

Collection #  
M 0458  
OM 0057

## ALICE MOORE FRENCH PAPERS, CA. 1865–1941

[Collection Information](#)

[Biographical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Series Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

Kim Rivers

July 1986

Visuals Revised by Dorothy A. Nicholson

June 2008

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

### COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	Manuscript Materials: 1 document case, 1 oversize folder Visual Materials: 1 half size document case, 2 cased images, 7 panoramic photographs
COLLECTION DATES:	1892–1941
PROVENANCE:	Gift of Carol Ford and Eddie H. Breedlove, Indianapolis, Indiana, 3 October 1985
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	

REPRODUCTION                      Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection  
RIGHTS:                                      must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.  
ALTERNATE  
FORMATS:  
RELATED  
HOLDINGS:  
ACCESSION                                1986.0001  
NUMBER:  
NOTES:

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Alice Moore French (1863–1934) was born in Johnson County, Indiana, to Joseph J. and Ermina Forsyth Moore. Joseph Moore first operated a country store and then a department store in Trafalgar, Indiana, and by judicious investment amassed a considerable amount of land there. He and his wife had three other children, only one of whom, Frank, survived infancy. After passing through the local grammar school, Alice attended Franklin College, graduating in 1882, and then the Boston (Massachusetts) School of Art and Design where she developed her skills in wood-carving and painting. In 1887 she married Eli M. French, a railroad man from Frankfort, Indiana, and together they had one son, Donald. When her husband died in 1894, French and her son moved to Woodruff Place in Indianapolis, residing there until her death. She was very active in women's clubs, including Kappa Kappa Gamma from her college days, the Woman's Department Club, and the Monday Club.

She was probably best known, however, for her founding of both the state and the national divisions of the American War Mothers in 1917. In August 1917, Don Herald of the State Food Commission attended a meeting of the Woman's Civic League in Indianapolis in hopes of persuading a woman to push ahead the food conservation program in Indiana. Alice French was chosen and initiated a circulating letter campaign aimed at women with children in the Armed Forces. Her idea of convincing these "War Mothers" to pledge to conserve wheat, meat, fats and sugar was supposedly inspired by her attorney son's enlistment in the army. Indiana Food Commissioner, Dr. Harry C. Barnhard, was so impressed with her letter that he forwarded it to Washington, D.C.; authorities there soon sent back a telegram requesting French to "mobilize" her War Mothers.

The Indiana Chapter was organized first and incorporated on 18 May 1918. Interest spread to other states, and a National Organization was incorporated in August 1918 with French as its first president. After the war, the group continued its efforts to aid soldiers; one of the most notable was the establishment in 1926 of the American War Mothers National Memorial Home to provide food and shelter for families visiting Fitzsimmons Veteran Hospital near Denver, Colorado. The group also had a postage stamp devoted to it in 1934. French was very enthusiastic about forming an International War Mothers modeled after the League of Nations and traveled extensively throughout the United States and Europe to encourage methods of addressing differences other than bloodshed. Although the organization was originally open only to mothers of World War I soldiers, its membership now includes mothers of soldiers who served in World War II, the Korean War, and the War in South Vietnam.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection, comprised of one manuscript box, 1 box of photographs, 2 cased images, and 7 panoramic photographs, represents both the personal history of Alice Moore French and the origins of the American War Mothers.

Her correspondence particularly illustrates this two-fold nature as it contains both letters from her brother Frank concerning family and business problems, and copies of letters French sent out in her position as President Emeritus. Her family data is filled out by French's collection of genealogical information.

The War Mothers early history is documented by its Articles of Incorporation, constitution and by-laws, stock shares, and a certificate from the Indiana Secretary of State. Also included are a scrapbook and typewritten manuscript narrating the history of the War Mothers by Alice French, another scrapbook holding newspaper clippings about the club, and a letter from an Assistant Postmaster General promising the Mothers a postage stamp in 1934. Visual images in the collection include photographs of Alice Moore French, other members of the War Mothers, personal subjects, and several post cards. The panoramic photographs show group images of the War Mothers and are stored in OVC Photographs and the hanging storage on 12A.

## **SERIES CONTENTS**

### **Series 1: Manuscript Materials, 1892–1941**

#### **CONTENTS**

Correspondence, 15 March 1893–8 April 1941.

Information about ancestors, compiled by Alice French.

Receipts, notices, programs, etc., concerning Alice Moore French and family.

The Key, Kappa Kappa Gamma, January 1901.

Receipt and account books, 1892–1921.

Documents of American War Mothers and the Indiana Chapter, 1918–1925.

Act of Incorporation for the American War Mothers, signed by Secretary of State of Indiana, William A. Roach, 15 August 1918

History of American War Mothers, typewritten manuscript by Alice Moore French.

American War Mothers, Indiana Chapter scrapbook, 1921–1926 (mainly newspaper clippings).

History of Indiana Chapter of American War Mothers scrapbook by Alice Moore French, 1929–1931.

Scrapbook, handwritten with photographs and clippings

#### **CONTAINER**

Box 1, Folder 1

Box 1, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 3

Box 1, Folder 4

Box 1, Folder 5

Box 1, Folder 6

OM 0057,  
Folder 1

Box 1, Folder 7

Box 1, Folder 8

Box 1, Folder 9

Box 1, Folder 10

### **Series 2: Visual Materials, ca. 1865–1935**

#### **CONTENTS**

Alice Moore French [7 portraits]

Group photograph of five young women [Alice Moore is on the right front row, possibly taken while she was in art school as all the girls are holding painting pallets, ca. 1885] [cabinet card]

National Convention of the American War Mothers group photograph  
[includes Alice M. French]

#### **CONTAINER**

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 1

American War Mothers group photograph  
[includes Alice M. French, ca. 1930]  
J.B. Beltz and his ship, October 18, 1909; includes a  
short note to Mr. A.J. Beltz, Marshall, Ill. on verso,  
[postcard photograph]

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 2

W.J. Fenimore and C.G. Beltz, includes a short note  
on verso [postcard photograph]

C. Porter Worman Jr., New York, St. John's School,  
photograph mounted on board

John Beltz, mounted on board  
Mildred Irene Beltz, postcard photograph

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 3

A cat portrait "Chess" (?) with letter on verso to Don  
from Grand Ma, cabinet card

St. Rock's Cemetery in New Orleans, includes note  
on verso

James Bethel Gresham portrait

Mrs. Nannie Stanley Kennedy, Nevada, Mo. Cattey  
(?) College, postcard portrait

Postcard photograph of a house; written on front:  
Residence (two words unclear) 517 5<sup>th</sup> St.; written  
on verso a note from Grace (last name unclear)

Ms. Bernice Parker, November 14, 1899,  
Indianapolis, portrait mounted on board

Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Gibson of Logansport, Sixth  
President of the Indiana Chapter of the American  
War Mothers 1929–1931 portrait

“California Chapter in Colonial Dress” photograph  
2 cabinet card photographs of unidentified babies

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 4

1 cabinet card portrait of a young woman

1 cabinet card portrait of an unidentified man

1 group photograph of 6 women in costume  
representing the wars of 1776, 1812, 1847, 1861,  
1898, 1917, and a man in Uncle Sam costume

1 portrait mounted on a board of an unidentified  
woman

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 5

1 photograph mounted on a board of an unidentified  
building

1 faded photograph mounted on a board of two people standing outside, "Don F" on verso

1 faded photograph mounted on a board of two people

1 photograph of 3 children (one boy and 2 girls); "Uncle Bob" written on verso

Postcard photograph of older woman in a rocking chair

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 6

Portraits of two young women mounted on board

Portraits of two young women in card stock cases  
James Whitcomb Riley [2 postcards]

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 7

Five greeting postcards (one of which is a duplicate)

Scenes from Knoxville Tennessee [3 postcards]  
Tintype cased image portraits of two young men, ca. 1865

Cased Images:  
ID 285  
ID 286

Cirkut Photograph:

Caption: "First National Convention of Indiana War Mothers, Indianapolis, Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 1918"

Description: [group of women on Monument Circle steps]

Panoramic Photographs:  
Hanging Storage,  
Folder 1

Cirkut Photograph:

Caption: "Mother's Day Ceremonies by the American War Mothers at the Tomb of the Unknown, Arlington National"

Description: group listening to speaker at ceremonies, [1925]

Panoramic Photographs:  
Hanging Storage,  
Folder 2

Cirkut Photograph:

Caption: "Mother's Day Ceremonies by the American War Mothers at the Tomb of the Unknown, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia"

Description: groups laying wreaths on the tomb [1925]

Panoramic Photographs:  
Hanging Storage,  
Folder 3

Cirkut Photograph:

Caption: "Sixth Biennial convention—American War Mothers, Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> –Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>, Long Beach, Calif. 1931"

Description: group of women assembled on the beach, Alice Moore French in front row in white dress with a dark coat over her left arm

OVC Photographs:  
Folder 1

Cirkut Photograph:

Caption: "American War Mothers at U.S. Capitol Armistice Day Exercises Nov. 11, 1932"

Description: Group portrait, Alice Moore French standing over officer's left shoulder

OVC Photographs:  
Folder 2

Cirkut Photograph:  
Description: American War Mothers at the Indiana  
World War Memorial, ca. 1935

Cirkut Photograph:  
Description: American War Mothers group, Alice  
Moore French third from left, ca. 1925

OVC Photographs:  
Folder 3

OVC Photographs:  
Folder 4

Three copy negatives

4x5 Polyester Negatives:  
Negatives 1-3

## CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M0458).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.