

## Sibyl Hoover of Gibson City, IL: A Year Abroad (1907-1908)

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Undated photo of Sibyl Hoover, taken c. 1905

At the beginning of the twentieth century, millions of Europeans were crossing the Atlantic to begin a new life in the United States of America. However, people were also traveling in the opposite direction. There were Americans headed for Europe to experience the cultural richness of the Old World.

A year of study abroad is a luxury that few Americans get to enjoy. This was particularly true in the 1900s. Fortunately for

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Issued

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

STATE OF Illinois  
COUNTY OF Ford

I, Sibyl Hoover, a NATIVE AND LOYAL CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES, hereby apply to the Department of State, at Washington, for a passport for myself, accompanied by my wife, \_\_\_\_\_, and minor children, as follows: \_\_\_\_\_, born at \_\_\_\_\_, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 18\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, born at \_\_\_\_\_, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 18\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, born at \_\_\_\_\_, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 18\_\_\_\_.

I solemnly swear that I was born at Gibson City in the State of Illinois, on or about the 16th day of Aug, 1889; that my father is a Native citizen of the United States; that I am domiciled in the United States, my permanent residence being at Gibson City in the State of Illinois, where I follow the occupation of Student; that I am about to go abroad temporarily; and that I intend to return to the United States within One years, with the purpose of residing and performing the duties of citizenship therein.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

Further, I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion: SO HELP ME GOD.

Sworn to before me this 17th day of August, 1907, at Gibson City, Illinois.

Notary Public

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICANT.

Age: 18 years. Mouth: Well developed  
Stature: 5 feet, 4 inches, Eng. Chin: Well developed  
Forehead: Well developed Hair: Light brown  
Eyes: Blue Complexion: Fair  
Nose: Well developed Face: Well developed

IDENTIFICATION.

I hereby certify that I have known the above-named Sibyl Hoover personally for 18 years, and know her to be a native-born citizen of the United States, and that the facts stated in her affidavit are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(ADDRESS OF WITNESS)  
Sibyl Hoover  
Gibson City, Illinois

Sibyl's Passport Application, downloaded from Ancestry.com. in March 2014

Sibyl Hoover, her mother Laura Ellen Hoover had a touch of the wanderlust. Gibson City was a small town in Central Illinois. Mom had her eyes on the wider world.

Following Sibyl's graduation from Gibson City High School in 1907, Laura Hoover packed up her daughters Sibyl and nine-year-old Josephine and headed for Germany. Laura would spend a year studying at the Willard School in Berlin. Josephine would continue her studies under her mom's direction. Doc Hoover, as Sibyl's dad was known, stayed home and maintained his dental practice. The family stayed in touch with the exchange of frequent letters, a few of which have survived. Letters home detailed class activities, visits to art galleries, shopping trips, get-togethers with new friends, and sightseeing trips to other cities in Germany,

## Our Family History

as well as to Italy and to France. In her letters home, Laura Hoover alludes to the fact that Doc Hoover's letters to his wife and children in Germany often included money.



Sibyl's keepsakes from her year abroad included the above postcards. The handwriting on the face of the postcards might be that of Sibyl's mother, rather than Sibyl.



A record of Sibyl's return to the United States is found in the archives of Ellis Island. Sibyl, in the company of Josephine and "Mrs. William A. Hoover," sailed from Boulogne-Sur-Mer in France on board the Ryndam. The ship arrived at Ellis Island on July 7, 1908.

Another postcard from Sibyl's collection. In 1908, Sibyl, her mom, and her sister departed from Boulogne-sur-Mer, France for the trip home.

In the fall of that year, Sibyl entered the Western College for women at Oxford, Ohio. She graduated from there in the spring of 1912.

As mementos of her year abroad, Sibyl brought home a stack of postcards, some "lovely Venetian glass jewelry" which was later stolen ... and a Russian samovar. Sibyl's sister Josephine mentioned the "old, beat-up samovar" in a letter written shortly after Sibyl's death in 1973. "I so well remember Sibyl saving her money for it in Berlin. It was in an old shop and she made a deal with the shopkeeper to hold it for her [until] she got the money. It was a prized possession – and one of a few that she brought home." Josephine also recalled that the samovar "made many Tom and Jerry's," a holiday drink which became a family tradition in Sibyl's household. Sibyl kept the samovar all of her life, proudly displayed on a table in a corner of the home library. It is now a treasured keepsake in the home of a granddaughter.



The Russian samovar purchased in Berlin during Sibyl's year abroad: a prized keepsake

Sibyl could not have known that just six years later, in 1914, World War I would erupt in Europe. Her uncle Marshall Hoover would travel to England that same year for a dental convention and then on to Russia at the invitation of a fellow dentist. He would be caught in the throes of the Russian Revolution, unable to leave St. Petersburg until the fall of 1918. But that is another story.