

MSS. Collection #26

Susanne B. Hoskins Papers, ca. 1860-1949 [bulk 1907-1921].
3 boxes (40 folders), ca. 485 items.

INTRODUCTION

This collection focuses on the career endeavors and occupational travels of Susanne B. Hoskins, who worked as nurse for the American Red Cross in France during World War I and throughout the U.S. after the war. The collection includes personal and family correspondence, literary compositions, military documents, a booklet of family genealogy, printed matter, and photographs (loose and album form). Most of the collection is composed of the photographic items and wartime correspondence of Susanne Hoskins.

Provenance: The bulk of this collection was donated by Katherine Hoskins of Summerfield, North Carolina, who was a cousin of Susanne Breckinridge Hoskins. It was assigned the accession numbers 1981.24.1-11. Also included are relevant materials removed from the J.A. Hoskins Family Papers (Mss. Coll. #174). They were donated by Margaret Hoskins Cecil, a daughter of Benjamin H. Hoskins Sr. and niece of Katherine Hoskins, in November 2004 and assigned the accession number 2004.56.3.

Processing: This collection was originally processed by Martha G. Hogan, and the finding aid was completed in December 1983. The materials removed from the J.A. Hoskins Family Papers were incorporated and the finding aid was updated by volunteer Ann Koppen in March 2022.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Susanne Breckinridge Hoskins (1871-1960) was born in Versailles, Kentucky, the daughter of Civil War Colonel Jesse E. Hoskins and Theodosia Mosby Hoskins. Nothing is known of her early years, with primary background material available beginning at the approximate age of thirty-six years. She received nurses' training at the Connecticut Training School for Nurses, New Haven, Connecticut, and was employed from 1915 to mid-1917 at the National Homeopathic Hospital in Washington, D.C.

During World War I, she served in the American National Red Cross, Children's Bureau, France, in Évian-les-Bains and Lyon, nursing many small children, the sick, and elderly refugees from areas of that country overrun by German forces. Her service tenure began there in September 1917, and it ended after peace was declared in 1918 and American militarized relief forces were evacuated from France in January 1919. She continued her association with the American Red Cross late into the 1940s.

After the war, Susanne Hoskins was employed at various institutions throughout the United States, including: Gordon-Keller Memorial Hospital, Tampa, Florida; Mary Lanning Hospital, Hastings, Nebraska; Passavant Memorial Hospital, Jacksonville, Illinois; and Mecklenburg Hospital, Plainfield, New Jersey. Her moves were frequent, apparently coinciding with those made by her sister, Letitia Hoskins Menge, in an effort to be within proximity of each other. As a

nurse, she was efficient and quite capable, most often holding supervisory positions where employed. She returned to Guilford County in the late 1930s and was involved in local private-duty nursing, taking nursing calls at Wesley Long Hospital and with several city physicians.

It is notable that Susanne Hoskins was a descendant of Joseph Hoskins, a Quaker who settled in Guilford County in 1780, having migrated from Pennsylvania. He acquired land on which the Battle of Guilford Courthouse was later to be fought during the American Revolution; his home place would also come to shelter the headquarters of Lord Cornwallis, British commander of this military expedition. Through the years, the Hoskins family figured prominently in the Summerfield area, prospering as farmers and merchants to local trade.

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

This collection primarily reflects the nature of Susanne Hoskins' career as a nurse, given to public and private service in the early twentieth century in the United States and in France during World War I.

The bulk of the collection consists of personal correspondence and photographs; it focuses on educational and medical data, and social activities arising from Miss Hoskins' various terms of employment as a supervisor of nurses in hospitals and agencies where she worked. Of particular interest are letters to her sister, Letitia Hoskins Menge, written during her tenure in France as a relief nurse devoted to the care of refugees from war-torn regions of that country. From her diaries and daybooks are taken accounts of her work there and elsewhere throughout 1913, 1917-19, and 1941-45; medical practices and patient cases are well-documented therein. In addition, information from the 1917-19 diary was compiled in manuscript form and, apparently, was sent to the *Ladies Home Journal* for possible publication.

The strength of the collection is found in Susanne Hoskins' candid and imaginative descriptions of the lively career and social activities of an unmarried and well-traveled nurse through the early and mid-years of the 1900s. Scenes of wartime France, early photos of surgical procedures (albums of New Haven and Washington years), family Civil War correspondence, and several handwritten notes from Winston Churchill (1919, 1930) mark the highlights of her personal papers. However, there exists a continuing lack of biographical data and no reference to important features such as proposed publication of the manuscript, "On the Outskirts: The Diary of a War Baby Nurse" or the receiving of letters from a personage of such renown as Churchill.

The less important items are found in the series of printed matter, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous objects, although a spontaneous sketch by a French artist, a patient under Miss Hoskins's care, is a highlight here. And all these items demonstrate the openness of Susanne Hoskins' reflections as a participant in service to the communities of her residences before, during, and after World War I.

Not related to Susanne Hoskins, specifically, but an excellent historical document, is the seventeen-page booklet entitled *Biographical and Family History Sketch of Joseph Addison Hoskins*, which traces the Hoskins family from 15th century Wales to 1917 Summerfield.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**1. Correspondence. 9 folders (158 items). 1863-1957.**

The correspondence primarily consists of personal letters, the largest portion of which Susanne Hoskins wrote to her sister, Letitia Hoskins Menge, from France during World War I (1917-1919). Also included are seven letters from her cousin Kate in the post-World War II years, as well as five family letters (1863) from Union army officer Jesse Hoskins to his wife Theodosia and son Ellis from battle positions in Tennessee. Others within the series are signed notes from Winston Churchill (1919, 1930), two handwritten and one typed, in reference to his health and an interview between the two on one of his visits to New York City; letters from friends made among American Red Cross personnel and nursing cohorts through the years; letters of reference attesting to her nursing and supervisory skills; letters of thanks from a physician and a patient; postal cards (gravure, watercolor, print); a Xeroxed military greeting card (1943); and miscellaneous unmatched covers.

2. Military Documents. 1 folder (7 items). ca. 1917-1919.

This series of official papers includes a transport pass and military identification with a snapshot of “Susanne Hoskins” as carrier; both were issued by the French Ministry of War during World War I. Receipt of a request for a French identification card is also included. A military order from the Headquarters of American Expeditionary Forces authorizes Susanne Hoskins to travel from Paris to the hospital in Évian-les-Bains. Other documents (with one duplication) are military orders for return transportation to the United States (1919) issued by the American Red Cross Bureau of Personnel and the Headquarters of American Expeditionary Forces, respectively.

3. Diaries & Daybooks. 7 folders (7 items). ca. 1913, 1917-1949.

The diaries and daybooks focus on Susanne Hoskins’ nursing career in New Haven and Middletown, Connecticut; Washington, D.C.; and various locations in France during World War I. Earliest dates denote medical treatment and patient care; later accounts reflect the nature of the day-to-day life of the author as a “war baby” nurse in France, and the domestic life of a single woman and private duty nurse in Greensboro (1941-1944). Many personal notes cover the subjects of classical art, drama, music, literature, politics, and medicine. Also included are six loose diary sheets (1981.24.2-D); two copies of Susanne Hoskins’ diary of her adventures as an American Red Cross nurse in France (1917-1919) in manuscript form, one handwritten and the other [a typescript with a cover letter to the magazine staff of *Ladies Home Journal*, requesting possible publication](#); a return address from the magazine taken from a mailing cover; and a review of Morley’s *Kitty Foyle*, presumably by Susanne Hoskins.

4. Printed Matter. 2 folders (15 items). 1890-1949.

The first folder of printed materials contains Susanne Hoskins’s nursing school diploma, two nurse’s certificates of registration (1908, 1945), and multiple certificates relating primarily to her foreign service tenure with the American Red Cross, and attesting to her capabilities and

efficiency as a nurse and supervisor. Cards indicate her membership in three nursing organizations (1948-1949): the American National Red Cross, the Greensboro Nurses' Private Duty Section, and the American Nurses Association. A United States pension certificate (1890), belonged to her mother, Theodosia Hoskins, and notes the Civil War service of her father, Jesse E. Hoskins. Also included in this folder are a New York playbill (1901) and a program from a benefit concert in France (1918). The second folder in the series contains a seventeen-page booklet entitled *Biographical and Family History Sketch of Joseph Addison Hoskins* (Greensboro: Jos. J. Stone and Co., Printers, 1917), which traces the forebears and progeny of Joseph Addison Hoskins, who lived in Guilford County's Summerfield area and shared ancestral background with Susanne Hoskins.

5. Newspaper Clippings. 1 folder (20 items). ca. 1918-1946.

These clippings are taken, for the most part, from unidentified sources, with the exceptions being two letters to the editor of the *Greensboro Daily News* written by Susanne Hoskins. Duplicate copies of a letter dated May 28, 1944, address the religious objection of Quakers to war service and their active participation with her in relief efforts in World War I France. The other letter to the editor, dated March 17, 1945, recounts the thrilling liberation of Lyon, France. Other items include duplicates of an article from *The Washington Star* on April 2, 1918, concerning Susanne Hoskins' work as an American nurse aiding the "repatrias" in Évian-les-Bains, France; and a humorous clipping with a snapshot of Professor O.J. Coffin of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Journalism (1946?). Miscellaneous items denote the social activities at various hospitals where she was employed throughout her nursing career; playful anecdotes, cartoons, and poetry are likewise found herein.

6. Miscellaneous Items. 4 folders (28 items). 1911-1960.

A charcoal sketch of a World War I French soldier artist in 1916, given to Susanne Hoskins in thanks for her care of his broken leg, is the highlight of this series (6:4). Of interest are a draft of a brief obituary for Susanne Hoskins by her cousin Kate; a hospital report from 1917 in France; three sheets of American Red Cross stationery from Saint-Cyr-au-Mont-d'Or, France; and four Republique Francais postage stamps (ca. 1917). Also included (and housed elsewhere) are three small souvenir scarves (American and British flags) and decorative pin. Additional folder contents consist of financial receipts relative to Susanne Hoskins' occupational travel and participation in various nursing associations during World War I and in the late 1940s, as well as a deed of trust for land in Greensboro. Scrapbook contents include items of personal note: a magazine clipping regarding professional data of Susanne Hoskins' brother-in-law, Dr. George A. Menge; cartoon sketches drawn by her sister; poems, limericks, and cartoons from magazines; and an invitational calling card from a family in France (1918).

7. Photographic Materials. 16 folders (ca. 250 items). ca. 1860-1945.

The materials in this series range from loose photos of Susanne Hoskins' tenure as a Red Cross nurse in World War I France to albums reflecting her nursing education in New Haven, Connecticut; employment at the National Homeopathic Hospital in Washington, D.C.; and employment at the Gordon-Keller Memorial Hospital in Tampa, Florida. Early twentieth century

surgical procedures are clearly pictured, as are patients and staff of the various institutions. Loose album sheets of scenes of Tampa and the United States Naval Hospital are featured; a carte de visite album of tintypes and daguerreotypes displays family portraits, as do several snapshots (ca. 1870, ca. 1890). Scenes of the care of the repatriated children and adults in France are evident, along with snapshots of American Red Cross nursing personnel and scenery of the French countryside.

FOLDER LISTING

Series	Folder	Contents
1	1	Correspondence -- Family (1863-1949)
	2	Correspondence -- Winston Churchill (1919, 1930)
	3	Correspondence -- S.B. Hoskins, Incoming (1917-1918)
	4	Correspondence -- S.B. Hoskins, Incoming (1920-1923, ca. 1930, 1944-1948, 1957)
	5	Correspondence -- S.B. Hoskins, Outgoing (1917)
	6	Correspondence -- S.B. Hoskins, Outgoing (1918)
	7	Correspondence -- S.B. Hoskins, Outgoing (n.d.)
	8	Correspondence -- Postal and Greeting Cards (1917-1943)
	9	Correspondence -- Miscellaneous Covers
2	1	<u>Military Documents (1917-1919)</u>
3	1	Diaries & Daybooks (ca. 1913)
	2	<u>Diaries & Daybooks (1917-1918)</u>
	3	Diaries & Daybooks (1927-1928)
	4	Diaries & Daybooks (1944-1949)
	5	Diaries & Daybooks -- Manuscript
	6	<u>Diaries & Daybooks -- Typescript</u>
	7	Diaries & Daybooks – Review
4	1	<u>Printed Matter -- General (1890-1949)</u>
	2	Printed Matter -- Genealogy (1917)
5	1	Newspaper clippings (1918-1946)
6	1	Miscellaneous -- General (1918-1960)
	2	Miscellaneous -- Financial Items (1911-1949)
	3	Miscellaneous -- Scrapbook Items (1918-1945)
	4	Miscellaneous -- Drawing (1916)
7	1	Photographs -- Loose snapshots, Hoskins Family (1861-1930)
	2	Photographs -- Loose snapshots, New Haven, Connecticut (1907)
	3	<u>Photographs -- Loose snapshots, France (1917-1918)</u>
	4	Photographs -- Loose snapshots, Tampa, Florida (1920)
	5	Photographs -- Loose snapshots, Medical (1915-1920)
	6	Photographs -- Loose snapshots, Miscellaneous (1907-1935)
	7	Photographs -- Loose snapshots, album source, New Haven, Connecticut (1900-1937)
	8	<u>Photographs -- Loose snapshots, album source, France (1917-1918)</u>

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
7	9	Photographs -- Loose snapshots, album source, Washington, D.C. (1916)
	10	Photographs -- Loose snapshots, daybook source (n.d.)
	11	Photographs -- Album source, Mrs. P.T. Hoskins (ca. 1860-1890)
	12	Photographs -- Album, New Haven, Connecticut (1907)
	13	Photographs -- Album, Washington, D.C. (1915-1917)
	14	Photographs -- Album, France (1917-1918)
	15	Photographs -- Loose album sheets (n.d.)
	16	Photographs -- Photographic postal cards (1918-1920)