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Acid-Free Paper, Unprocessed Collections, and Some French Farmers

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Abstract

Hello everyone! This week as the Special Collections Fortenbaugh Intern I have been ushered from the figurative world of Archival processing methods and principles into the world of acid free paper and unprocessed collections! After having finished reading through the manual I discussed in my last post, Karen (Director of Special Collections) walked me through the unprocessed collections within the college's possession. After having told me a number of quirky stories attached to many of these collections, Karen gave me some time to explore the unprocessed material and see which collection most catches my eye. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Fortenbaugh Internship, Special Collections, College Archive, Archives

Disciplines

Archival Science | Library and Information Science

Comments

The Interns at Gettysburg College's Musselman Library captured their internship experiences since the spring of 2011. Over time the blog has featured Fortenbaugh, Smith, and Holley interns. They shared updates on semester long projects, responded to blogging prompts, and documented their individual intern experience.

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Blogging the Library

The Interns @ Gettysburg College's Musselman Library

Acid free paper, unprocessed collections, and some French farmers

Friday, February 4, 2011

By: Sierra Green '11

Hello everyone! This week as the Special Collections Fortenbaugh Intern I have been ushered from the figurative world of Archival processing methods and principles into the world of acid free paper and unprocessed collections! After having finished reading through the manual I discussed in my last post, Karen (Director of Special Collections) walked me through the unprocessed collections within the college's possession. After having told me a number of quirky stories attached to many of these collections, Karen gave me some time to explore the unprocessed material and see which collection most catches my eye.

This was the moment I had been waiting for. I now had the opportunity to explore and bond with each of these collections. Each group of documents, photographs, papers, objects, and letters tell their own story of the past. The thought that I could play a part in making these collections more accessible to Special Collections patrons amazed me! On one shelf there was a collection of letters from two brothers writing home to their family during the Civil War and on another shelf were the papers of a quirky physics professor who taught here at Gettysburg in the early twentieth century. The personal experiences they record and the facets of life they reveal are simply hypnotizing. I could have spent all day making my way through each and every box, but alas I had to choose which collection to process.

The collection I selected was compiled by Mr. Jerold Wikoff, who was the Senior Editor of Public Relations here at the college. For the June 1995 issue of the Gettysburg Magazine, Mr. Wikoff elicited Gettysburg College Alumni to submit their memories of World War II in order to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. This collection is therefore a living record of the stories that alumni sent to Mr. Wikoff preceding the publication of this commemorative issue. I chose this collection because of the wide array of experiences that I would be exposed to as I processed the collection. It has been fascinating to see the stories that so many alumni took the time to share with Mr. Wikoff. The manner in which they shared these stories is also really interesting to see and examine. Here's one example that really struck me:

Mr. Henry Burman (Class of 1941) was a combat pilot on a bombing mission that took him over German occupied France. Mr. Burman's mission was to destroy a German submarine naval base. In the midst of completing this mission, Mr. Burman and his crew were attacked by two flights of German fighter aircraft. After dropping 8,000 feet, Mr. Burman instructed his men to prepare to abandon their plane. His last memory being the feeling of his body hitting the dash board of the plane, Mr. Burman regained consciousness once again and found himself in the arms of some French farmers. Attending to his wounds as much as they could, this small group of Frenchmen cared for Mr. Burman until German troops came to capture and detain him as a Prisoner of War. Mr. Burman later learned that he was the sole survivor of this plane crash.

Over fifty years later in 1994, Mr. Burman made his way back to that same piece of French countryside that had served as the impromptu landing strip of his fighter plane. This is Mr. Burman's recounting of his return trip:

"I returned to the Village of Molac, where our plane had crashed, and met some of the people who remember the crash and who helped save my life. The farm boy who rode his bicycle for the doctor was there and invited me to his home where we had a drink of special brandy, and he told me that I was a miracle to survive the crash."

While in the village of Molac, Mr. Burman was asked by the townspeople to dedicate a monument they had erected for the eight crewmen who lost their lives while serving their country.

Stories such as these make me remember how important it is to record and remember the kind actions of others that persist even in times of war. As can be seen by Mr. Burman's recounting of this story, the bond that is created between those who give and receive compassion is one that does not perish, but lives on in recorded memory.

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