

C Crain, Ada E. (1904-2003), Papers, c. 1860-2003
3067 1.3 linear feet

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INTRODUCTION

The papers of Ada Crain, a schoolteacher, consist of correspondence, genealogical materials, photographs, yearbooks, an 1878 diary, and a manuscript written by Crain. The materials detail the first half of Ada Crain's life while living and teaching in Oklahoma, Missouri, and Michigan.

DONOR INFORMATION

The Crain Papers were donated by Mrs. Yvonne Hasty to the State Historical Society of Missouri on 3 November 2004 (SHS Accession No. 6061).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ernest B. Crain was born on October 29, 1859 in Indiana to Orange and Delilah Crain. In 1878, Orange decided to leave Indiana and travel west. The family packed their belongings and began the trip by wagon to Kansas on September 12, 1878. Ernest kept a diary of the family's travels until they reached Kansas on October 31, 1878. The Crain family lived in Kansas near the Oklahoma Territory for the next decade. When the Oklahoma Territory was opened up they decided to move south. Ernest, along with his brothers, participated in the Oklahoma Land Rush on April 22, 1889 and each staked land claims on the Cherokee Strip between the towns of Goltry and Jet. In 1903, he met and later married Maudie Owens Kerr (1877-1966), a widow from Missouri.

Ernest and Maudie Crain's only child, Ada E. Crain, was born on September 18, 1904 in Goltry, Oklahoma. The Crains lived on their Oklahoma homestead until 1911 when Maudie persuaded Ernest to move to Republic, Missouri, where many of her relatives lived. Ada had not attended school while living in Goltry and began her academic career once the family arrived in Republic. At the age of 15, she contracted malaria and suffered recurrences of the disease throughout her life. In 1924, she was the valedictorian of her graduating class at Republic High School and received a scholarship to Southwest Missouri State Teachers College. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in education from the college in 1928 and began her lifelong teaching career.

From 1928 to 1930, Crain taught at Brandsville High School in Brandsville, Missouri. She acted as the principal during the 1929-1930 school year. She then joined the Yates-Fisher Teacher's Agency in Chicago and was offered a job at a high school in Atlanta, Michigan. In 1940, she received a master's degree in education from the University of Missouri. From 1946 to 1949, Crain taught summer college courses at Ferris Institute in Big Rapids, Michigan. In 1949, Ernest Crain, now blind, suffered a stroke and was rendered partially paralyzed. Later that year, he died and Maudie Crain moved to Big Rapids to live with her daughter. Ada took care of her mother until Maudie's death in 1966. Crain continued to teach at various schools in Michigan until her retirement in 1968.

Throughout her life, she traveled extensively around the world. Encouraged by friends, she began writing a family history in 1992, which she published as *The Deacon* in 1994. At age

93, suffering from Alzheimer's Disease, she was placed in a nursing home where she died in 2003. Crain never married, but was engaged four times.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Ada Crain Papers consist of correspondence, legal papers, photographs, diaries, writings, and yearbooks that are organized into five series: **Personal Papers**, **Family Papers**, **Writings**, **Miscellaneous**, and **Photographs**. The materials in the collection focus primarily on the first half of Ada Crain's life. Little is available of her life after 1950.

The **Personal Papers** series consists of correspondence, legal papers, awards and diplomas, alumni newsletters, and yearbooks. The series is arranged by type of material and chronologically therein.

The **Family Papers** series is arranged chronologically and consists of documents pertaining to Ada's parents, Ernest and Maudie Crain, as well as genealogical material. Ernest's diary of his family's 1878 trip from Indiana to Kansas is included in this series.

The **Writings** series is arranged chronologically and contains drafts of essays and her family history. The series also contains the final copy of the family history, *The Deacon*.

The **Miscellaneous** series is arranged chronologically and contains materials such as trip mementos, newspaper clippings, and pamphlets.

The **Photographs** series is arranged by subject matter and then chronologically therein. The photographs consist primarily of family members, but also include friends, school groups, and vacations.

FOLDER LIST

Personal Papers Series

The **Personal Papers** series is arranged by type of material and chronologically therein. This series consists primarily of correspondence, with many of the letters being from family and friends. Of particular interest is a series of letters from Ada Crain's parents written during 1931 that focus on their money fears, especially regarding the failure of the First State Bank in Jet, Oklahoma, where the bulk of their savings was held. Her parents included clippings from the Oklahoma paper regarding the bank closure. These are the only letters in the collection that are from the elder Crains and the papers offer little insight into their lives in Republic, Missouri. The correspondence also includes many postcards of images from the University of Missouri and the Capitol building in Jefferson City, Missouri.

The legal papers included in this series consist primarily of Ada Crain's will and court documents regarding the appointment of her guardianship to the state when her mental health began to deteriorate. The awards and diplomas contained in this series consist of such items as perfect attendance awards, high school and college diplomas, and an award given to Crain for being "Fowlerville's Most Outstanding Citizen."

This series also contains three issues of the *Bulletin of Southwest Missouri State College*, Springfield, Missouri. There are also two *Ozarko* yearbooks from Southwest Missouri State Teachers College, and a 1990 commemorative yearbook from the 1940 graduating class of the University of Missouri. Of particular interest is the commemorative yearbook which contains a picture and short biography of Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, who was a member of the 1940 graduating class.

- f. 1 Correspondence, 1928-1990
- f. 2 Correspondence, 1990-2002
- f. 3 Correspondence, n.d.
- f. 4 Legal Papers, 1954-2003
- f. 5 Awards and Diplomas, 1915-1978
- f. 6 *Bulletin of Southwest Missouri State College*, 1951-1955
- f. 7 *Ozarko*, 1927
- f. 8 *Ozarko*, 1928
- f. 9 *Memories: Class of 1940, University of Missouri 1940-1990*

Family Papers Series

This series is arranged chronologically and contains documents pertaining to Ernest and Maudie Crain. Of particular interest is Ernest's 1878 diary describing his family's journey from Indiana to Kansas. The diary ends before their arrival in Wellington, Kansas because Ernest ran out of blank pages shortly after they crossed the Kansas border. The diary describes towns the Crains passed through on their journey, as well as details of the trip including how many miles traveled, length of time traveled, and where they stopped to set up camp. There is also mention of Ernest and Orange's battle with ague, which plagued them throughout the trip. The diary offers an informative glance at the trials and tribulations that families faced during a period of westward expansion.

Maudie and Ernest's 1903 marriage license is also included in this series. Other documents in this series include Maudie and Ernest's war ration coupon books, property tax receipts, correspondence from the Missouri Welfare Office, Maudie's death certificate, and correspondence regarding the sale of the Crains' home in Republic after Ernest's death.

Also included in this series is genealogical information collected by Ada Crain. The information is arranged alphabetically by surname. The majority of the information focuses on the Crain (Crane) family. However, there is also some information on the families of Ernest and Maudie Crain's siblings and their immediate families. The documents consist of photocopies of information on marriages, census data, death certificates, obituaries, family charts, and correspondence regarding Ada Crain's genealogical research.

- f. 10 Family Papers, 1878-1966
- f. 11 Genealogy, Brashers and Crain
- f. 12 Genealogy, Crane, Dixon and Gallaway
- f. 13 Genealogy, Owens, Shirley and Stealey

Writings Series

The **Writings** series is arranged chronologically and contains drafts of essays and Crain's family history. Ada Crain wrote several short essays regarding her experiences as a teacher in Brandsville, Missouri and her early childhood in Oklahoma. In the early 1990s, she was encouraged by friends to write a book about her life which resulted in the publication of *The Deacon* in 1994. *The Deacon* told of Ernest Crain's journey from Indiana to Kansas and his participation in the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889. Ada Crain transcribed her father's diary and included it in *The Deacon*. However, she edited the work in order to make it more readable. It is beneficial to read the transcription alongside the diary itself in order to clarify some of the indecipherable sections. However, the transcription is watered down and leaves out several important details. Crain's book ends with the death of her father and her mother's move to Michigan. The information provided in the book tells a great deal about Ada and her family, however, there is little regarding her experiences as a teacher outside of the two years she spent in Brandsville, Missouri.

- f. 14 "Brandsville Missouri High School," 1990
- f. 15 Draft of *The Deacon*, part one, c. 1992
- f. 16 Draft of *The Deacon*, part two, c. 1992
- f. 17 *The Deacon*, 1994
- f. 18 Writings on early life, n.d.

Miscellaneous Series

The **Miscellaneous** series is arranged chronologically and contains materials such as mementos from a 1937 trip to Mexico City, Mexico. Of particular interest is a commemorative book celebrating the centennial of Republic, Missouri. This book offers a history of the town and many of its celebrated buildings and families. There are also several Civil Defense pamphlets published by the United States Government at the beginning of the Cold War.

- f. 19 Miscellaneous, 1937-1951
- f. 20 Miscellaneous, 1971
- f. 21 Miscellaneous, 1971-1995, n.d.

Photographs Series

The **Photographs** series is arranged by subject matter and then chronologically therein. The photographs date from the 1860s to the 1990s and consist of tintypes, cartes-de-visites, cabinet cards, formal portraits, and snapshots. The photographs consist primarily of family members, many of whom have been identified. One folder is dedicated to the Carter family, who traveled with the Crains to Kansas. The youngest Carter son, Otis, married Ernest's sister, Edith.

There are also photographs of friends, schoolmates, students, and vacations. Many of the friends and students are not identified, or only identified by first name. The scrapbooks consist of many photographs whose subjects are unidentified, but are likely Crain's relatives. Loose photographs found in the first scrapbook were removed and kept together. Of particular interest is a photograph that was taken by Charles Eisenmann, who was famous for photographing 19th century sideshow and circus performers. Although many of the images are unidentified, dates have been determined when possible and these photographs show the contemporary fashions of the period, as well as the trends in photography.

- f. 22 Family, 1890s-1930s
- f. 23 Family, 1933-1947
- f. 24 Family, 1948-1996, n.d.
- f. 25 Carter Family, 1878-1940s
- f. 26 Friends, c. 1920-1997
- f. 27 Miscellaneous, 1900s-1949, n.d.
- f. 28 School, 1923-c. 1978
- f. 29 Travels, 1931-1980, n.d.
- f. 30 Loose Photographs from Scrapbook I, 1870s-1900s
- f. 31 Scrapbook I, 1860s-1920s
- f. 32 Scrapbook II, 1924-1956, n.d.
- f. 33 Scrapbook II, 1924-1956, n.d.

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