

Collection #
SC 3056

ESTHER GRANT DIARY, 1918

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 manuscript folder

COLLECTION
DATES: 1918

PROVENANCE: Joan E. Hostetler, Heritage Photo Services, Indianapolis

RESTRICTIONS: None

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RELATED
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ACCESSION
NUMBER: 2000.0442

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Esther Grant was born in December 1893 to Swedish immigrants John and Matilda Grant. Her father was a farmer, and she was the youngest of nine children. In 1900 the family lived in Wea, Tippecanoe County, Indiana, but by 1910 John Grant had died and Esther Grant lived with her mother and four siblings on a farm in Van Buren, La Grange County. Matilda Grant and several of her children moved to Mishawaka at some point during the following eight years.

Prior to 1918, Esther Grant moved to the town of LaGrange and began doing clerical work for Ira B. Wald at the LaGrange Hardware Company. Along with a friend known as Jessie (and probably others), she appears to have lived in a boarding house in LaGrange. Most weekends she traveled to Mishawaka by train to visit her family. Later in the year she moved to Fort Wayne and began working at the Steele-Myers Department Store, a job she did not like very much. In October, she became ill with Spanish influenza during the global pandemic of the disease, but recovered.

Records of Grant's life past 1918 have not yet been found, and her date of death is unknown.

Sources:

Collection Materials

United States Census Records

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Esther Grant wrote regular daily entries in her diary throughout the year of 1918. The volume takes the form of a date book, with nine lines per day. Most of the entries are basic chronologies of what she did: if she went to work, when she returned home, what recreational activities she engaged in and with whom, and what time she went to bed. She worked full time, occasionally on Saturdays, and was often late. Usually she traveled to Mishawaka on weekends to see her family and attend church. When she spent time by herself, she sewed, crocheted, or read. She also had a number of friends with whom she went out for dinner, movies, and drives.

Only sometimes does she offer opinions or feelings, and these tend to be brief. Words that appear in the diary include: punk (not feeling well), peeved, some joke (referring to either funny or negative occurrences), blue Monday, and homesick.

Some sentences and phrases are written in shorthand, and it appears as though these contain more personal or sensitive information. Usually the subject of such passages is entirely indecipherable, but occasionally clues can be gathered, as with the following: "Saw Bob Payne a few minutes. [Shorthand sentence]. J.P.C saw my neck. He made fun of me."

Of historical note is Grant's relative freedom compared to other young women in the early 1900s. She lives away from home, works in a retail establishment, and is able to spend unchaperoned time with men whenever she chooses. Never does she mention any disapproval from her family.

The diary also mentions two major historical events, the Spanish Influenza Pandemic and the end of the First World War. Grant became ill during the pandemic; though she recovered, an acquaintance of hers, "Miss Nice," did not. Each of these illnesses is recorded very matter-of-factly. On November 11 she writes in response to the war's end: "3 o'clock Monday AM I woke up and heard whistles & all kinds of Noises—Peace was declared. No work Mishawaka People certainly celebrated right."

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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, SC 3056).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.