

Flora Jane Coutts (1897-1983)
Papers, 1903-1970
Doc 457-459, MSA 913-914, Size C & D

Introduction

This collection consists of diaries, notebooks, letters, photographs, postcards, and miscellaneous Vermontiana related to the life of Flora Jane Coutts (1897-1983) of Newport, Vermont. It reflects Coutts' varied careers as a teacher in Vermont and in Korea in the 1920s, a youth leader, executive director of the Northeastern Vermont Development Association, Red Cross worker in India and China in World War II, and her service in the Vermont Senate for two terms, (1937-38 and 1939-40) and in later in the Vermont House for six terms (from 1961-2 to 1971-2).

Included in the collection are a few letters written to Coutts' mother, Flora Longeway Coutts, and several diaries of her sister, Ann Coutts Aldrich (b. 1904).

The collection was a gift to the Vermont Historical Society from Beatrice Aldrich Nelson, daughter of Beatrice Coutts Aldrich, and Flora J. Coutts' niece in 1999 (ms. acc. no. 99.5). Additional items were donated by Morgan Coutts Irons in 2020. It is housed in three document boxes, two archival flip-top boxes, one size C folder, and one size D folder (3.75 linear feet). Artifacts have been moved to the VHS museum collection.

Biographical Notes

According to information about the Coutts family supplied by Beatrice Nelson Aldrich, the donor of the papers, Flora Jane Coutts (September 25, 1897-March 13, 1983) was the oldest daughter of Flora Mable Longeway (dates?) and Robert M. Coutts (dates?). Robert emigrated from Scotland to work as a granite cutter in Hardwick. He died young of "stone cutters' disease" and his widow supported their eight children, one just a year old, by taking in washing. All of the Coutts children went on to higher education. Three of Flora's sisters, Alice, Beatrice, and Ann, married the Aldrich brothers, Carroll, Ira, and Alfred.

Flora Coutts was born in West Charleston, Vermont graduated from Hardwick Academy and received a certificate from Johnson Normal School in 1917. She taught school in Vermont and Cleveland, Ohio, prior to teaching at the Pyengyang Foreign School in Korea from 1922 to 1925, sponsored by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

From 1925 to 1936 Coutts was a Club Agent with the Vermont Extension service and owned her own small business in 1936 and 1937. She was elected to the Vermont Senate from Orleans County for two terms (1937-8 and 1939-40), when George Aiken was governor. In the early 1940s, Coutts served as the Executive Secretary of the Orleans County Development Association and the Vermont Association for the Crippled.

During World War II, Coutts was a Club director for the American Red Cross and was stationed in India and China from 1943 until 1945. After the war, Coutts became the first Executive Secretary of the Northeastern Vermont Development Association. She served six terms in the Vermont House from 1961 until 1972.

Coutts' informal notes about her education, work and accomplishments (Folder 0) are sometimes inconsistent with the information in her obituary (Folder 0). In her 1942 application to the U.S. Manpower Commission, she specified her special skills as: "leadership [of] women's groups, public speaking, and program building." She belonged to many groups and held many offices; these include: President of the Vermont Business and Professional Women's Club, Assistant Director of the 350th Champlain Valley Festival, Vice Chairman of the Vermont Republican Party Executive Committee, and a delegate to the 1940 Republican Convention in Philadelphia.

She retired in the 1970s and died in Newport on March 13, 1983.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of the diaries, notebooks, photographs, postcards, letters, and miscellaneous Vermontiana of Flora Coutts of Newport, Vermont, for the period 1920 to 1970. Coutts had an extraordinary career as teacher, youth leader, Red Cross worker, executive director of several organizations, as well as serving several terms in both the Vermont Senate and House. A few letters and diaries in the collection are related to Coutts' mother, Flora Longeway Coutts, and her sister, Ann Coutts Aldrich.

Coutts' notebooks make up a sizable part of the collection. These are part diary and part "to do" lists that she kept from 1958 to 1973. They are filled with names and tasks – indicative of a highly motivated and organized individual.

In diaries from an earlier period, Coutts recorded her travel and experiences while teaching in Korea from 1921 to 1924. Although she never married, she had a number of men friends and enjoyed a full social life

The collection of photographs is extensive. These include portraits of Coutts at many stages in her life; the Vermont Senate ca. 1937, in which she is the only woman present; her family; her travels abroad; and many Vermont publicity photographs.

When she was teaching in Korea in the 1920s, Coutts mailed photographs to her family with her notations. They include photographs of Pyongyang Foreign School, her colleagues, and various vacation trips.

Many of the Red Cross photographs from India and China during World War II are 8x10 glossy prints produced for official publicity purposes. Although these are not all identified, the photographs reveal Coutts' skill as a supervisor of these facilities.

Vermont photographs include Vermont towns and road signs, ca. 1950, perhaps related to her interest in the 251 Club. There are a number of Vermont Agency on Development publicity photographs, ca. 1940s and 1950s, as well as 1950s J. Walter Thompson camera promotion shots of churches, covered bridges, seasonal landscapes, and individuals.

A large collection of postcards includes both Vermont and international subjects. These date from ca. 1915 to the 1930s and some have messages from Flora Coutts to her family.

Although there are not many letters in the collection, they are important pieces of Flora Coutts' life. She describes her teaching experiences in Korea between 1922-5, and her experiences with the Red Cross from 1943 to 1945, (when the U.S. Army censor permits) in India and China. Further, information about this period of her life may be found in several newspapers published by the U.S. Armed Forces in 1945 (size C folder).

Organization

The collection is organized in seven series:

- I. Flora Longeway Coutts (Mrs. Robert M.), dates?
- II. Ann Coutts Aldrich (Mrs. Alfred), b. 1904
- III. Flora Jane Coutts, 1897-1983
 - a. Biography
 - b. Diaries
 - c. Letters
 - d. Notebooks
 - e. Notes
 - f. Work files
- IV. Photographs
 - a. Family and FJC's life in Vermont
 - b. Korea, 1920s
 - c. India and China, 1943-5
 - d. Vermont
- V. Newspaper clippings
- VI. Postcards
 - a. Vermont
 - b. Asia and Europe
- VII. Miscellaneous

Related Collections

- *The Vermonter*, June 1940, v.45, no.6, pp. 123-125, "Specializing in Vermont and Orleans County," by Flora J. Coutts. VHS 974.30 V598 v.45 (photocopy in Folder 0).

- Green Mountain Club Records, Doc. 300, Alphabetical name index to End-to-End Reports (Long Trail). Coutts, Flora J., 1957-2-79. Report lacking.
- Consult the VHS museum catalog for artifacts related to her life.

Inventory

I. Flora Longeway Coutts, dates?

Doc 457:1 Letters to, 1922-44

II. Ann Coutts Aldrich (b. 1904)

Doc 457:2 Diaries, 1923, 1925 and 1926
 3 Letters, 1922-26
 4 _____, 1930-31
 5 _____, 1932-34
 6 _____, undated, ca. 1930
 7 _____, _____
 7A Intelligence tests, undated
 8 _____, 1925-26
 8A *Lessons in Progressive Drawing*, "A. Coutts, Montpelier, Vermont, Montpelier Seminary"
 8B *The Ontario Public School Speller*, with notes inserted.

III. Flora Jane Coutts, 1897-1983

Doc 457:9 Biographical, 1940s
 10 _____, Newspaper clippings about, 1940s-1956 and undated
 11 Diaries, 1920-24, 1938, 1953
 12 _____, 1953-54, 1954, 1958
 13 _____, 1961, 1975, and 1976
 14 Letters from Flora, to her mother, 1916 and 1921
 15 _____, from Korea, 1922
 16 _____, _____, Mar.-June 1923
 17 _____, _____, July-Dec. 1923
 18 _____, _____, 1924
 19 _____, _____, undated
 20 _____, returning from Korea, 1925
 21 _____, from India, 1943
 22 _____, from China, 1944-45
 MSA 914:01 _____, to family, 1944-45
 02 Letters to Flora, from interested men
 03 _____, from PyrengYang, Korea, 1927-1966
 Doc 458:24 _____, from Sen. Aiken and Gov. Proctor, 1945-63
 MSA 914:04 _____, from Dorothy C. Fisher and Wendell L. Wilkie
 Doc 458:23 _____, miscellaneous, 1925-78
 MSA 914:05 _____, miscellaneous

- Doc 459:1 Notebooks, March, April-May 1958
 2 _____, Aug.-Sept. 1958
 3 _____, Nov.-Dec. 1958
 4 _____, Dec.-Jan. 1959 and Feb.-June 1959
 5 _____, Feb.-March 1959 and March-May 1959
 6 _____, June 1959, and June-July 1959
 Doc 459:7 _____, Aug.-Oct. 1959, and Dec.1959-Feb. 1960
 8 _____, Mar.-Nov. 1960 and April-May 1961
 9 _____, Oct.-Nov. 1961 and June 1963
 10 _____, Jan.-May 1963 and Nov.-March 1964
 11 _____, April-Aug. 1964 and Sept. 1964-March 1965
 12 _____, April 1965-Oct. 1967 and Aug.-Dec.1965
 13 _____, Jan.-March 1966 and April-Aug. 1966
 14 _____, Mar.-Aug. 1967 and Jan.-May 1968
 15 _____, May-Sept. 1968 and Sept.-Dec. 1968
 16 _____, Dec. 1968-May 1969 and June-Sept. 19, 1969
 17 _____, Sept.19-Nov. 1969 and Dec. 1969-Mar. 15, 1970
 18 _____, Mar.16-June 23, 1970 and June 23-Aug. 1970
 19 _____, Sept.-Nov. 1970 and Dec.1970-Feb. 1971
 20 _____, March-May 1971, May 25-Oct. 7, 1971 and Feb.-May 18, 1972
 21 _____, April-July 1973 and undated
 22 _____, undated and miscellaneous 1977 (3)
 23 _____, ca. 1974-77
 24 _____, 1977
 25 _____, Notes, geology of Vt., undated
 26 _____, _____, _____
 27 _____, Vt. roads and handmade rugs, _____
- Doc 457:25 Notes, *Vermont State Papers*, undated
 26 _____, _____, _____
 27 _____, City plan, Newport, Vt., 1960
 28 _____, miscellaneous, undated
 29 Work files, Pyengyang Foreign School, Korea, 1920-35
 30 _____, Korea, 1920s-1976
 31 _____, China, India, undated
 32 _____, Red Cross, 1943-45
 33 _____, Vermont Senate, 1937-39
 34 _____, General Assembly, 1961-1972
 35 _____, Republican National Convention Philadelphia, 1940
 36 _____, Republican Party (U.S. & Vt.), 1970 and 1973
 MSA 913:01 _____, Northeastern Vt. Development Association, Inc., 1950-51
 Vermont Development Commission, "Outline of Basic Data
 Essential in the Planning for Economic Development in Vermont,"
 preliminary draft, 1948.
 02 _____, Bayley-Hazen Road, 1959
 03 _____, Sen. George Aiken, 1960-75

- MSA 914:06 Education information, 1903-1960
 07 Notes and invitations
 08 Information 1921-1942, Day Book notes 1973
 09 Trips, Florida 1940, Iceland 1974, Adirondack Hike undated
 10 Coutts-Moriarty 4-H Camp
 11 Winona J. Billings, Berry School, travel cards, Lake Memphremagog
 Goat Farm, Billings family genealogy
 :12 Historical Societies, Orleans and Island Pond, 1977-78
 13 Organizations, member of or interested in
 14 Willoughby Lake Handbook
 15 Legislature songs and miscellaneous

IV. Photographs

- MSA 913:04 Coutts family, 1969 and undated
 05 Flora J. Coutts, portraits, ca. 1905-1960
 06 _____, _____, 1912-ca.1942
 07 _____, _____, 1940-67
 Doc 457:08 Vt. legislature, 1937-72
 Size C _____, 1937-38 session
 _____, 1940 session
 Size D _____, Vermont Senate, ca. 1937
 _____, legislators from Orleans County, 1961
 _____, "Ladies of the Legislature," 1969
 _____, FJC with group of women, undated
 09 Photographs 1969-73, Legislature, boy and girl pages
 MAS 913:10 Florida, ca. 1950
 Doc 458:1 FJC's camp, 1959
 2 Bayley-Hazen Road Day, 1959
 3 People, unidentified, ca. 1890-1920
 4 _____, _____, ca. 1920-1930
 5 _____, _____, 1940-1950s
 6 Animals, undated
 7 Korea, 1922-25
 8 _____, _____
 9 _____, _____
 10 _____, _____
 11 _____, _____
 12 _____, _____
 13 _____, _____, and undated
 14 Red Cross, F.J. Coutts in uniform, 1943-45
 15 _____, India, 1943 and undated
 16 _____, China, F.J. Coutts, et.al, 1944-45
 17 _____, _____, _____, _____, Town Club
 18 _____, _____, people, _____
 19 _____, _____, _____, _____
 20 _____, _____, _____, _____

- 21 _____, _____, _____, _____
 22 _____, _____, buildings, _____
 23 _____, _____, _____, _____
 24 _____, _____, miscellaneous, _____
 25 _____, unidentified, 1943-45
 Size D “In the Orient where Flora lived for some time,” no date
 26 Miscellaneous travel, 1925-1932 and undated
 27 Vermont, towns, ca. 1950s
 28 _____, road signs, _____
 29 Vermont, miscellaneous, ca. 1905-1960
 30 _____, J. Walter Thompson Co., camera promotion, towns, ca. 1950
 31 _____, _____, churches, covered bridges, _____
 32 _____, _____, winter and skiing, etc., ca. 1950
 33 _____, _____, spring and autumn, ca. 1950
 34 _____, Agency of Development, animals, ca. 1940
 35 _____, _____, people at work and play, _____
 36 _____, _____, miscellaneous, 1940s-50s
 37 Places, unidentified, undated
 38 Negatives, miscellaneous, ca. 1925 and later

V. Newspaper clippings

- Doc 458:39 Vermont, miscellaneous, 1939-1971
 40 Miscellaneous, 1940s
 MSA 914:16 Legislature
 17 _____, GOP State Committee and town
 18 Miscellaneous

VI. Postcards

- Doc 458:41 Vermont, flood, 1927
 42 _____, Mt. Mansfield, Long Trail etc., 1920-47
 43 _____, Northeast Kingdom, ca. 1915-1940
 44 _____, Lake Champlain, ca. 1940
 45 _____, towns, Barnard-Highgate, 1907-1958
 46 _____, _____, Lyndonville-Plymouth, 1920-63
 47 _____, _____, Poultney-Woodstock, 1919-1943
 48 _____, miscellaneous, 1915-1932
 49 Korea, cities, with message from FJC, ca. 1925
 50 _____, people, _____, _____
 51 _____, miscellaneous, _____, _____
 52 _____, _____, no message, _____
 53 China, ca. 1925
 54 Egypt, ca. 1925
 55 Hong Kong, Singapore, ca. 1925
 56 India, ca. 1925
 57 Japan, ca. 1925
 58 Jerusalem, ca. 1925

- 59 London, ca. 1925
60 Miscellaneous

VII. Miscellaneous

- Doc 458:61 Clippings, poetry, undated
62 Vermont, pageants:
Pageant of Vermont Pioneer Women by Peggy Coffin Halvosa, undated, and *Saga of Vermont* by Walter Hard and Wallace Fay for Mock Session of the Vt. Legislature, March 28, 1941. Typescripts, 1941.
63 Greeting cards, 1927-1945
64 *What is Vermont?*, a collection for the youth of Vermont by the League of Vt. Writers etc., sponsored by The Champlain Festival Committee in honor of the 350th anniversary of the discovery of Lake Champlain. Typescript, 1959.
65 Address books, undated
66 Fragments, _____
67 Miscellaneous, 1920s-1970s
68 Miscellaneous printed items
Montpelier Seminary, Commencement, 1919
C.A. Parkhurst, *The Tamil Country*, no date.
Colin Cleghorn, *Calcutta: A Book for Visitors*, 1945.
American Red Cross, *Guide to Calcutta for Servicemen*.
B. J. Vaswani, *Mark Twain in India*, second edition.
Ada Lee, *The Darjeeling Disaster: Its Bright Side, the Triumph of the Six Lee Children*, 1923.
Tested Recipes and Instructions for the Hamilton Beach Model "D" Food Mixer and Attachments.
- Size C FJC teaching certificates 1917 and 1918
FJC Johnson Normal School certificates, 1916 and 1917
Map of Kashmir and Jammu, Newman & Co., Calcutta, undated
Map of Japan and Korea. National Geographic, Dec. 1960
Command Post, China, Feb. 9, 1945 (published for the Armed Forces)
Feb. 9, 16, and 23, 1945
China Lantern, (for the U.S. Armed Forces)
June 22, 1945
"A G.I. View of American Red Cross" (cartoon map)

Priscilla Page
September 2000
Rev. December 2000
Rev. January 2002
Rev. July 2012
Rev. June 2021