

**The Filson Historical Society**

**Gabhart family  
Papers, 1918-1931**

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Size of collection:  
0.33 cu. ft.

Location Number:  
Mss. A G112

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**Scope and Content Note**

The collection consists of the correspondence and diaries of Mary E. Lilly and James H. Gabhart, who were from Smith Mills in Henderson County, Kentucky, and moved to Louisville after their marriage in ca. 1923. The letters document the relationship between Mary and James before their marriage and provide information about the influenza epidemic of 1918 and Mary's time at Western Kentucky State Teachers College in 1921. The diaries are authored by James while he was a patient seeking treatment for tuberculosis at Waverly Hills Sanatorium in Jefferson County from 1928 until his death in 1931.

Folders 1-6 consist of correspondence dating from 1918 to 1927. Letters from 1918 are written from Mary in Smith Mills to James in Georgetown, Kentucky, where James is attending Georgetown College and has passed his examination for the United States Army. Mary writes about closures of schools, churches, and businesses during the influenza epidemic, mentioning cases and deaths from the flu. She inquires when James will be able to come home, and she asks him about his feelings for Mary Doyle from Henderson. Letters, ca. 1918-1920, are written to James from Mary Doyle, Fleet Dummitt, Charles Burris, and other correspondents. Letters written in 1919-1920 from Mary to James reference Mary teaching school and James in Smith Mills working for the census. Letters written in 1921 from Mary to James provide information about Mary's months at Western Kentucky State Teachers College in Bowling Green. She asks about James's work planting corn, and she writes at length about whether he will "ever want to go with" her again, referencing their "brief engagement" that ended at some point. Letters from 1924 date from after the marriage of Mary and James and their move to Louisville; they are from Levy Bros. and Matt Iron and Sons Jewelers and Opticians, welcoming the birth of Mary and James's daughter Martha Lilly. Two letters from 1927 are to Mary from James, likely written from Waverly Hills Sanatorium.

Folders 7-8 hold three diaries written by James in 1928-1931, while he was a patient at Waverly Hills Sanatorium. He writes of visits from Mary, who is working as an accountant, and discusses his relationship with her and their daughter Martha Lilly. He describes his symptoms, his interaction with physicians and nurses, his treatments, the activities and the deaths of other patients, and his visits home. The last diary documents his departure from Waverly Hills in late May to spend his "last days," as he notes, at his mother's house before he dies at the sanatorium in August.

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**Biographical Note**

James Henry Gabhart, Jr. was born in 1898 in Smith Mills in Henderson County, Kentucky. In 1918, he was living in Georgetown, Kentucky, where he was enrolled as a student at Georgetown College, a Baptist school. He was inducted into the United States Army in October 1918. In 1920, he was working on his family's farm in Walnut Bottom in Henderson County.

Mary E. Lilly was born in 1898 in Smith Mills. During the months of April-June 1921, she lived in Bowling Green and attended Western Kentucky State Teachers College. At some point in the next several years, Mary and James married and moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where their daughter Martha Lilly Gabhart was born in 1924.

James was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 1922 and sought treatment at Waverly Hills Sanatorium in Jefferson County from the late 1920s until his death in August 1931. Mary Gabhart is listed as an accountant in the 1930 census. She died in 1969 in Louisville.

Sources:

Ancestry.com

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**Folder List**

**Box 1**

Folder 1: Correspondence from Mary Lilly to James Gabhart, September-October 1918

Folder 2: Correspondence from Mary Lilly to James Gabhart, undated, ca. Fall 1918

Folder 3: Correspondence received by James Gabhart, ca. 1918-1920

Folder 4: Correspondence from Mary Lilly to James Gabhart, 1919-1920

Folder 5: Correspondence from Mary Lilly to James Gabhart, 1921

Folder 6: Correspondence of Mary and James Gabhart, 1924, 1927

Folder 7: Diary of James Gabhart, 1928-1929

Folder 8: Diaries of James Gabhart, 1930 and January-July 1931

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**Subject Headings**

Baptists - Kentucky  
Courtship - Kentucky  
Depressions - 1929 - Kentucky  
Diseases - Kentucky  
Gabhart, James Henry, 1898-1931  
Gabhart, Mary Lilly, 1898-1969  
Influenza Epidemic, 1918-1919 - Kentucky  
Marketing - Kentucky - Louisville  
Medical care - Kentucky  
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Teachers - Kentucky  
Tuberculosis patients' writings  
Tuberculosis - Kentucky - Louisville  
Veterans - Kentucky  
Waverly Hills Sanatorium (Louisville, Ky.)  
Weather  
Western Kentucky State Teachers College  
World War, 1914-1918 - Kentucky