

Collection #
SC 0035
BV 0396

FREDERIC MURRAY AYRES PAPERS, 1916-1933

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Processed by

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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 4 manuscript folders, 1 photograph folder, 1 bound volume

COLLECTION DATES: 1916-1933

PROVENANCE:

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1969.1204

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Frederic Murray Ayres was the son of L.S. Ayres department store founder Lyman S. Ayres and became president of L.S. Ayres & Company after his father's death of chronic nephritis in 1896. The company was incorporated shortly afterwards. Frederick initiated many innovations within the company and it grew markedly under his guidance. In 1904 he announced a new flagship store would be built at the corner of Meridian and Washington Streets in downtown Indianapolis. The store that sought to be "all things to all people" opened its doors on October 2, 1905. In 1906 the store purchased its first electric delivery vehicle, a Waverly. The store added a children's department in 1909. It then added five and one half acres of floor space in 1915, and by 1926 it had expanded into adjoining properties on Washington Street, including the former Chamber of Commerce building. The store first offered men's clothing in 1929. After 44 years as president, Frederic died in 1940. He was remembered as a reserved, kindly, and tolerant administrator who was an "inveterate smoker" and who enjoyed bridge, detective stories, and a good joke.

Presumably due to his successes managing his ever-growing department store company, in 1917 Ayres became Indiana's first chairman of the YMCA campaign for war work funds. Soon after, he was appointed Director of Stores for the American Red Cross' Department of Supplies overseas. His primary assignment was to manage the liquidation of supplies not deemed absolutely essential. He served in this position first in Washington D.C., and then in France, from February 1918 until April 1919.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

Turchi, Kenneth L., *L.S. Ayres & Company: The Store at the Crossroads of America* HF 5465 .I64 L267 2012

We Tell Our Story: L.S. Ayres & Company pam.q HF 5465 .I64 L29 1972

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The majority of the collection is directly related to Ayres' work with the Red Cross. It consists largely of correspondence with other Red Cross officials and ephemera resulting from his travels in Europe such as travel papers, identity cards, postcards, maps, the cover from a book of railway tickets, etc. It also includes L.S. Ayres publications that detail Frederic's Red Cross service.

Materials not related to Ayres' Red Cross service include two reports by the Citizens Historical Association – one on L.S. Ayres & Company, and another on Frederic Ayres himself, and a menu from the 1928 Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and Commercial Club dinner.

The collection also includes a scrapbook of newspaper clippings and photographs from the National Reunion of the 42nd Infantry (Rainbow) Division in Indianapolis July 13-15, 1923. Visiting dignitaries such as General John J. Pershing and French General Henri Gouraud stayed at the Ayres home during the event, a fact that is reflected in correspondence with Frederic's friend and Red Cross associate William B. Jackson (folder 3).

There are also a small number of photographs and photo postcards in the collection, all of which date from Ayres' service in Europe during World War I.

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CONTENTS

Letters from L.S. Ayres employees deployed into the war, thanking the company for gifts of gloves, socks, sleeping bags, etc. Letters of congratulations for Red Cross appointment.

Instructions for red Cross service, travel papers, typed account of war-torn France and Belgium, sales board report, welcome home letters and program from event at the Athenaeum

Telegrams requesting a return to France, correspondence with William B. Jackson

Assorted travel documents, identity cards, newspaper clippings, Red Cross certificates of recognition, typed description of Argonne Association, The Ayres Log Book of March/April 1918, Red Cross maps of Paris, sheet music for "Madelon of Victory", Citizens Historical Association reports, Commercial Club menu

Photographs and photo postcards

Scrapbook, National Reunion of 42nd Infantry (Rainbow) Division. Indianapolis, Indiana, July 13-15, 1923.

CONTAINER

Folder 1

Folder 2

Folder 3

Folder 4

Photographs, Folder 1

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