MSS.0362. James A. Matthews collection finding aid

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Title: James A. Matthews collection
Collection No: MSS.0362
Extent: 0.25 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1914-1946

Abstract: This collection consists of photographs, newspaper clippings, poems, and personal correspondence of James A. Matthews, a government field auditor during World War I and certified accountant in Memphis, Tennessee.

Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: James A. Matthews collection, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis

Publication date: 2023 August
Biographical Information

James Alexander Matthews, Jr. was born on June 24, 1889, in Shelby County, Tennessee to James Alexander Matthews, Sr. He had one brother and one sister. Matthews, Jr. was a government field auditor in the Machine and Repair Division for the Department of Military Aeronautics at Taylor Field in Montgomery, Alabama during World War I. The War Department established the Aircraft and Engine Repair Depot #3 in Montgomery on the site of the former Wright Brothers flying school at Taylor Airfield. Matthews was also an amateur aviator. He was drafted during the war in 1917, however he was rejected for aviation duties by the government for poor eyesight. He eventually gained commission, non-flying status as a lieutenant in the Division of Military Aeronautics in October 1918.

Before his military service, he worked for E. A. Leathem and Co., certified public accountants in Memphis, Tennessee, as a Sr. Accountant. In 1920 after his military service, he started an accounting firm, Wilson, Cameron & Matthews with Robert Wilson and S. A. Cameron in Memphis, TN. A few years later in 1923, he launched his own accounting firm, James A. Matthews and Co., also located in Memphis, TN.

He served on the State Board of Accountancy for Tennessee starting in 1939 and was eventually a former president. He was a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and former president of the Memphis chapter of Certified Public Accountants. He was an active member of the Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce. Matthews had been treasurer of the Memphis Quarterback Club since 1947 and he was secretary-treasurer of the Memphis Football Association. In 1938, he was made an honorary member of the University of Tennessee Alumni Association of Memphis in recognition of “adoption” of the college and support of the Tennessee Volunteers.

Matthews audited books for the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. for many years at plants from Mobile, Alabama to Gary, Indiana. During the 1950s, he was a director of the Coca-Cola Bottling Works of Lexington, Kentucky, director of Coca-Cola Bottling Inc. of Mobile, Alabama, and was on the board of the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. at Somerset, KY. He eventually was elected to serve on the board of directors of the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1957.

Matthews’ wife, Ann K. Jones Matthews, died at the age of sixty, after two years of ill health, on June 12, 1956. James A. Matthews, Jr. died at the age of eighty-one on November 23, 1970, in a local hospital after a short illness. At the time of his death, he was well known as an accountant and sportsman. Both Matthews and his wife were buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Memphis, TN.

Scope and contents

This collection consists of photographs, newspaper clippings, poems, and personal correspondence of James A. Matthews. The correspondence deals mainly with Mr. Matthews’
dealings as a civilian employee government auditor and efforts by himself and others close to
him, to secure Matthews a commission as a government auditor. Of particular interest is a letter
dated October 12, 1918, written to Mr. Matthews by a soldier who describes his experience
fighting in “The Battle of the Argonne Forest” during World War I.

Subject terms

Accounting firms--Tennessee
Auditor.
United States. War Department. Division of Military Aeronautics.
World War I (1914-1918)

Inventory

Box 1
Folder
1 Correspondence: 1914 July 20-1918 August 15 (26).
2 Correspondence: 1918 September 6-1919 April 1 (23).
3 1. Photographs: James A. Matthews and others posing near airplanes, cars, horses and
buildings at Taylor Field, Montgomery, Ala., circa 1918 (8); Matthews, Brig. General
3. Newspaper clippings: about James Matthews and Co. accounting firm in Memphis,
TN, unknown publications, and unknown dates (2).
4. Copy of WW1 poems: “The Anxious Dead”, “America’s Answer”, and “Poppies”,
pgs. 43-44 of “Captain Billy’s Whiz Bang”, unknown date.
4 Letter: from a soldier J. Earl[e] Patterson to James A. Matthews mentioning “The Battle
of the Argonne Forest”, 1918 October 12 (1).
5 Copies of The Commercial Appeal articles: regarding James A. Matthews and his