Percival W. Petch Papers circa 1900-1953: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number:      C1584
Repository:      Princeton University Library. Special Collections.
                 Manuscripts Division
                 One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size:            0.4 linear ft.
                 1 box
Language(s) of Material:      English
Abstract:        Consists primarily of an unpublished manuscript, dating from 1917 to 1919, along with clippings and a few original photographs documenting the experiences of Percival William Petch (1886-1940), a British army officer who was stationed along the Macedonian Front during World War I.
Location:        This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
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Biography/History

Percival William Petch served with the British Royal Army as a Derby Scheme volunteer from 1916 to 1919. After being rejected from serving twice, Petch was recruited into the army in March 1916, and arrived in Thessaloniki in November 1917. From September 1918 until his discharge in December 1919, Petch was confined to several hospitals and camps in Greece, Turkey, and finally England where he was treated for various illnesses, including malaria. He was ultimately promoted to Corporal in March 1919.

Born in 1886 in Worcestershire to John Robert Petch (b. 1862) and Fanny Annie Colsey (1862-1937), Petch worked for a time as a clerk, and later as a performer and comedian. He died in Lancashire in 1940.

Description

This collection consists primarily of an unpublished manuscript along with photographic clippings and original photographs documenting the experiences of Percival William Petch (1886-1940), a Derby Scheme volunteer with the British Army who was stationed in Thessaloniki (Salonika) during World War I. Also included are a couple of poems by Petch as well as some ephemera and war memorabilia, including a Derby Scheme uniform armband.

Some correspondence, war memorabilia, ephemera, and photographs relating to Petch's brother, Eric George Petch (1892-1965), are also included in the collection. Eric Petch, a druggist, also served in World War I as a private with the British Army Labour Corps. He later worked for the Refuge Field Staff Association.

A few Petch family photographs and ephemera are also included.

Access and Use

Access

Open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. No further photoduplication of copies of material in the collection can be made when Princeton University Library does not own the original. Inquiries regarding publishing material from the collection should be directed to RBSC Public Services staff at rbsc@princeton.edu. The library has no information on the status of literary rights in the collection and researchers are responsible for determining any questions of copyright.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition
Purchased in 2017. (AM 2018-34)

Acquired with matching funds provided by the Program in Hellenic Studies, with support of the Stanley J. Seeger Hellenic Fund.

Appraisal

No materials were separated during 2018 processing.

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Processing and Other Information

Encoding

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2018-02-02T16:06-0500

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

- Great Britain. Army—History—World War, 1914-1918—Sources.
- World War, 1914-1918—Personal narratives, British--Sources.
- World War, 1914-1918—Campaigns—Balkan Peninsula—Sources.
- World War, 1914-1918—Campaigns—Greece—Sources.
- World War, 1914-1918—Campaigns—Greece—Thessalonikē—Sources.
- European history
- Hellenic studies
- World War I
Manuscript Documenting Wartime Experience, 1917-1919

Description: Petch's manuscript, which he authored upon his return to England, covers the years 1917 to 1919, and describes his experiences along the Macedonian Front. In the manuscript, Petch includes a fair amount of ethnographic observations and a description of his journey from England to Greece, along with observations about the hardships imposed by the war, and the awkward integration of multiple nationalities trying to survive economically, physically, and psychologically. Perhaps most significant, in terms of historic events in Thessaloniki, is a chapter entitled "Flames Destroy," which describes the devastating Great Thessaloniki Fire of 1917. The manuscript consists of 82 typescript pages of narrative with handwritten annotations, a table of contents, and attached newspaper clippings scattered throughout.

Clippings and Photographs Documenting Wartime Experience, 1917-1919

Description: 39 pages of clipped and pasted illustrations, seemingly from a scrapbook, mostly in the form of on-the-spot newsprint photographic views as well as a few small original photographs taken by the writer and one example of local paper currency.

"Very Brief Record of War-time Movements", 1919

Description: 2 pages outlining Petch's personal timeline of movements.

Derby Scheme Uniform Armband, circa 1916

Description: Brassard, armlet with the rare clear issue-stamping Red Crown emblem.

Poems, circa 1917-1937

Description: One poem by Petch is entitled, "Somewhere in France;" the other, "Inadequate Tribute to My Beloved Mother (Mrs. Fanny Annie Petch, nee Colsey)."

Ephemera and Photograph Relating to Petch as a Performer, circa 1930

Description: Includes part of a program and photograph of Petch as well as lyrics to the song, "The Cabman's Story."

Eric Petch: Correspondence, Photographs, and Ephemera, 1915-1934

Description: Most of the items relate to Petch's military service, including a couple of photos of Petch in his uniform, an unused field message book (Army Book 153) issued in 1915, and a notification of his enrollment into the army reserve, among other items.

Petch Family: Photographs and Ephemera, circa 1900-1953
Description: Includes photos of Percival Petch and of his mother and father. Ephemeral items, including a couple of food ration books, relate to Mr. and Mrs. S. Hassall.