

# Guide to the Mina Curtiss Collection

MS 1206



compiled by Miriam Levi and Catherine Lawrence

January 1996

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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
(203) 432-7441  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 1206

**CREATOR:** Curtiss, Mina Kirstein, 1896-1985, collector

**TITLE:** Mina Curtiss Collection

**DATES:** 1910-1945

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1.5 linear feet (4 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The original accession consists of original and typed copies of letters sent home by American servicemen from various training camps in the United States and from overseas campaigns during World War II, many of which Mina Curtiss used for her 1944 book, *Letters Home*. The addition consists of Henry T. Curtiss papers and photographs. There are a diary and book relating to Curtiss's 1910 trip to Europe on the S.S. *Arabic*, which included stops in the British Isles, Holland, Germany, Venice, Scutari and Dalmatia; a volume of letters and photographs sent by members of the Scroll and Key Society to one another from 1920-1923, with reminiscences about Curtiss after his death in 1928; and eight large photographs of Curtiss alone and with friends, circa 1910.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1206>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1206>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Mina Curtiss. Gift of Lincoln Kirstein and the Estate of George Kirstein, 1986.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

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### Conditions Governing Use

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### Preferred Citation

Mina Curtiss Collection (MS 1206). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Mina Kirstein Curtiss was born on October 13, 1896, in Boston, Massachusetts. She graduated from Smith College in 1918, received a M.A. in English from Columbia University in 1920, and returned to Smith, where she was an associate professor until 1934. She was a research assistant for the Mercury Theater from 1935 to 1938, and she worked for the Office of War Information during World War II. She taught at Smith from 1940 to 1941. In 1942, Curtiss wrote and produced a local radio program in Des Moines, Iowa, in which she featured Iowa soldiers' letters home, and interviews with their families. The response inspired her to expand the project and incorporate letters of servicemen from all over the country, and in 1944 she published an anthology of enlisted men's *Letters Home*. During the next decades, Curtiss spent much time in France, and later Russia. She was the author of many publications, and received the Legion of Honor from the French government for her books on Marcel Proust and Georges Bizet. She married Henry ("Harry") Tomlinson Curtiss on June 1, 1926. Curtiss died on November 1, 1985.

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## Scope and Contents

The original accession consists of original and typed copies of letters sent home by American servicemen from various training camps in the United States and from overseas campaigns during World War II, many of which Mina Curtiss used for her 1944 book, *Letters Home*. The addition consists of Henry T. Curtiss papers and photographs. There are a diary and book relating to Curtiss's 1910 trip to Europe on the S.S. *Arabic*, which included stops in the British Isles, Holland, Germany, Venice, Scutari and Dalmatia; a volume of letters and photographs sent by members of the Scroll and Key Society to one another from 1920-1923, with reminiscences about Curtiss after his death in 1928; and eight large photographs of Curtiss alone and with friends, circa 1910.

## **Arrangement**

The papers are arranged by accession.

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## Collection Contents

### Original Accession: Military Letters, 1939-1945

|                |                                    |           |
|----------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| b. 1, f. 1     | Alaska and Aleutians               | 1942-1944 |
| b. 1, f. 2-4   | "At Sea"<br>English                | 1941-1943 |
| b. 1, f. 5-6   | Australia                          | 1942      |
| b. 1, f. 7     | Australia and New Zealand          | 1943-1944 |
| b. 1, f. 8     | Canal Zone                         | 1941-1942 |
| b. 1, f. 9     | Chile                              | 1942      |
| b. 1, f. 10    | China                              | Undated   |
| b. 1, f. 11-12 | Egypt and Middle East              | 1941-1943 |
| b. 1, f. 13    | England                            | 1942-1944 |
| b. 1, f. 14    | England - English Allied Forces    | 1939-1942 |
| b. 1, f. 15    | Fiji Islands, Midway, Wake, Saipan | 1942      |
| b. 1, f. 16    | France                             | 1943-1945 |
| b. 2, f. 17    | Germany                            | 1941-1945 |
| b. 2, f. 18    | Guadalcanal and the Solomons       | 1942-1943 |
| b. 2, f. 19    | Hawaii                             | 1941-1943 |
| b. 2, f. 20    | India                              | 1942-1944 |
| b. 2, f. 21    | Ireland                            | 1942      |
| b. 2, f. 22    | Italy                              | 1943-1944 |
| b. 2, f. 23    | Japan                              | 1942-1943 |
| b. 2, f. 24    | New Caledonia                      | 1942-1943 |
| b. 2, f. 25    | New Guinea                         | 1942      |
| b. 2, f. 26    | New Guinea                         | 1943-1944 |
| b. 2, f. 27-30 | North Africa                       | 1942-1943 |
| b. 3, f. 31-32 | North Africa                       | 1943      |
| b. 3, f. 33    | Noumea                             | 1943      |
| b. 3, f. 34    | Okinawa                            | 1944-1945 |
| b. 3, f. 35    | Philippine Islands                 | 1943      |

|                |                     |           |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| b. 3, f. 36    | Saipan              | 1944      |
| b. 3, f. 37    | Scotland            | 1942-1943 |
| b. 3, f. 38    | South Pacific       | 1942-1943 |
| b. 3, f. 39    | Tonga               | 1943      |
|                | United States       |           |
| b. 3, f. 40    | Air Force           | 1942-1943 |
| b. 3, f. 41-43 | Army                | 1941-1943 |
| b. 3, f. 44    | Hospitals           | 1943-1944 |
| b. 3, f. 45    | Military government | 1943      |
| b. 3, f. 46    | Marines             | 1942      |
| b. 3, f. 47    | Navy                | 1942-1943 |
| b. 3, f. 48    | Paratroops          |           |
| b. 3, f. 49    | Quartermaster Corps | 1941-1942 |
| b. 3, f. 50    | Signal Corps        | 1941-1942 |
| b. 3, f. 51    | Ski troops          | Undated   |

### Accession 1987-M-0010: Additional Material, 1910-1928

This addition to the Mina Curtiss Collection consists of journals, letters, and photographs belonging to her husband, Henry T. Curtiss. Items include a diary kept by Curtiss during a 1910 trip to Europe with Yale classmates and fellow Scroll and Key Society members S. Merrell Clement, Jr., J. Curtis Platt, Reginald Roome, and Earl T. Williams. The diary describes the group’s travels on the S. S. *Arabic* to the British Isles, Holland, Germany, Venice, Scutari and Dalmatia. There is also a leather binder of photographs and letters circulated annually among Scroll and Key Society members. The inside cover contains a photographic negative of Henry Curtiss and a friend on horseback. The majority of the letters, from 1920 to 1923, are arranged first by author and then by date. Curtiss’s own letters are near the end of this group, and a later photograph of him outside his Ashfield home is found after his entries. The final group of letters, from 1927 to 1928, includes reminiscences about Curtiss after his death. Related to these two volumes is the book *Diary of a Trip Abroad in the Summer of 1910*, by Earl Trumbull Williams. Published after Williams’ early death, this book serves as a companion volume to Henry Curtiss’s account of the trip. There are also eight large photographs of Curtiss alone and with friends, circa 1910. Five of the photos are card-mounted and numbered, and depict various scenes of Curtiss and classmates at the beach, at school, in Europe, and on a ship. The other three photos have been captioned, presumably by Mina Curtiss, and depict a “Keys wedding”; Curtiss with his dogs outside his Ashfield home; and Curtiss with Bobby Jones, Jack Davidson, and Fred Kennedy.

|            |   |                              |
|------------|---|------------------------------|
| b. 1, f. 1 | “A Diary of a Trip to Europe The Summer of 1910” [manuscript journal]<br>English            | 1910 July 2-<br>September 23 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Photographs and letters of Scroll and Key Society alumni from Yale College Class<br>of 1910 | 1920-1923,<br>1927-1928      |
| b. 1, f. 3 | <i>Diary of a Trip Abroad in the Summer of 1910</i> by Earl Trumbull Williams<br>English    | 1920                         |
| b. 1, f. 4 | Photographs   | Circa 1910,<br>undated       |



## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

College students -- Connecticut -- 20th  
Century  
Ocean travel -- 20th Century  
Travelers  
Voyages and travels -- 20th Century  
World War, 1939-1945 -- Personal narratives,  
American

### **Geographic Names**

Europe -- Description and travel -- 20th  
Century

### **Genres / Formats**

Travel journals

### **Occupations**

Authors

### **Names**

Clement, Stephen Merrell, 1887-1943  
Curtiss, Henry Tomlinson, 1888-1928  
Curtiss, Mina Kirstein, 1896-1985  
Platt, Joseph Curtis, 1887-1950  
Roome, Reginald, 1888-1949  
Williams, Earl Trumbull, 1888-1918

### **Corporate Bodies**

Yale College (1887- ). Class of 1910  
Yale University -- Students -- 20th Century