Flora Jane Coutts (1897-1983)
Papers, 1920-1970
Doc 457-459, 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). It is housed in three document boxes, one size C folder, and one size D folder (3 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 Pyengyang 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

- Consult the VHS museum catalog for artifacts related to her life.

*Vermont Historical Society* • *Montpelier 05609-0901*
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
   14 Letters, 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
   23 ______, from miscellaneous, 1928-78
   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
   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
13 ____, Jan.-March 1966 and April-Aug. 1966
14 ____, Mar.-Aug. 1967 and Jan.-May 1968
20 ____, March-May 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, 1966-1972
35 ____, Republican Nat’l Convention Philadelphia, 1940
36 ____, Republican Party (U.S. & Vt.), 1970 and 1973

Vermont Development Commission. “Outline of Basic Data
Essential in the Planning for Economic Development in Vermont,”
preliminary draft, 1948.
38 ____, Bayley-Hazen Road, 1959
39 ____, Sen. George Aiken, 1960-75

IV. Photographs
Doc 457:40 Coutts family, 1969
41 Flora J. Coutts, portraits, ca. 1905-1960
42 ____, ____, 1912-ca.1942
43 ____, ____, 1940-67

Doc 457:44 Vt. legislature, 1937-72
Size C ____, 1937-38 session
        ____, 1940 session
Size D ____, Vermont Senate, ca. 1937
        ____, legislators from Orleans County, 1961
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V. Newspaper clippings

Doc 458:39 Vermont, miscellaneous, 1939-1971

Miscellaneous, 1940s
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, _____, _____
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52 _____, _____, no message, _____
53 China, ca. 1925
54 Egypt, ca. 1925
55 Hong Kong, Singapore, ca. 1925
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57 Japan, ca. 1925
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VII. Miscellaneous
Doc 458:61 Clippings, poetry, undated
62 Vermont, pageants:
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
American Red Cross, *Guide to Calcutta for Servicemen*.
*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
*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