

The Filson Historical Society

**Hood, James N., 1925-2010
Papers, 1927, 1943-1946**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, see the Curator of Special Collections.

Size of Collection:
0.66 Cubic Feet

Location Number:
Mss./A/H776

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Scope and Content Note

The James N. Hood papers document the courtship of two young Kentuckians during World War II. Hood corresponded with his sweetheart Mary Lee Willis during his service as an Armed Guard in the Navy. Hood writes of his love for Willis, his training and duties, his leisure activities (especially the movies he has recently watched), and his growing homesickness. He also comments on news from his hometown of Columbia, Ky. In addition to Hood's correspondence, there are also a few letters written to Willis by other family members and friends. Hood trained in New Orleans and San Francisco, served in the North Pacific, and was on coastal patrol in San Diego after the war's end.

Folders 1-14 contain correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis.

Folder 1 contains correspondence from Hood while he was based at the Armed Guard Center in New Orleans in 1944.

Folder 2 contains correspondence when Hood was based at Treasure Island in San Francisco, California. Hood often writes about the tests he has to take for his training.

Folders 3-6 contain Hood's letters during the time he was on duty in the North Pacific. On 30 July 1945, he lists places that he has traveled, many of them in the Alaskan Islands. On 22 March 1945, he describes a hunting trip in the Attu Islands.

Folders 7-8 contain correspondence primarily from Seattle, Washington, where Hood's ship, the Delarof, was docked for repairs. Especially of interest is Hood's description of the celebrations in Seattle at the news that the war has ended (14 & 17 Aug 1945).

Folder 9 contains correspondence from Camp Elliott in San Diego, California, where Hood reported for reassignment after the end of the war.

Folders 10-14 contain Hood's letters from San Diego, where he has been assigned to coastal patrol. Letters in this portion of the collection especially reflect Hood's homesickness and growing desperation to be reunited with Mary Lee Willis.

Folder 15 contains miscellaneous correspondence written to Mary Lee Willis. Included are two letters written by other friends serving in World War II—one from Owen J. Estes from Camp Wheeler, Ga. and the other from Art [Clinton?] who was in the Navy in Norfolk Va. Mary Lee Willis also saved several letters written by her mother, Sara Willis, shortly before her death in 1927. Finally, there is a small collection of letters exchanged in 1946 between Mary Lee and someone she refers to as "mother", who has gone to Palm Beach, Florida for health reasons.

Related Collections:

James N. Hood letters, 1944-1946 (Mss. C H)

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Biographical Note

James N. Hood was born in 1925 to James and Myra Hood. His family lived in Columbia, Adair County, Kentucky. During World War II, Hood became an Armed Guard for the Navy to protect merchant ships. He was a Gunner's Mate, 3rd class. He trained in New Orleans (1944) and at Treasure Island in San Francisco (Jan.-Feb 1945). In March through July of 1945, Hood was on duty in the North Pacific where he wrote especially of visiting some of the Alaskan Islands. He served briefly on the S.S. Choluteca in New Orleans before being transferred to the S.S. Delarof. The Delarof was docked in Seattle for repairs when the war ended in August 1945. After the end of the war, he spent some time at Camp Elliott (Nov. 1945) and on coastal patrol in San Diego, CA. He was discharged in April 1946. Hood returned home to marry his sweetheart, Mary Lee Willis.

Mary Lee Willis was born in 1926 to Don Carlos Willis and Sara Alice Williams. She lived in Louisville, Ky. until the death of her mother in 1927. Following the death of his wife, Don Carlos returned to his hometown of Columbia, Ky. Mary Lee grew up in Columbia, Ky. where she eventually met James Hood, her future husband. The couple married soon after James was discharged from the Navy in April 1946. They spent their lives in Columbia, Ky.

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Folder List

Box 1

- Folder 1: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, 1944
- Folder 2: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Jan. – Feb. 1945.
- Folder 3: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Mar. – Apr. 1945.
- Folder 4: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, May 1945.
- Folder 5: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, June 1945.
- Folder 6: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, July 1945.
- Folder 7: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Aug. 1945.
- Folder 8: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Sept. – Oct. 1945.

Box 2

- Folder 9: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Nov. 1945.
- Folder 10: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Dec. 1-15, 1945.
- Folder 11: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Dec. 16-31, 1945.
- Folder 12: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Jan. – Feb., 1946.
- Folder 13: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Mar. 1946.
- Folder 14: Correspondence from James Hood to Mary Lee Willis, Apr. 1946.
- Folder 15: Miscellaneous correspondence to Mary Lee Willis, 1927, 1943-1946.

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Subject Headings

Adair County (Ky.) – Social life and customs
Alaska – Description and travel
Betrothal
Camp Elliott (Calif.)
Clothing and dress
Columbia (Ky.) – Social life and customs
Courtship
Fairs – Kentucky
Hood family
Hood, Mary Lee (Willis), 1926-2004
Letterheads – United States
Love-letters
Military education
Motion pictures
Music – 20th century
Seattle – Description and travel
United States. Navy. Armed guard
United States. Navy – Military life
United States. Navy – Physical training – California – San Francisco
United States. Navy – Physical training – Louisiana – New Orleans
United States – Social life and customs
Willis family
Willis, Sara Alice (Williams), d. 1927
World War, 1939-1945
World War, 1939-1945 – Economic aspects
World War, 1939-1945 – Naval operations, American