

A Guide to the Shortt Family Papers, 1869-1928

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A Collection in Special Collections, Kegley Library 2001.11
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History

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Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

2001.11

Language

English

Physical Characteristics

3 folders.

Repository

Special Collections, Kegley Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Donated by Ruth Ann Chitwood in 2001 as part of the W. R. Chitwood Collection.

Preferred Citation

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Biographical Information

Benjamin B. Shortt, a telegraph operator for Western Union Company, and Catherine Gillespie Shortt, a milliner, inculcated in their five children a respect for education. The couple enable the Wythe County School Board to operate a one room school on their property on what is now Fish Hatchery Road. Their oldest daughter Laura Shortt (1864-1945) exemplified the family love of learning; she attended Plumer Memorial College and Peabody Institute in Memphis, Tennessee before returning home to Wytheville in 1895. Laura Shortt purchased Plumer Memorial College in 1897 for \$3,600 from the Presbyterian Church.

She opened Plumer Memorial Female College in the autumn of 1897, operating a boarding school for girls and a coed day school. Her three sisters assisted her with the school. Catherine Gillespie Shortt (1865-1959) taught the primary grades as well as art and Roman history. She attended several art schools in New York City including Cooper Union and offered students instruction in oil, pastel, and watercolor. Alberta Shortt (1869-1954) supervised the primary grades while her younger sister Olive Shortt (1870-1953) managed the kitchen, garden, and custodial duties of the household and school.

In 1914 of 1915, Laura Shortt ceased the boarding school operation of the College but continued the day school until her retirement in 1929. Summer boarders such as Dr. William A. R. Goodwin, proponent of Colonial Williamsburg, provided the sisters with financial support after the closure of the College. In 1948 local entrepreneurs purchased the Plumer College building and converted it into apartments.

Scope and Content

Items in Folder 1, correspondence (1887-1926) includes four letters from correspondents August Bernard of Perforated Stamping Patterns, Joseph C. Shaffer of the University of Virginia Law School, Susie L. Gleaves, and a letter from an unknown student. Folder 2 contains a ledger with diary entries and poems by Laura Shortt and a log kept by telegraph operator Benjamin Shortt. Finally, Folder 3, contains a roll book and diary used as a records book of Plumer Memorial College students, notes on weather, and notes on local events.

Contents List

Folder 1. Correspondence. 1887-1926.

Extent

4 items.

Letter. August Bernard, Perforated Stamping Patterns, New York City to Benjamin B. Shortt. 18 March 1887.

Folder-item 1:1

Extent

1 p.

Scope and Content

Letter regarding order.

Letter, Joseph C. Shaffer, University of Virginia Law Department, Charlottesville, Virginia to Catherine Gillespie Shortt, Plumer College, Wytheville, Virginia. 31 October 1902.

Folder-item 1:2

Extent

3 p.

Scope and Content

Re: memories of his years at Plumer College.

Postcard, Susie L. Gleaves to Shortt family. 25 December 1895.

Folder-item 1:3

Extent

Postcard with floral decoration.

Scope and Content

Christmas greeting of "Jerusalem, Blumen von Bethanien."

Letter, [unknown] to Laura Shortt. 7 May 1926.

Folder-item 1:4

Extent

1 p.

Scope and Content

Former student requests help with registration at the College of William and Mary.

Folder 2. Ledger. 1869, 1878-1879.**Extent**

Ledger.

Scope and Content

This is a ledger with diary entries and poems by Laura Shortt as well as a log kept by telegraph operator Benjamin B. Shortt. The first pages of the ledger contain poems (1878, 1879) and compositions by Laura Shortt. These are followed by diary entries "Events of Interest" compiled by Laura Shortt for 1938-1942. The middle portion of the ledger is blank. The last section contains log entries by Benjamin B. Shortt who worked for Western Union Telegraph Company. One portion of the log he wrote while stationed at Bristol, Virginia in January to February 1869; these are more of a personal diary entry. The latter entries Shortt made, from August to September 1869, deal with mechanical and technical information regarding telegraph lines and equipment.

Folder 3. Roll Book and Diary. 1918-1938.**Extent**

1 item.

Scope and Content

This Roll Book and Diary contains a record book with diary entries and enrollments of Plumer Memorial College students. Diary entries of "Incidents" are brief notes on weather, local and national news, and local deaths written by Laura Shortt. Interspersed with these entries are enrollment of students for each school year, divided into four quarters.