



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Madeleine Neel diaries

1914-1937

MssCol 22989

Compiled by Weatherly Stephan, 2014

Summary

Creator: Neel, Madeleine

Title: Madeleine Neel diaries

Date: 1914-1937

Size: 2.31 linear feet (6 boxes)

Source: Gift of Peter Martland, 2014.

Abstract: Madeleine Neel (circa 1880-1937) was a British immigrant to the United States and the wife of Henri Charles Neel. The Madeleine Neel diaries date from 1914 to 1937 and contain daily entries that document Neel's social life, housekeeping, family events, and reactions to current events in the United States and Europe during World War I, the Great Depression, and the interwar period.

Preferred citation: Madeleine Neel diaries, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Weatherly Stephan, 2014

Creator History

Madeleine Neel (circa 1880-1937) was a British immigrant to the United States. She was the wife of Henri Charles Neel (1889-1957), a French immigrant who studied romance languages at Columbia University and earned a Master of Arts in 1911. Henri Neel then taught at several academic institutions in the Northeastern United States, including a secondary school in Morristown, New Jersey; Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York; and Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Custodial History

Prior to Peter Martland's possession, the diaries were held by Charlotte Erickson, Mellon Professor of History at Cambridge University, until her death in 2008. Erickson's acquisition of the diaries is not known.

Scope and Content Note

The Madeleine Neel diaries date from 1914 to 1937 and consist of 22 volumes. The diaries document the experiences of a British immigrant living in the United States during World War I, the Great Depression, and the interwar period. Each volume covers one year and contains near complete one page entries for each day of the year, recounting Neel's daily housekeeping activities, her husband's work, news of her family in Britain, social engagements, local weather, and her reactions to current events. Most volumes feature address lists and household expenses in the front and back of each book. In addition to diary entries, the volumes also hold news clippings, poems, obituaries, ticket stubs, telegraphs, recipes, photographs, and programs for music and theatre performances interleaved or pasted onto individual entry pages.

The collection covers the periods in which Neel and her husband resided in New York City; Morristown, New Jersey; Syracuse and Onondaga, New York; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Neel's varied experiences—of being an immigrant, a house wife, and separated from her family abroad—are briefly touched upon in one or two sentences in many entries. Her enduring connection to Britain and Europe during periods of tumult is evident, as she discusses news from abroad reported through newspapers and letters from family, with her personal reactions to these events often included. Neel's travels to Europe are also detailed. Her daily decisions in running her household are shown with expense lists, recipes, notes on chores, and her descriptions of meals prepared for the day. The Neels' active social life is illustrated in programs and ticket stubs of events attended as well as discussion of their visits with neighbors, colleagues, and fellow church members. Neel's entries also trace the arc of her husband's career as a teacher, translator, and professor and the daily tasks he undertook with these jobs.

Diaries for 1917 and 1918 are not present.

Arrangement: The diaries are arranged chronologically by year.

Key Terms

Subjects

British -- United States
French -- United States
Housekeeping -- United States -- 20th century
Immigrants -- United States
World War, 1914-1918

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Diaries

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.) -- Social life and customs
Onondaga (N.Y. : Town) -- Social life and customs
Philadelphia (Pa.) -- Social life and customs
Syracuse (N.Y.) -- Social life and customs

Names

Neel, Henri Charles

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-4 1914-1919
- b. 2 f. 1-4 1920-1923
- b. 3 f. 1-4 1924-1927
- b. 4 f. 1-4 1928-1931
- b. 5 f. 1-4 1932-1935
- b. 6 f. 1-2 1936-1937