

Frank E. Ellwanger Commonplace Book, 1906-1914

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Abstract:

A curious compendium of early 20th Century memorabilia compiling miscellaneous household tidbits of knowledge, medical remedies, scientific inventions and mechanical observations compiled by a citizen of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The collection reflects the years of 1906 to 1914. Personal observations and notations as well as articles clipped from newspapers, magazines and brochures are included. With its various recipes for making home remedies and references to do-it-yourself solutions, the volume compares to a receipt book or commonplace book of an earlier age.

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Creator:

Ellwanger, Frank E. (b. 1875)

Title:

Frank E. Ellwanger Commonplace Book 1906-1914

Restrictions to Access:

This collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation:

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Historical Note:

In an earlier age, the commonplace book or receipt book was a compilation of useful knowledge usually assembled by women responsible for a household out in the country. In this particular case the compiler is a scientifically curious man. The scope of time specifically noted ranges from 1906 to 1914. Mr. Frank E. Ellwanger, the creator of this compendium, was a long time resident of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The volume notes his personal four resident addresses as well as other addresses of people he seems to have known in Philadelphia. The compilation is composed of a plethora of handy household hints, medical remedies and cures, formulas for various products, mechanical drawings and designs of useful appliances, engineering observations, and economical improvements to many existing appliances of the early 20th century. Also noted are Pennsylvania localities beyond Philadelphia such as a description of a water airtight cooler as seen at the Allentown Fair in 1906 or finding a good source of dry yeast in Hazelton, Pennsylvania and a visit to St. Luke's Hospital (Bethlehem) for poison ivy treatment. Among the many hints and tidbits of information and recommendations are recipes for hair growth stimulant, a diabetes cure, a kidney disease remedy, skin whitening elixir, purifying tainted meat and water, wart and mole removal (tincture of *Cannibus indica*), a consumption cure, appendicitis remedy to mention just a few of the many homeopathic information that seemed to be of his special interest. Included are many chemical formulae with references to a book by Williams titled as Elements of Chemistry noting the various catalytic reactions of NaCl, hydrogen, formation of acids, oxidation, atmospheric pressure and use of hydrochloric acid for numerous solutions. Interesting mechanical devices that are illustrated: a power generator powered by the waves of the surf, a corn popper, a burglar alarm, economical water pumping, various heating devices, economical use of petroleum and gas. Also noted as of interest to Mr. Ellwanger are various engineering elements such as the Murray Marine Steady-Floating Steel

Structures for ship salvage, an unreinforced concrete bridge, concrete for building homes, cement compounds, aluminum solder. This compilation of ephemera gives an interesting insight into the mindset of the amateur scientist and a self-improvement citizen of the early 20th century – before the age of easy access to knowledge by way of the computer. It follows in the earlier tradition of a receipt book or commonplace book.

Scope and Content Note:

The scrapbook contains 289 numbered pages many of which are blank. The first numbered pages contain adages advising against fear, encouragement (an adage by Elbert Hubbard, a turn-of-the 20th-century writer and propagandist for can-do American inventors and tycoons), a Table of Equivalents compiled and prepared by Chas. D. Clarkson, Dep't of Commerce and Finance Drexel Institute and an index of sorts (with the note *Don't Hurry*). Pages 19 to 252 contain the body of the compilation of handwritten notes, newspaper and magazine clippings some glued on to the pages others loosely attached. Among the main body of the collection are several pages left blank among the entries as if to leave room for additional information. The writing is in black ink.

Organization of the Content:

This hard cover book is bound in red leather with gold embossing and contains 289 numbered pages. It measures 5 ¾” x 9” x 1 ¼” (14.25cm x 22.5cm x 3cm) with marbled printed end pages and page edges. The book spine is missing. Inside the front cover is a label bearing the following: Wm. H. Hoskins Co. Mfg. Stationers, Business Furniture, Printers, Engravers, Blank Book Makers. 904 906 Chestnut Street...Philadelphia. On the inner side of the facing fly leaf is handwritten in black ink: *Property of Frank E. Ellwanger #5919 Ellsworth St, Phila. Pa.* Other addresses that are crossed out are: 1720 Willington St., 2741 W. 13th Phila. Pa., #4539 N. 19th Phila, Pa. Also crossed out is “try American Trust Co. “for address.” Broad & Ridge Ave. Phila. Not crossed out is a note: “Try Integrity Title & Trust Co. 4th & Green at Phila Pa. Another note below is: *My Harmonious days are Tuesday (born on this day) Thursday & Saturday.* At the bottom of this page is the number 682 ½ printed in purple ink on the lower right side of the inner fly leaf. The Index of 190 items appears on numbered pages 2 to 9; following are nine blank pages faintly lined. The main collection of memorabilia begins on page 19 and continues to page 252.

Indexing Terms:

Ellwanger, Frank E.
Civilization, Modern – 20th century
History – 20th century
Philadelphia (Pa.) – Social life and customs – Twentieth century
Commonplace book

Related Material:

The Southern Gardener and Receipt-Book, containing valuable information, original and otherwise, on all subjects connected with Domestic and Rural Affairs, Gardening, Cookery, Beverages, Dairy, Medical, Veterinary and Miscellaneous, Third Edition, Revised and Corrected by Mrs. Mary L. Edgeworth; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. 1860.

Detailed Description of Collection:

The contents Index is listed below. Although in the compilation the index is not alphabetized, for convenience of the Special Collection user, the Index has been somewhat ordered to gain an insight into the interests of the compiler. Mr. Ellwanger's Index alphabetized:

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