

Pilcher, Frederick, Jr. scrapbook

Frederick Pilcher Jr. scrapbook
C.1923-1932

Title Statement

Pilcher, Frederick, Jr. scrapbook Frederick Pilcher Jr. scrapbook MSS 16824

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Publication Statement

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Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library
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Profile Description

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Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16824

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1632

Unit Date

C.1923-1932

Mixed Materials [X006178635]

1 (Flat_Box)

Language

English

Creator

Pilcher, Frederick Jr.

Extent

.44 Cubic Feet 1 Oversize Flat Box Small OS

Condition Description

good

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased from Max Rambod by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 7 March 2023.

Preferred Citation

MSS 16824, Frederick Pilcher scrapbook, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

Content Description

Content Warning: This material contains graphic imagery and content involving human remains. The purpose of this note is to allow users to decide whether they need or want to view these materials or, at least, to mentally or emotionally prepare themselves to view the materials.

This collection contains a scrapbook of black and white photographs and ephemera documenting Frederick Pilcher, Jr.'s life from the 1920s to the 1930s as a student at Virginia Polytechnical Institute (VPI), known as Virginia Tech, and the University of Virginia Medical School. Included are newspaper clippings, tickets to sporting events, commencement announcements, invitations, report cards, certificate of admittance to the medical board's examination, alumni ribbons, cards and correspondence regarding advancements for his professional work. The scrapbook also depicts his travels on the railway to the Pacific Northwest where he had an internship in Seattle's Virginia Mason Clinic, and a steamship vacation to Alaska. The report cards in the scrapbook suggest Pilcher attended VPI as an undergraduate and then the University of Virginia Medical School.

Amid the memorabilia and photographs in the scrapbook, is a photograph of medical student Pilcher posing with an African American corpse from the medical school. There is a caption below the photograph that is racially offensive. The photograph is also disturbing content that users may not want to view.

Included are newspaper clippings describing how Pilcher and his cousin took two bodies from the University's medical school to his home in Chesterfield County. Two months later the two bodies were found on the creek banks near Pilcher's residence by a 15 year-old boy who was fishing and called the police. Pilcher and his cousin were not prosecuted and Pilcher was allowed to continue medical school.

University of Virginia Medical School often used African American corpses for teaching medical students. The students were known to pose with them for photographs. Cadavers were often called "subjects" who were "... primarily the bodies of deceased African-Americans." Since it was difficult to obtain cadavers legally in the twentieth century, "...professors sought out grave robbers who targeted African-Americans..."

For more information:

Contested Spaces:Examining the Past, Present, and Forgotten at the University of Virginia. The Cadaver Society African-American Workers at the Anatomical Theatre. Accessed 3/22/24.
<https://as7cs3.wixsite.com/curatingthepast/absence-of-spaces>

Subjects for Anatomy Class. Claude Moore Health Sciences Library. Accessed 3/22/24
<http://exhibits.hsl.virginia.edu/anatomical-theatre/subjects-for-anatomy-class/>

Credit to Janet Pearson, a Historical Collections staff member. Originally done under the direction of Joan Echtenkamp Klein, who was the Alvin V. and Nancy Baird Curator for Historical Collections until her untimely death, project support was continued under Dan Cavanaugh, who stepped into Joan's role and position. Anatomical Theatre at the University. Accessed 3/22/24 <http://exhibits.hsl.virginia.edu/anatomical-theatre/credits/>

Keywords

Student life

Travel

Scrapbooks

Black-and-white photographs

Human dissection

Body snatching

University of Virginia. School of Medicine

Virginia Polytechnic Institute
Alaska
Seattle (Wash.)