

LeRoy Weld Diaries, 1894-1955

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Collection Summary

Creator

Weld, LeRoy, 1880-1956

Dates [inclusive]

1894-1955

Collection Number

zz703.Weld

Quantity

2.0 Linear feet, 2 cartons

Repository

George T. Henry College Archives, Stewart Memorial Library, Coe College

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted

Abstract

LeRoy Dougherty Weld (1880-1956) was professor of physics and mathematics at Coe College from 1902 to 1945. He was the college's first physics professor; served as the chair of the physics department and combined mathematics and physics departments (1902-1945); helped direct the building of the Carnegie Science (now Stewart) Hall (completed 1910) and Voorhees Hall (completed 1918); supervised the Science Club/Kelvin Society (1902-1945) and Volunteer [Student Missionary] Band (1920-1933); served as the first president of the campus's Phi Kappa Phi Chapter (1925); directed the personnel [career services] program (1928-1932); and served as informal adviser to all Coe presidents (1902-1945). Weld also authored three college physics texts and the most authoritative physics glossary of the mid-twentieth century. After his retirement from Coe Weld worked as chief physicist for the Turner Manufacturing Co. of Cedar Rapids (1945-1948) and physical science terminology editor for the G. & C. Merriam Co. of Springfield, Massachusetts (1951-1955). The Leroy Weld Papers consist primarily of 62 diaries written from 1894 to 1955; each diary's entries cover one calendar year.

Language

English

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Administrative Information

Location

George T. Henry College Archives

Preferred Citation

LeRoy Weld Diaries, George T. Henry College Archives, Stewart Memorial Library, Coe College.

Acquisition

Donated by LeRoy Weld, professor of Physics and Mathematics 1902-1945.

Processing Information

Processed by Stephen Vincent

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Timeline: life of Leroy D. Weld

1880

LeRoy Dougherty Weld is born March 6, 1880 in Cresco, Iowa, the son of LeRoy Tryon Weld (1839-1923) and Nancy Rose (Dougherty) Weld (1845-1928). LeRoy T. Weld is superintendent of schools in Cresco at the time of Leroy D.'s birth; he accepts a similar position in Nevada, Iowa in 1886. Nancy Weld is an avid volunteer in Methodist Church women's organizations. The elder Welds have two additional children, both born more than a decade before Leroy D.: Laenas (1862-1919) and Lloyd (1864-1909).

1894

Weld begins keeping a daily diary on January 1st, recording his activities and the weather for each day. The diary is maintained through December 31, 1955, a span of sixty-two consecutive years. Most entries are brief, roughly 5-15 lines (40-125 words) in length.

1895

Weld moves to Iowa City to begin studies at the State University of Iowa (now University of Iowa).

Weld's older brother Laenas is a mathematics professor at the university. He acts as LeRoy's informal mentor during his undergraduate studies and throughout his early career.

In late 1895 Weld meets his future wife, Lulu A. Graff (1879-1953), a fellow science major at the university, at a freshmen social function. Their relationship lasts nearly sixty years, until Lulu's death. In addition to her activities as a wife, mother, and homemaker, Lulu develops a career of her own as an active volunteer and group leader with local and state Presbyterian Church organizations.

While at S.U.I. Weld frequently takes natures hikes, canoes, and picnics in surrounding natural area; much of his free time will continue to be devoted similar outdoor activities until his final years.

1897

LeRoy T. and Nancy Weld move to Cedar Rapids, building a home several blocks north of Coe College at 1630 E Ave. In 1908 Leroy D. and Lulu Weld build their first home four blocks away.

1898

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War Weld briefly considers joining the U.S. Army, then decides against the move at his parents' urging.

1899

Weld graduates with a Bachelor of Sciences degree from the State University of Iowa at the age of 19.

Following his graduation Weld works for three years as a high school teacher. He teaches at Missouri Valley High School in western Iowa in 1899-1900 and at Clinton High School in eastern Iowa from 1900-1902.

1902

Weld is awarded a Masters of Science degree from the State University of Iowa.

Weld accepts an offer to become a professor of mathematics and astronomy at Coe College following a discussion with the college's president, S.B. McCormick. He subsequently agrees to serve as Coe's Registrar, a then part-time position; he serves as registrar from 1902 to 1906.

The Coe College Science Club (renamed the Kelvin Society in 1910) elects Weld as its president. He leads the group until his retirement from Coe in 1945 and occasionally serves as a featured speaker. He delivers his last Kelvin Society talk in 1950.

Weld also assumes leadership of a committee to plan a new science building for Coe, beginning a process that culminates with the completion of the Carnegie (now Stewart) Science Hall in 1910. Weld is responsible for fundraising (Andrew Carnegie gifts, 1906 and 1908) and the design and installation of the building's laboratories.

1903

Weld marries Lulu Graff on June 24th. The couple rent a home at 321 N. 16th St., near Coe, from 1903 to 1905. Lulu assists her husband with his grading, professional correspondence, and registration duties during their first married years.

The Welds become active participants in the life of Cedar Rapids' First Presbyterian Church. The congregation, along with Coe College, becomes the focal point of their social activities thereafter. Weld also takes a leading role in Coe College and Cedar Rapids Y.M.C.A. religious affairs.

Weld designs a sun dial for the Coe Class of 1903. It's placed south of the Old Main building as a glass gift.

1905

The mathematics department expands to become the mathematics and physics department, with Weld as its first chair. In 1918 the department will be divided into separate mathematics and physics departments, with Weld directing the latter until his retirement in 1945.

1906

During the summer Weld works for the engineering corps of the Rock Island Railroad. His time is primarily devoted to creating topographical maps in eastern Iowa.

1907

Weld tours several Eastern colleges' science lab facilities to aid his design of Coe's prospective new physics lab.

1908

The Welds build their first home, 1531 B Ave., near the Coe campus. They reside there from 1908 until 1934. Much of Weld's leisure time from 1908 through the early 1920s is devoted to home improvement projects.

The Welds' first child, Rose Esther, is born April 14th. Rose Esther attends Cedar Rapids public schools and Coe College (class of 1930). Troubled by neurological problems from an early age, she remains at home with her

parents during most of her adult life.

1911

Coe College's campus landscape is re-graded under Weld's supervision.

1912

Weld teaches the spring semester at Columbia University in New York City as part of a Coe-Columbia faculty exchange project with L. B. Morse.

1913

The Weld's second child, Virginia Lloyd, is born April 21st. Virginia attends Cedar Rapids public schools and Coe College (class of 1936).

Weld notes in his diary that Coe classes have been cancelled due to Flunk Day, his first reference to the event. Subsequent Flunk Days are duly mentioned.

1914

Weld oversees construction of original (west) wing of Voorhees Hall, acting as "supervising architect" for New York architect E. L. Tilton. Work is completed in 1914 and 1915. Weld serves in a similar capacity during the construction of Voorhees' second wing in 1917-1918.

1915

Weld's first book, *Theory of Errors and Least Squares*, is published by Macmillan and Co. A treatise on measurement methods to account for accidental errors in calculations in astronomy, surveying, and other scientific fields, the book is marketed as an advanced college textbook. Weld had previously lectured at Coe and Columbia University and published an article in *Popular Astronomy* on the topic.

1917

Weld purchases a summer cottage ("Briarwood") in McGregor, Iowa, near the Mississippi River. The Weld family spends much of its summer time at Briarwood and a successor cottage, "Ridgewood," through the remainder of their lives. Coe faculty members and administrators are frequent visitors.

With the announcement of America's entry into World War II Weld leads military drills for students at Coe, apparently as preparation for military service. Weld also corresponds with state and national government officials soliciting support for war relief efforts.

1920

The Coe College Volunteer Band, a student group for those interested in foreign Christian missionary service, begins meeting at the Welds' home on Sunday evenings. The group meets regularly at the Welds' until 1933.

Weld and other Iowa faculty members sponsor "The American School of Wildlife Protection," a local summer program to promote conservation awareness and action near the Welds summer home in McGregor, Iowa.

1922

Weld receives his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Physics from the State University of Iowa. His dissertation examined the scientific application of the crystalliptometer, an instrument that measures beams of light.

At the request of James P.C. Southall, a Columbia University professor, Weld assists in the translation of *Handbuch der Physiologischen Optic* (Treatise on Physiological Optics) by the German scientist Hermann von Helmholtz. The project requires much of Weld's time in 1922 and 1923. The translation is published in Southall in 1924.

Weld also agrees to a proposal from Blakiston's Son and Co. to write a physics textbook. Weld works on the text from 1922 through 1926. Frederick Palmer, Jr. of Haverford College joins Weld as co-author on the project in 1923.

1923

Weld purchases his first automobile. Extended recreational car outings become an important aspect of the Welds' family life thereafter. In subsequent years they make multiple week trips to Yellowstone National Park (1924), Ontario (1925), the East Coast (1926), the Appalachian Mountains (1928), and Michigan's Upper Peninsula (1931, 1934).

1925

Coe's Phi Kappa Phi chapter is founded with Weld as president. The first Coe students are admitted in 1926.

1926

Weld and Palmer's *A Textbook of Modern Physics* is published. (See related 1922 entry above.) A revised edition by Weld and Palmer is released in 1930.

1928

Weld presides at the Iowa Academy of Sciences' annual meeting as the group's president. Weld was an active member of the academy from ca. 1902 until his retirement in 1945. He receives an honorary emeritus fellowship in 1947.

Wells is chosen to direct Coe's first Personnel Office, a career services-type program to assist students with career direction and placement. He attends summer courses on personnel management at Columbia University in 1929 to improve the office's service. The program is active from 1928 to 1932, but closes because of the limited opportunities available during the Great Depression.

1930

Weld begins collecting definitions for physics terms in 1930. His independent work would lead to the publication of a physics glossary in 1937. (See related 1933, 1937 entries below.)

1931

Coe President Harry Gage appoints Weld as chair of a committee to consider a loan by faculty members to Coe College to meet its obligations. Weld meets frequently with Gage on related matters through early 1932. The loan is made in October 1932.

1933

Lulu Weld embarks on a personal 7-month, 12 country tour of Asia and the Middle East, visiting Christian missionaries in the field. Her journey embraces Japan, Korea, China, Singapore, the Philippines, Siam (Thailand), India, Persia (Iran), Egypt, Palestine (Israel), Syria, and Italy.

Weld accepts position as chair of a committee to create a glossary for the physical sciences (i.e. physics) for National Research Council. Weld is assigned full authorship for the glossary in 1936.

1934

The Welds build their second home at 1838 Blake Blvd. SE.

1935

Van Nostrand, a New Jersey publishing house, signs Weld to a contract to write the entries for physics topics in a forthcoming scientific encyclopedia. Weld writes "some 600" entries for the work between 1935 and 1937.

1937

McGraw-Hill publishes Glossary of Physics, a compilation of definitions for 3,250 physics terms. (See related 1931, 1933 entries above.)

Weld participates as one of 17 students and faculty on a two week Coe College summer geology field trip that includes stays in the Black Hills, Big Horn, Yellowstone, Grand Tetons, and Medicine Bow areas of the Mountain West. He takes part in similar, expanded expeditions in the summers of 1938 and 1939 as well.

1938

Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia is published. (See related 1935 entry above.)

The Welds sponsor informal "fireside" discussions for Coe students, inviting them to their home to discuss "beautiful" ideas, experiences, or objects of the students' choosing on a bi-weekly basis. The discussions are popular with students in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

1939

Weld serves as Acting Dean of Coe College during the absence of C. Harve Geiger, who has taken a leave to complete his doctoral study.

1940

The Welds' daughter, Virginia, marries Karl Everett Swanberg of Boston at the Welds' home on December 25th. The couple lives near Pittsburgh, near Chicago, and in Cedar Rapids during the time between their marriage and Weld's death. They have two children, Jon (b. 1941) and Karl (b. 1944). As Lulu and Leroy Weld grow older the Swanbergs maintain frequent contact, often visiting and providing assistance in the couple's final years.

1942

As part of the World War II war effort Weld offers U.S. government-sponsored courses for radio technicians. Sections of the course are taught during the spring, summer, and fall of 1942 on the Coe campus. In the winter of 1942-1943 Weld offers a subsequent course for radio inspectors.

Weld prepares a textbook manuscript on heat, submitting it to publisher McGraw Hill. The company declines publication in 1943. Later the manuscript will be submitted to Macmillan & Co. and published in 1948. (See related 1945 and 1948 entries below.)

1943

Ronald Mayers, the general manager of Cedar Rapids microphone manufacturer Turner Manufacturing Co., solicits Weld's assistance as a technical consultant on an apparently classified wartime project. Weld works both at Turner Manufacturing Co. and the Coe physics lab on several different microphone, radar, and sound projects from late 1943 through the end of World War II.

1944

Weld is involved in extensive discussions and meetings with Coe President Charles A. Anderson, Coe trustees, and Coe faculty members between June 8th and June 20th 1944 concerning conflicts between Anderson and the faculty. Anderson resigns at the end of the crisis.

1945

After a meeting with Turner Co. executives Weld accepts their offer to become the company's Chief Physicist. Weld begins full time work at the company in March 1945.

Weld resigns from his professorship at Coe at the end of the 2nd quarter. He completes his final day of work on March 28th, shortly after his 65th birthday, bringing an end to a career at Coe that lasted 43 years.

Macmillan and Co. offer to publish Weld's proposed textbook on heat. (See related 1942 and 1948 entries.)

1946

Suffering from gastro-intestinal pain, Weld is hospitalized for 7 days. On his doctor's advice he remained confined for several more days thereafter.

1947

Coe College confers an honorary Doctor of Science degree on Weld at its annual commencement exercises.

Weld's work schedule at Turner Manufacturing is reduced to half time.

1948

Macmillan and Co. publish Weld's final book, A Textbook of Heat for Upperclassmen. (See related 1942, 1945 entries above.)

Weld's position at Turner Manufacturing Co. is terminated.

Rose Esther Weld, Weld's elder daughter, dies in Cedar Rapids.

1950

Weld reviews his diary for material that "might be used in a history of Coe." He meets twice with Grace Douma, who completes a centennial history of Coe College in 1951.

1951

Dictionary publisher G & C Merriam Co. of Springfield, Massachusetts offers Weld a position to edit terms related to physics, math, and astronomy. Weld accepts the offer and moves to Springfield. He works full time at Merriam from 1951 to 1955.

1953

Lulu Weld dies in Springfield after an extensive illness.

1955

Weld is hospitalized for three weeks after he experiences conditions apparently similar to those of his 1946 hospitalization. At the end of his hospital stay Weld returns to his Springfield home but is unable to return to work, leading to the termination of his Merriam employment. Weld returns to Cedar Rapids, moving back to his 1531 B Ave. home in early 1956.

Weld dies in Cedar Rapids on December 27, 1956. He is survived by his daughter, Virginia Weld Swanberg, and her children.

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Scope and Content note

The Leroy Weld Papers consists primarily of two groups of materials: 62 diaries, each corresponding to a calendar year from 1894 through 1955 (1.9 lin. ft. total); and 6 folders comprised of newspaper clippings and other ephemera that have removed from the diaries during the papers' archival processing (.2 lin. ft.). Each diary is identified with its year of coverage written on the outside cover and an inside title paper.

The diaries include daily entries that remain largely consistent in scope and depth from one year to the next. In them Weld tersely describes the events of his day, typically in passages of 5-10 sentences, followed by a concluding sentence or two on the day's weather. Entries outline both personal and professional activities but are invariably brief and solely descriptive, with limited detail and exceedingly little analysis or attempt to provide meaning or context.

Weld places heavy emphasis on activities associated with his education, primarily at the State University of Iowa from 1895 to 1899, and his teaching, research, and other academic activities, both while a teacher at Missouri Valley and Clinton high schools (1899-1902) and at Coe College (1902-1945). Weld's life as a Coe faculty member is particularly well documented. Cursory passages cover a wide array of issues, including matters such as office visitors, tutoring work, testing and grading, faculty meetings, the college science club, Flunk Day, informal discussions with Coe presidents, campus religious activities, campus expansion projects, the Iowa Academy of Science, correspondence with publishers and fellow academics, and research.

Weld focuses daily on his family and social life as well. The entire arc of Weld's relationships with his parents, two brothers, wife, two daughters, and grandchildren is covered through diary entries. Similarly evident is Weld's lifelong commitments to Protestant Christianity, Christian religious service at the campus and local levels, and Cedar Rapids' First Presbyterian Church. Still other diary themes are Weld's deep interests in outdoor activities, vacation touring via extended car trips, and the family's summer home in McGregor, Iowa.

Weld's diary also provides considerable if at times only fleeting glimpses of the larger technological changes taking places in the first half of twentieth century America, including the introduction and growing importance in everyday life of the phonograph, radios, movies, automobiles, and, by mid-century, television and air travel.

Newspaper clippings originally in the diaries include obituaries for Weld's parents and elder brother, announcements pertaining to events in the lives of Weld's children, and feature articles on Weld's research and publications.

Additional newspaper articles pertaining to Weld's life were copied during the processing of the Weld Papers. These have been placed in a final, separate folder. Included are obituaries for Weld and a feature on Weld's World War II work with Turner Manufacturing Co.

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Subject Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Cedar Rapids (Iowa)
- Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- McGregor (Iowa)
- Nevada (Iowa)

Personal Name(s)

- Anderson, Charles A.
- Gage, Harry Morehouse, Dr., Coe College President, 1878-1961
- Marquis, John A.
- McCormick, Samuel B.
- Weld, Laenas, 1862-1919
- Weld, Lulu (Graff), 1879-1953

Subject(s)

- Coe College -- Buildings
- Coe College -- Faculty
- Coe College -- History --20th century
- Coe College -- Students --Religious life
- Geology -- Field work
- High school teaching -- Iowa
- Physicists -- Iowa -- Cedar Rapids -- Diaries

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Collection Inventory

Diaries 1894-1955 1.8 Linear feet Diaries are stored in 2 cartons. Carton 1 includes diaries for 1894-. Carton 2 includes diaries for -1955. Dates for each diary are on front cover and inside title page on individual volumes.

Enclosures (Clippings and Ephemera) 0.2 Linear feet 6 folders in Carton 1 of Leroy Weld Papers.

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