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Penner, William Hazel, 1914-1990 (MSS 759)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
Department of Library Special Collections
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

Descriptive Inventory

MSS 759 PENNER, William Hazel, 1914-1990

1 box. 9 folders. 154 items. 1942-1948. Originals.

SC2024.11.1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

William H. Penner (also known as “Willie” or “Bill”), the son of John Wesley Penner and Maggie (Holman) Penner, was born in Warren County, Kentucky on 8 September 1914. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in September 1942 and trained at Camp Butner, North Carolina and at Camp Stoneman in Pittsburg, California. In June 1943, he was sent to New Guinea. He was discharged from the Army late in 1945.

On 29 November 1952, Penner married Mable Ellen Cox (1909-1992) and the couple made their home in Bristow, Warren County, Kentucky. Penner died on 11 February 1990 and is interred in Fairview Cemetery, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection consists almost entirely of letters of William H. Penner to his parents and brother Robert, written during Penner’s World War II military service. Also included are a few other letters of family and friends, written to Penner’s mother Maggie.

Penner’s letters span October 1942 to November 1945, and cover his training and deployment to New Guinea. He briefly describes his training at Camp Butner in North Carolina, which appears to involve bridge-building skills, but is circumspect about his duties in New Guinea, most likely because of the Army’s censorship practices. He notes (Folder 3) that soldiers’ mail is being read, and two of his letters in Folder 4 have lines excised by the censor. Penner reports to his parents on mail he has received, asks about other family in military service, and expresses interest in the progress of farm work at home. His letters hint at his father’s difficulties in maintaining his crops and dairy production with one son in military service, burdens which become more acute after Penner’s older brother Robert dies in June 1945. Penner attempts to get an early discharge in order to return home, but the Japanese surrender and the military’s point system put him on the path to repatriation in November.

Other items in the collection (Folder 9) include letters to Penner’s mother Maggie from her niece Bonnie Baird, serving with the Women’s Army Corps at a hospital in Denver, Colorado. She briefly describes her nursing duties and her liking for Denver, where she considers staying after leaving the service and obtaining a divorce from her husband.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	William H. Penner	1942-1948	154 items
Folder 1	Inventory and biographical data		4 items
Folder 2	Letters to family	Oct.-Dec. 1942	13 items
Folder 3	Letters to family	Jan.-July 1943	24 items
Folder 4	Letters to family	Aug.-Dec. 1943	26 items
Folder 5	Letters to family	Jan.-June 1944	27 items
Folder 6	Letters to family	July-Dec. 1944	25 items
Folder 7	Letters to family	Jan.-June 1945	14 items
Folder 8	Letters to family	July-Nov. 1945	12 items
Folder 9	Other letters to Maggie Penner	1944-1948	9 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS PENNER, William Hazel, 1942-1948
759 1914-1990

Letters of William H. Penner ("Willie" or "Bill") to his parents and brother in Warren County, Kentucky, written during his World War II military service in North Carolina, California and New Guinea. Includes a few other letters to Penner's mother Maggie.

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SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Baird, Bonnie Holman (White), 1901-1993 – Correspondence B1,F6,9
Baird, Clifton Eugene, 1926-2016 – Mentioned B1,F6,9
Lockhart, Robert, 1920-1999 B1,F9
Penner, John Wesley, 1885-1966 – Letters to B1,F2-8
Penner, Maggie (Holman), 1884-1965 – Letters to B1,F2-8
Penner, Robert Brown, 1908-1945 – Letters to B1,F2-7

Penner, Robert Brown, 1908-1945 – Relating to B1,F9
Ray, Mrs. F. W., b. 1895 B1,F9
World War II, 1939-1945 – Censorship B1,F3,4
World War II, 1939-1945 – Military life, 1942-1945
World War II, 1939-1945 – New Guinea, 1943-1945
World War II, 1939-1945 – V-mail B1,F3,4,5
World War II, 1939-1945 – Women’s Army Corps – Relating to B1,F9

Niedermeier 02/13/2024