

# Guide to the Reuben L. and Marcionella V. Curtiss Papers

MS 853



compiled by Susan Grigg and Françoise Rosset

March 1979

Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
(203) 432-7441  
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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 853

**CREATOR:** Curtiss, Reuben Lucius, 1897-1978

**TITLE:** Reuben L. and Marcionella V. Curtiss papers

**DATES:** 1942-1979

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 2.5 linear feet (6 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Correspondence between Reuben L. and Marcionella V. Curtiss during World War II when each was serving in the United States Army make up the bulk of the papers. Reuben L. Curtiss's letters are sent from various parts of the United States, Africa, India, and China. Marcionella V. Curtiss's letters reflect her service in Australia, New Guinea and the Philippine Islands. There is also a diary kept by Reuben L. Curtiss (1944-1945), and a biographical sketch written by Marcionella V. Curtiss in 1979.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0853>

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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.0853>.

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

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Reuben L. Curtiss, 1975.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

Copyright status for collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

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## Preferred Citation

Reuben L. and Marcionella V. Curtiss Papers (MS 853). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

| Date   | Event   |
|--|---|
| 1897   | ○ born in North Branford, Connecticut   |
| [c. 1909]  | ○ left school after the sixth grade   |
| [1910s]-1942   | ○ held various jobs in New York City and Connecticut                                      |
| 1933   | ○ married Marcionella Vegas   |
| 1938   | ○ bought a campsite in Milford, Connecticut, and began living there except in the winters |
| 1940   | ○ built a cabin on the Milford campsite and made it the Curtisses' permanent home         |
| 1942   | ○ joined the United States Army   |
| 1943-1945  | ○ served in India and China, supervising transport of American war materiel               |
| 1945   | ○ left the army   |
| 1945-[late 1950s]  | ○ held various jobs in Connecticut  |
| 1952   | ○ fathered a son, Scott Dewitt  |
| 1978   | ○ died in the Veterans Administration Medical Center in West Haven, Connecticut           |
| <b>MARCIONELLA LILLYAN (VEGAS) CURTISS SMITH (1906-)</b> |   |
| 1914   | ○ born in Forteleza, Brazil, of American-born parents                                     |
| 1917   | ○ came to live in New York  |
| [late 1920s]   | ○ attended junior high school and one month of business school                            |
| [early 1930s]  | ○ worked as a "girl friday" for Reuben Curtiss and attended high school in the evenings   |
| 1933   | ○ married Reuben Curtiss  |
| 1933-1942  | ○ held various jobs in New York City and Connecticut                                      |

**MARCIONELLA LILLYAN (VEGAS) CURTISS SMITH (1906-)**

- 1942                   ○ joined the United States Army
- 1944-1945           ○ served in Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines
- 1945                   ○ left the army
- 1945-1952           ○ held various jobs in Connecticut
- 1952                   ○ gave birth to a son, Scott Dewitt
- [late 1950s-late  
1960s]               ○ held various jobs in Connecticut
- 1968                   ○ separated from Reuben Curtiss and went to live with his nephew, Leland Smith
- 1971                   ○ moved to the Southwest
- 1978                   ○ married Leland Smith

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## **Scope and Contents**

The Reuben L. and Marcionella V. Curtiss Papers consist mainly of correspondence between Mr. and Mrs. Curtiss during their service in the United States Army in the Second World War. Mr. Curtiss wrote his letters mainly from army posts in the United States (September 1942-July 1943) and from India and China (August 1943-June 1945). Mrs. Curtiss wrote her letters from Milford, Connecticut (September-November 1942), from army posts in the United States (December 1942-June 1944), and from Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines (June 1944-June 1945). The correspondence is most valuable for its descriptions and criticisms of army life and of the people and customs of the places in which the Curtisses were stationed. There is also a diary kept by Mr. Curtiss between February 1944 and December 1945.

The essential biographical source is a 3000-word letter that Mrs. Curtiss (now married to Leland Smith) wrote in February 1979 at the invitation of this department. It is boxed at the beginning of the papers. It not only provides information about parentage, schooling, employment, and the like, but also creates a vivid and moving impression of "Curt & Marcy - Their Life Together." This letter is essential to a full appreciation of the papers. For quick reference, however, please see the chronology selected from it in the Biographical Sketch above.

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## Collection Contents

### Inventory, 1942-1945, 1979

2.5' (6 boxes)

The Reuben L. and Marcionella V. Curtiss Papers were given to Yale University Library by Reuben L. Curtiss in 1975.

|            |   |  |
|------------|---|--|
| b. 1       | Marcionella V. Curtiss: biographical letter | 1979                                   |
| b. 1       | Reuben L. Curtiss: diary                    | 1944<br>February-1945<br>December      |
| RLC to MVC |   |  |
| b. 1       | Fort Devens, Mass.                          | 1942 September<br>1-4                  |
| b. 1       | Atlantic City, N.J.                         | 1942 September<br>6-24                 |
| b. 1       | Madison, Wis.                               | 1942 September<br>27-December 19       |
| b. 1       | en route to Florida                         | 1942 December<br>19-22                 |
| b. 1       | Boca Raton, Fla                             | 1942 December<br>25-1943<br>February 7 |
| b. 1       | Las Vegas, N.M.                             | 1943 February 8-<br>March 31           |
| b. 2       | Las Vegas, N.M.                             | 1943 April 1-10                        |
| b. 2       | Billings, Mont.                             | 1943 April 12-<br>July 7               |
| b. 2       | Boca Raton, Fla.                            | 1943 July 11-13                        |
| b. 2       | Africa (en route to India)                  | 1943 July 15-23                        |
| b. 2       | Africa and Middle East (en route to India)  | 1943 July 24-31                        |
| b. 2       | India (Karachi)                             | 1943 August 1-<br>October 13           |
| b. 2       | India (Chabua, Assam?)                      | 1943 October<br>28-1944<br>February 24 |
| b. 2       | India (Ledo, Assam?)                        | 1944 February<br>24-March 31           |
| b. 3       | India (Calcutta)                            | 1944 April 1-<br>September 9           |

## RLC to MVC (continued)

|            |   |                                    |
|------------|---|------------------------------------|
| b. 3       | India (Panitola, Assam)                 | 1944 September 16-27               |
| b. 3       | Kunming, China                          | 1944 September 30-1945 February 28 |
| b. 4       | Kunming, China                          | 1945 March 1-May 17                |
| b. 4       | Kunming, China, and Calcutta, India     | 1945 May 18-June 16                |
| b. 4       | New Haven, Conn.                        | 1945 July 25-27                    |
| MVC to RLC |   |                                    |
| b. 4       | Milford, Conn.                          | 1942 September 1-November 27       |
| b. 4       | en route to Iowa                        | 1942 November 28-29                |
| b. 4       | Des Moines, Iowa                        | 1942 December 2-1943 January 30    |
| b. 4       | Fort Knox, Ky.                          | 1943 February 1-28                 |
| b. 5       | Fort Knox, Ky.                          | 1943 March 2-1944 April 19         |
| b. 5       | Milford, Conn.                          | 1944 April 23-26                   |
| b. 6       | Fort Oglethorpe, Ga.                    | 1944 May 1-26                      |
| b. 6       | en route to California                  | 1944 May 29-31                     |
| b. 6       | California (San Francisco?)             | 1944 June 2-7                      |
| b. 6       | <i>en route</i> to Australia<br>English | 1944 [June 8-25?]                  |
| b. 6       | Brisbane, Australia                     | 1944 June 26-October 22            |
| b. 6       | New Guinea                              | 1944 November 4-1945 January 28    |
| b. 6       | en route to the Philippines             | 1945 [February 1-7?]               |
| b. 6       | Philippines                             | 1945 February 8-April 7            |
| b. 6       | Philippines (Manila)                    | 1945 April 17-June 4               |

MVC to RLC (continued)

b. 6

Clippings

undated

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## **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**

World War, 1939-1945 -- United States

### **Geographic Names**

Asia

### **Genres / Formats**

Diaries

### **Occupations**

Soldiers

### **Names**

Curtiss, Reuben Lucius, 1897-1978

Smith, Marcionella Lillyan Vegas Curtiss, 1906-