

Information Sheet

R French, William Aden Elmer, 1892-1980.
175 Papers, 1877-1967 (bulk 1877-1934).
Twenty-six folders.

MICROFILM

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These are the papers of an author and newspaper publisher at Eminence in Shannon County, Missouri. Included are hunting and fishing diaries, journals, teaching notebooks, lists of published works, short stories, and family correspondence.

William Aden Elmer French was born at Erin, Tennessee, in 1892. One of ten children, he came to Missouri with three of his brothers in 1906, making the month-long journey by wagon. Following his education at Eminence, French was employed as a teacher in rural schools in Shannon County, Missouri, and Glendale, Oklahoma. In 1916 he hired on as a printer with the Eminence *Current Wave*, beginning an association with that newspaper which, with a few lapses, lasted until his retirement and sale of the paper in 1962. He was also editor and publisher of newspapers in Summersville, Birch Tree, and Winona. He was the author of seven books and a collection of poetry, and numerous magazine articles and short stories. He died in March 1980 and is buried at Eminence.

French's papers consist of about equal numbers of diaries and miscellaneous notebooks. With the exception of one folder of French family correspondence, they are his personal papers, providing a daily record of his life from 1906 through 1926. They also provide an account of life in the Current River hills of the Ozarks, and include a considerable amount of information on the Shannon County communities of Eminence, Shawnee, Owl Bend, and Munsell.

Writing, hunting, and fishing are quite evident in his papers as French's favorite pursuits. His progress as a sportsman is noted in several of his early notebooks, and his frequent outings are carefully entered in his diaries. Of his literary efforts there are only a few early examples, but there are lists of his published writings with publication data to 1914.

French's diaries are nearly complete for 1906-1926. The earliest begins in Tennessee and includes the particulars of his trip to southern Missouri with his brothers. The remaining diaries contain notes and records of his tenure as teacher in rural schools at Cotoreva, Owl Bend, Prairie Hollow, and Munsell in Shannon County, his army service during World War I in Iowa and South Carolina, and his subsequent re-employment with the *Current Wave*.

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Shelf List

These are the papers of an author and newspaper publisher at Eminence in Shannon County, Missouri. Included are hunting and fishing diaries, journals, teaching notebooks, lists of published works, short stories, and family correspondence.

Folders 1-11: Miscellaneous notebooks and papers, 1877-1967.

Family correspondence, composition book, teaching notebooks, notes on moving to Missouri in 1906, lists of published writings, and short stories.

Folder 1: Correspondence, 1877-1934.

Family correspondence, mostly between Celestine French, Delhi, Kansas, and her sister, Kate Ralston. Also letters by James French and A. W. Knapp.

Folder 2: Diary of a trip to Missouri, 1906.

This small notebook details the first week of a trip from Houston County, Tennessee, to Eminence, Missouri, 10-17 October 1906. Folder 12 includes a complete account of the month-long journey.

Folder 3: Composition book, 1908-1909.

Miscellaneous notes on world geography precede French's story, "Careless Carl: The Story of a Wasted Life."

Folder 4: Notebook, 1909.

Only three pages of this small notebook bear writing. It includes a list of "dates to remember," concerning early hunting trips and literary efforts. Much of this information is duplicated in the lists of published works in Folders 5 and 15.

Folder 5: List of writings, 1902-1911.

This volume bears the notation, "A Complete List of all my Published Writings, with a description of each." Sixty essays, short stories, and articles are noted, each with the details of publication and compensation. See also Folders 4 and 15.

Folder 6: Teaching notebook, 1911-1912.

Contains notes on French's tenure as teacher at the Prairie Hollow and Owl Bend schools in Shannon County. There are notes on enrollment, attendance, grades, and books. Also miscellaneous notes for "Owl Bend Hoots," a column written by French and published in the *Current Wave*.

Folder 7: *The Mixture*, Eminence, Missouri, 1914-1916.

Two issues of this small literary magazine published at Eminence by the French brothers, February 1914 and October 1916.

Folder 8: Short stories, n.d.

A two-page typescript of hunting and fishing anecdotes. Includes "Bass Volunteers for the Stringer," "Fishing in the Treetops," "Lucky Prod With a Gig," and "Two Rabbits at One Shot."

Folder 9: "Tom Howard Slept Here," by Luther Rowlett, n.d.

An undated, manuscript piece by Luther Rowlett, possibly submitted for publication in *The Mixture*. It concerns a visit to Eminence in September 1881 by Jesse and Frank James, who posed as cattle buyers. There is considerable background material on the Civil War in Shannon County, in which the Chilton and Deatherage families figure prominently. Rowlett's story appears to be a rendering of oral traditions concerning the James brothers in Shannon County. A listing of eight individuals names as "sources" ends the piece.

Folder 10: Hog book, 1930-1934.

An accounting of French's hog business, including expenses and receipts, inventories of animals, and farrowing records.

Folder 11: Hunting book, n.d.

A listing of various types of animals killed with different weapons. Also a record of French's total fishing catch. There are a few miscellaneous farm records for 1966-1967 at the end of this volume.

Folders 12-26: Diaries, 1906-1926.

Hunting, fishing, and trapping diaries, daily journals, and miscellaneous items. The diaries are nearly complete for the period 1906-1926.

Folder 12: Diary, 1 October 1906--25 November 1906.

There are hunting, fishing, and trapping notes, 1901-1906, interspersed with other records at the beginning of the volume.

Folder 13: Diary, 30 October 1906--18 December 1907.

Folder 14: Diary of a hunting trip, 1-2 July 1909.

Folder 15: Diary, 19 December 1907--6 January 1910.

Contains a listing of French's writings to 1914. See also material in Folders 4 and 5.

Folder 16: Diary, 13 November 1910--27 August 1911.

Folder 17: Diary, 2 September 1911--25 July 1912.

Folder 18: Diary, 9 December 1912--24 January 1913.

Also includes miscellaneous notes for 1912-1913.

Folder 19: Diary, 2 August 1912--17 January 1914.

Folder 20: Diary, 1 February 1915--21 April 1918.

Folder 21: Diary, 9 September 1915--10 March 1918.

Folder 22: Diary, 10 March 1918--15 June 1919.

This notebook details French's military service during World War I. He trained as an army automotive mechanic at Ames, Iowa, and Camp Jackson, South Carolina, but the war ended before he saw active service.

Folder 23: Diary, 15 June 1919--8 August 1920.

The first twenty pages contain notes and diagrams on auto mechanics, probably made during French's military training.

Folder 24: Diary, 16 April 1922--9 September 1923.

Folder 25: Diary, 10 September 1923--9 February 1925.

Folder 26: Diary, 1 April 1926--31 December 1926.

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Index Cards

Ames (Iowa)
Camp Jackson (S.C.) [SEE Fort Jackson (S.C.)]
Cotoreva School (Shannon County, Mo.)
Current Wave (Eminence, Mo.)
Depew (Okla.)
Eminence (Mo.)
Fishing—Missouri—Shannon County
Fort Jackson (S.C.)
French, Celestine

French, Grace McKinney
French, James
French, Norris L.
French, William Aden Elmer, 1892-1980
Glendale School (Glendale, Okla.)
Houston County (Tenn.)
Hunting—Missouri—Shannon County
Hunting and fishing clubs—Missouri
James, Frank, 1844-1915
James, Jesse, 1847-1882
Knapp, A. W.
Macksville (Kan.)
McMaines, Frank M.
Missouri—History—Civil War, 1861-1865
The Mixture (magazine)
Munsell (Mo.)
Munsell Chapel School (Shannon County, Mo.)
Newspaper publishing—Missouri—Shannon County
Owl Bend (Mo.)
Owl Bend School (Shannon County, Mo.)
Prairie Hollow School (Shannon County, Mo.)
Ralston, Kate
Rowlett, Luther
Schools—Missouri—Shannon County
Shannon County (Mo.)
Shawnee (Mo.)
Silver Hook Fishing Club of St. Louis
Trapping—Missouri—Shannon County
West Eminence (Mo.)
World War, 1914-1918