Abstract: The journal of Dr. Stanley Hart Osborn describes his work with the Red Cross in Serbia and Montenegro during World War I. The journal is a carbon copy of a typescript of the daily journal kept by Osborn from May 1915 to Jan 1916 and relates his experiences as a member of a neutral organization during the war. The journal also features over 300 photographs taken by Osborn, corresponding to events in the diary.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 097, Item 056
Title: A diary of the American Red Cross Sanitary Commission to Serbia 1915-16
Inclusive Dates: 1915-1917
Extent: 1 v. (576 p.) ; 29 cm.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 097, Item 056, Stanley H. Osborn, A Diary of the American Red Cross Sanitary Commission to Serbia 1915-16, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
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Biographical Note

Stanley Hart Osborn was born on May 3, 1891, in Peabody, Massachusetts, to Charles L. Osborn and Alice C. Hart. He studied medicine at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and received his M.D. in 1915 from the Harvard-MIT School for Health Officers. In May of 1915, he joined a group of doctors and sanitary engineers volunteering with the Red Cross to fight typhus and other epidemic diseases in Serbia and Montenegro. The volunteers were organized by Osborn's professor at MIT, William Thompson Sedgwick.

Osborn returned home from Europe in January 1916. He was appointed a deputy commissioner of the Connecticut Health Department in 1920, and he served as the State Health Commissioner of Connecticut from 1922 to 1959. Osborn died on June 7, 1975, at the age of 84.

Sources:


Additional biographical information derived from the collection.
Scope and Content Note

The journal of Dr. Stanley Hart Osborn describes his work with the Red Cross in Serbia and Montenegro during World War I. The journal is a carbon copy of a typescript of the daily journal kept by Osborn from May 1915 to Jan 1916 and relates his experiences as a member of a neutral organization during the war. The journal also features over 300 photographs taken by Osborn, corresponding to events in the diary.

This copy of Stanley Hart Osborn's journal is bound in cloth-covered boards and contains an autograph dedication to MIT professor William Thompson Sedgwick. In response to a 1915 report from the Rockefeller Foundation War Relief Commission, Sedgwick, in concert with the Red Cross, organized a team of sanitary engineers, sanitary inspectors, bacteriologists, biologists, and physicians to fight epidemics of typhus fever, typhoid fever, smallpox, scarlet fever, and cholera in Serbia. The front of the volume contains a picture of these Red Cross volunteers accompanied by a list of the men photographed. A forward describes the purpose of the commission. It also lists the treatment and prevention of the major diseases found in the area.

The text of the journal appears on the recto sides of the pages, which are numbered. The verso sides contain over 300 photographs taken by Osborn. These photographs correspond to events described in the diary and are labeled and captioned accordingly. The photographs depict other Red Cross volunteers, soldiers, citizens of Serbia and Montenegro, various uniforms, modes of transportation, landscapes, buildings, landmarks and tourist attractions, the Serbian's daily life, sanitary work, and battlefields.

The journal entries begin with a description of Osborn's preparations in both New York City and Washington, D.C. He left New York on May 16, 1915, aboard the S. S. Athinai. Osborn describes his passage on the ship including meals, sleeping conditions, amusements, and other anecdotes of the journey. Upon entering the Mediterranean, the ship was stopped for several days in Gibraltar due to war preparations. They then proceeded to Greece. During this time, Osborn spent time sightseeing in both Spain and Greece.

Osborn began his Red Cross service in Pech and Jacovitza, Montenegro, on June 18, 1915. The journal describes the cleaning, fumigating, sterilizing, and whitewashing of local hospitals and public building as well vaccinations, bathing facilities, and other sanitation work. Osborn also describes his meals, accommodations, travel between towns, and general living conditions. During this time, Osborn heard numerous rumors about the ongoing war and saw some local military activity.

At the beginning of August, Osborn was reassigned to Mitrovitza, Serbia. With the help of work gangs of Austrian prisoners, the Red Cross organized similar sanitation projects to those in Montenegro. Osborn also describes the use and repairs of several Ford automobiles, including an accident on September 5, in which his car fell down a twenty-five-foot cliff. Osborn also worked in several other Serbian cities including Skopje, Djevdjeli, and Doyran.

In October 1915, Osborn was in Skopje when the Serbian army retreated and the Bulgarians captured the city. Although the Red Cross workers were neutral, Osborn did get caught between the lines during the Battle of Skopje. He describes what it feels like to be under fire. After the invasion, Osborn treated many of the wounded soldiers. The Bulgarians also gave the Red Cross permission to continue the sanitation work they began under the Serbians.
Osborn noted that the diary proper ends on December 17 after he finally received permission to leave Serbia. The remainder of the account is from a pocket diary and letters home. As Osborn noted in the forward, security issues during the war prevented him from taking any photographs of his journey home.

Upon reaching Sofia, Bulgaria, Osborn boarded a train to Lom Palanka. From there he traveled by boat up the Danube to Austria. After spending Christmas day in Vienna, he traveled through Switzerland to Paris, France. On December 31, Osborn sailed from Bordeaux home to the United States.

An appendix at the back of the volume contains sections headed "The Songs of the American Red Cross Sanitary Commission to Serbia During 1915," "Members of My Unit in Montenegro and Serbia," and "Equipment for Each Member."

A map titled "La Division Administrative du Royaume de Serbie" by the Institut Cartographique M. Milo evi, Belgrade, has been removed to the oversize section of manuscripts. The cities visited by Osborn have been marked and the countries are labeled in English.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Corporate Names
Athinai (Ship)
Rockefeller Foundation. War Relief Commission.

Topical Terms
Physicians--Diaries.
Epidemics--Serbia--Prevention--History--20th century.
Sanitary engineering--Serbia--History--20th century.
Sanitation--Serbia--History--20th century.
Cholera--Serbia--History--20th century.
Dysentery--Serbia--History--20th century.
Typhoid fever--Serbia--History--20th century.
Typhoid fever--Vaccination--Serbia--History--20th century.
Typhus fever--Serbia--History--20th century.
Vaccination--Serbia--History--20th century.
Voyages and Travels--History--20th century.
World War, 1914-1918.
World War, 1914-1918--Campaigns--Balkan Peninsula.
World War, 1914-1918--Hospitals--Serbia.
World War, 1914-1918--Prisoners and prisons, Austrian.
World War, 1914-1918--Serbia.

Geographic Names
Montenegro--Description and travel.

Serbia--Description and travel.

Skopje (Macedonia)--Description and travel.

Form/Genre Terms

Diaries.

Photographs.

Occupation

Physicians.

Sanitary engineers.

Related Materials in Other Repositories


Related Materials in this Repository

This item forms part of MSS 097 Diaries, Journals, and Ships' Logs collection.

Publication Note

Detailed Description of the Collection

A diary of the American Red Cross Sanitary Commission to Serbia 1915-16, 1915-1917 [Item 056]

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