

# CHARLES THOMPSON PAPERS, MARCH, 1943-JULY, 1945

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Collection #:  
M 623

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Processed by:  
Paul Brockman  
22 October 1992

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## USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript box, 382 letters (.4 linear feet)

COLLECTION DATES: March, 1943-July, 1945

PROVENANCE: Joseph F. Thompson, Indianapolis, Indiana, 8 October 1992

RESTRICTIONS: None

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: Thompson, *Projects and Expeditions* (D 811.5.T56, 1989).

ACCESSION NUMBER: 93.0014

NOTES: *Projects and Expeditions* contains the transcripts of the letters in this collection with background information.

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## HISTORICAL SKETCH

Charles Frederic Thompson (1895-1989) was born in Attica, Indiana, to veterinarian Louis H. and Elizabeth Tanner Thompson. In 1914 Charles Thompson entered Indiana University Bloomington and developed an interest in medical

research. Three years later, he enlisted in what became U.S. Army Ambulance Service and served as an ambulance driver with the French and American armies in France attaining the rank of Private First Class and receiving the Croix de Guerre for bravery at the front. Thompson returned to Indiana University in 1919 to complete his medical studies. He served as an extern in Long Hospital, Indianapolis, 1922-1923 and surgical resident at Riley Hospital, Indianapolis, 1924-1925. He then entered into his own medical practice in Indianapolis. In 1925 Charles Thompson married Irvne Bridge. They had three children: Charles Bridge, Joseph Francis, and Susanna Tanner. Thompson became a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and qualified as an orthopedic surgeon in 1937.

Before the U.S. entry into World War II, Charles helped organize the 32nd General Hospital out of Indiana University Medical Center. With the unit's mobilization, Thompson was named Chief of the Surgical Service of the 32nd General Hospital with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. After completing training at Camp Bowie in Brownwood, Texas, Thompson and the hospital unit was assigned to administer to wounded soldiers and civilians in England, France, Belgium, and Germany. After the war, Thompson returned to Indianapolis where he performed medical research at Riley, City, and Veterans hospitals and served as Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at Indiana University Medical Center.

Sources: Thompson, *Projects and Expeditions*, pp. vii-viii, 398-402.  
*Indiana Book of Merit*, p.731.

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### **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The collection is comprised of 382 letters written by Charles Thompson from March, 1943-July, 1945 while with the U.S. Army Medical Corps during World War II. Most of the letters were written to his wife, Ila Irvne Bridge Thompson, but there are letters to his children Joseph, Charles, and Susanna in Indianapolis. Letters were written from basic training at Camp Bowie, Texas; on board the transport ship from New Jersey to England; and from U.S. Army hospitals in England, France, Belgium, and Germany. Throughout his letters there are many sketches of the rooms he lived in and other related drawings. Many of the letters written on board ship and in England are on V-Mail (positive reduced copies of letters on microfilm). All the letters are transcribed and annotated in *Projects and Expeditions* (D 811.5 .T56 1989).

In his letters Thompson discusses the rigors of basic training, living conditions at Camp Bowie (March 1943-August 1943), and life back home. Letters written while crossing the North Atlantic (September 1943) describe activities on board a transport ship and family news. Thompson also discusses life and living conditions at the Army hospital near Oxford, England (September 1943-July 1944) as well as sight seeing and discussions of individuals with whom he came into contact or formed friendships. There is also acknowledgment of letters and news received from home. Items contained in letters written from France (July 1944-December 1944) includes a description of the capturing of a German pilot (August 19, 1944), caring for wounded American and Allied soldiers, civilians, and German POW's. There is also discussion of news received from home and living conditions at the hospital. Letters written from Liege, Belgium (December 1944-February 1945) contain comments and advice on family news from home, local living conditions, and the medical care and other relations with the civilian population. The final set of Thompson's letters come from his unit's assignment in Aachen, Germany (February 1945-August 1945). In these letters he describes living conditions among the German people, local travels and sight seeing, news from home and packages shipped, reports on his patients including the types of wounds, operations performed, etc., and the anticipation of returning home near the end and after conclusion of the war in Europe.

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### **BOX AND FOLDER LISTING**

**BOX 1: Correspondence, March, 1943-July, 1945**  
**FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 Correspondence, March, 1943-June, 1943
  - 2 Correspondence, July, 1943
  - 3 Correspondence, August, 1943
  - 4 Correspondence, September, 1943
  - 5 Correspondence, October, 1943
  - 6 Correspondence, November, 1943
  - 7 Correspondence, December, 1943
  - 8 Correspondence, January, 1944
  - 9 Correspondence, February, 1944-March, 1944
  - 10 Correspondence, April, 1944
  - 11 Correspondence, May, 1944
  - 12 Correspondence, June, 1944
  - 13 Correspondence, July, 1944-October, 1944
  - 14 Correspondence, November, 1944-December, 1944
  - 15 Correspondence, January, 1945
  - 16 Correspondence, February, 1945
  - 17 Correspondence, March, 1945
  - 18 Correspondence, April, 1945
  - 19 Correspondence, May, 1945
  - 20 Correspondence, June, 1945
  - 21 Correspondence, July, 1945
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### **CATALOGUING INFORMATION**

**MAIN ENTRY:** Thompson, Charles F. (Charles Frederick), 1895-1989

**SUBJECT ENTRIES:** Thompson, Ila Irvine Bridge

United States. Army. Medical Corps

World War, 1939-1945--Medical care--Europe

World War, 1939-1945--Hospitals--England

World War, 1939-1945--Hospitals--Germany

World War, 1939-1945--Hospitals--France

World War, 1939-1945--Hospitals--Belgium

Medicine, Military--Europe

Hospitals, Military--Europe

Surgery, Military--Europe

Physicians--Indiana--Indianapolis

Soldiers--Indiana--Indianapolis

War--Medical aspects

War--Relief of sick and wounded

Orthopedic surgery

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