

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Waddell Tupper was born on March 31, 1870 at Sheet Harbor in Nova Scotia. His parents were John and Eliza Bedford (Waddell) Tupper. In 1887 he left Sheet Harbor to attend Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia. At Dalhousie, as a student of Professor W.J. Alexander, he first showed an interest in English and teaching. After graduating from Dalhousie in 1891 he went to Johns Hopkins to study under the eminent philologist James Wilson Bright, Lafayette Class of 1877 and protégé of F.A. March, Sr. In 1895 he was awarded a doctorate in English and returned to Canada to teach English and History at Western University in Ontario.

In 1900 James Waddell Tupper obtained a teaching position at Bryn Mawr College. While there he taught Freshman English and Literature. In 1902 he joined the Harvard faculty as a member of an experimental group of teachers assembled by Dean Briggs to teach composition. From this group of teachers came the notion that writing and thinking are organically related, and that the first obligation of a teacher is to help students to read intelligently, to think clearly, and to write acceptably.

In 1906 James Waddell Tupper was approached by Lafayette College President Ethelbert Dudley Warfield about the possibility of becoming an adjunct professor in English at the college. He accepted the position after some negotiations as to how English was to be taught at Lafayette.

In 1906 Lafayette College was in the midst of transforming the teaching focus in the English department from one of a philological emphasis to one based on composition. This program was similar to Harvard's. Based on their revision of the English curriculum, choosing James Waddell Tupper to lead seemed natural. Soon Freshman English One and Two became a requirement of all those entering Lafayette. His name became synonymous with the classes nicknamed "Tup's English."

The backbone of English One and Two were the daily themes required of the freshmen. These consisted of 150 word essays on a topic which were dropped off in the theme box at South College. In addition to the daily themes students were assigned to write a 750 word essay every two weeks. These assignments were initially considered brutal but soon became revered as a sort of rite of passage among the men.

James Waddell Tupper taught at Lafayette for 37 years. In those years he expanded the curriculum's emphasis to include modern literature and advanced courses. Tupper himself expanded his course load to include a sophomore survey of literature known as "Tup's Survey" and other advanced courses in drama and poetry of the Renaissance.

In those 37 years at Lafayette James Waddell Tupper encouraged students to express themselves through their writing both in the classroom and at his home, where he would hold informal meetings of selected upperclassmen. These gatherings were called "T and T's" for Tarrytons and Tea which were staples at these functions. Students selected for these "T and T's"

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were periodically called on to compose papers and provide materials for discussions, many of which lasted far into the night.

James Waddell Tupper became the Head of the English Department in 1928 with the retirement of Francis A. March, Jr. He retained this position until his retirement from teaching in 1947.

Throughout James Waddell Tupper's teaching career at Lafayette he often taught summer school at various colleges and universities. These included Bowdoin and Johns Hopkins, where he taught graduate level literature.

After he retired in 1947, he continued to teach at various colleges in the summer. In 1950 he received an honorary doctorate of Literature from Lafayette College. James Waddell Tupper died June 3, 1953, after a prolonged illness.

He married Mary Patterson Harmon on December 30, 1903. Together they had one son, Harmon Tupper, born in 1905.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection contains over 250 letters written by James Waddell Tupper and his wife Mary to their son, Harmon Tupper. This correspondence starts in the late 1920s and continues through the early 1950s, when Dr. Tupper died. In addition to these letters there is some miscellaneous correspondence and documents tracing James Waddell Tupper's life and career at Lafayette College.

The 1.6 linear feet that make up the Tupper Family Papers are arranged chronologically. These papers are interesting in that they document Lafayette College over almost a forty year period. The accumulated correspondence of Tupper and his wife Mary reflects the attitudes and opinions of two of the college's leading personalities over a period of forty years. The college, as seen through their eyes, is shown as a community of professors and administrators interacting with each other through the course of nearly a half century.

INVENTORY

Box 1

Correspondence: 1903-1929

Box 2

Correspondence: 1930-1932

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Box 3

Correspondence: 1932-1939

Box 4

Correspondence: 1940-1959; n.d.

Box 5

Miscellaneous Documents

Folder

- 1 J.W. Tupper's Phi Beta Kappa Certificate: 1890
- 2 Contract between J.W. Tupper and D.C. Heath & co. to edit D'Avenant's Love and Honor and The Seige of Rhodes: 1905
- 3 Founder's Day Exercises (J.W. Tupper Honorary Degree): 1950
- 4 Note Book/Diary of J.W. Tupper: 1950-1953
- 5 Faculty Resolution on J.W. Tupper's Death: 1953
- 6 Newspaper Clippings on J.W. Tupper's Death: June 3, 1953
- 7 Last Will and Testament: n.d.
- 8 Typescripts of Speeches: n.d.
- 9 Typescript of Article: n.d.
- 10 Lafayette Alumnus articles: 1944-1953

Box 6

Oversize

Diplomas: 1891; 1895