Abstract: The Miriam E. Welliver travel journal documents this Pennsylvania school teacher's month-long, 5,100 mile automobile trip across 19 states and Canada via handwritten journal entries, black-and-white photographs, postcards, telegrams, plant specimens, pamphlets, and other miscellaneous materials.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 097, Item 172

Creator: Welliver, Miriam E.

Title: Miriam E. Welliver travel diary

Inclusive Dates: 1934

Extent: 1 v.; 18 cm.

Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 097, Item 172, Miriam E. Welliver travel diary, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Item 172: Shelved in SPEC MSS 097

Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/

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Biographical Note

Pennsylvania school teacher Miriam E. Welliver was born to George W. and Sara Eva Welliver in or near Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, in May of 1898. The youngest of six surviving Welliver children, Miriam Welliver began work as a public school teacher some time prior to 1918. The Report of the Proceedings of the Pennsylvania State Educational Association for 1919 lists Welliver as a teacher in the borough of Catawissa, Pennsylvania. In 1934 Welliver left her home in Danville, Pennsylvania, to embark on a 5,100 mile, month-long automobile tour of 19 states and Canada.

Sources:


Additional information derived from the collection.
Scope and Content Note

The Miriam E. Welliver travel journal documents this Pennsylvania school teacher's month-long, 5,100 mile automobile trip across 19 states and Canada via handwritten journal entries, black-and-white photographs, postcards, telegrams, plant specimens, pamphlets, and other miscellaneous materials. Welliver departed from Danville, Pennsylvania, on June 11, 1934, and returned home on July 13. She traveled with two women and two boys, identified in the volume as Anne, Julianne, Charles, and Buddy. It is unclear what relationship existed between these individuals, however Welliver frequently refers to the group of travelers as the "Montour Five," likely reflecting their shared home county in Pennsylvania, Montour County, of which Danville is the county seat.

Welliver thoroughly documented this trip, recording both anecdotes and stories from life on the road, as well as documenting statistics such as daily miles traveled, cost of gasoline, oil, and tolls, number of states traversed, bodies of water crossed or visited, flora and fauna sighted along the way, and, occasionally, meal expenses. The journey took the party through much of the eastern half of the United States. Starting in Danville, the group went south through Gettysburg, West Virginia, Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, before ending their southward travels with stops in Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Orlando, Florida. In Florida they had plans to visit friends and/or family in St. Cloud, Florida, however several days of rain and bad weather made the roads "thoroughly impassable." From Florida the group traveled west, stopping to swim in the Gulf of Mexico and passing through or near Mobile, Alabama; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Natchez, Mississippi. While in Baton Rouge the group toured the then-new state capitol building and Welliver commented on the building's beauty, granite, and cost. Welliver also despised about the terrible state of roads in Mississippi. After traveling north through Arkansas, Tennessee (Memphis), and Missouri, the group spent over a week in the greater Chicago region visiting with cousins in Sycamore, Illinois, and attending the Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago.

Welliver's experiences at the Century of Progress are central to this journal and are documented extensively and exhaustively in the second half of the volume. Though no photographs from the fair are included, numerous clippings, postcards, programs, and other ephemera complement Welliver's detailed written accounts of her time at the fair. In addition to listing and reviewing the buildings, exhibits, shows, and demonstrations she visited (including, among others, the Firestone exhibition building, the Federal building, the Court of States, the Travel and Transport Building, and the Art Institute of Chicago), Welliver also wrote about the theft of her pocket book, her sore feet, and the weather. All-in-all this portion of the journal provides a wonderful first-person account of a woman's experiences at the Century of Progress.

After completing their visit to the fair and their Illinois cousins, the "Montour Five" drove across Indiana and through Paw Paw and Detroit, Michigan, ultimately crossing into Ontario, Canada, stopping in Malahide, Ontario, for Sunday church services. From Malahide, the group continued on to Niagara Falls where they stayed at the Clifton Tourist Camp. Numerous photographs document the group's sightseeing at both the Canadian and American sides of Niagara Falls. On the final leg of their journey the group traveled through New York state, visiting Rochester, Alexandria Bay, and Johnstown, with the sights of Alexandria Bay and the 1000 Islands regions of the St. Lawrence Seaway being particularly well documented. From New York
the group traveled home passing through New Jersey and Centralia and Catawissa, Pennsylvania, before reaching Danville.

Miriam Welliver's travel journal has much to offer the researcher. Those interested in early twentieth-century automobile travel will find these reminiscences of interest given Welliver's frequent commentary on the state of the roads they traveled and sights they witnessed along the way, as well as her detailed documentation of miles traveled, flat tires, oil changes, and overall vehicle maintenance concerns. Additionally, the timing of this journey and the membership of its party make this journal somewhat unique among other travel logs of the era. As already noted, it is unclear how the three adult women and two boys that took part in this journey are related. Similarly, it is unclear how or why this independent group of women decided to take such a large journey while much of the country was still experiencing the effects of the Great Depression. The photographs and commentary offered by Welliver along the road provide a wonderfully rich glimpse at life in various regions of the United States as seen through the eyes of a Pennsylvania schoolteacher. The journal offers evidence of period social and cultural mores and practices, and documents assumptions about race (especially in the South), religious beliefs, and gender roles. Finally, this volume preserves many items collected by Welliver on her road trip including postcards, telegrams, plant specimens, Century of Progress memorabilia, and other assorted ephemera, making it a wonderful resource for individuals interested in the material culture of American automobile travel.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Welliver, Miriam E.

Corporate Names

Century of Progress International Exposition (1933-1934 : Chicago, Ill.)

Topical Terms

Automobile travel--East (U.S.)--History--20th century--Sources.
Automobile travel--Southern states--History--20th century--Sources.
Automobile travel--Canada--History--20th century--Sources.
Tourist camps, hostels, etc.--20th century.
Women automobile drivers--20th century.
Tourism--20th century.
Women travelers--20th century.
Exhibitions--United States--History--20th century--Sources.

Geographic Names

Pennsylvania--Description and travel.
Maryland--Description and travel.
Virginia--Description and travel.
West Virginia--Description and travel.
North Carolina--Description and travel.
South Carolina--Description and travel.
Georgia--Description and travel.
Florida--Description and travel.
Alabama--Description and travel.
Mississippi--Description and travel.
Louisiana--Description and travel.
Tennessee--Description and travel.
Arkansas--Description and travel.
Missouri--Description and travel.
Illinois--Description and travel.
Indiana--Description and travel.
Michigan--Description and travel.
New York--Description and travel.
New Jersey--Description and travel.
Ontario--Description and travel.

**Form/Genre Terms**

Diaries.
Plant material.
Specimens.
Postcards.
Black-and-white photographs.
Telegrams.

**Related Materials in this Repository**

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

Miriam E. Welliver travel diary, 1934 [Item 172]

1 volume