

The Filson Historical Society

**Kyer family
Papers, 1906-2012**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, contact the Collections Department.

Size of Collection:
2 cubic feet

Location Number:
Mss. A K99

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Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of papers from the family of Dotsy and Minerva Kyer and their children Charles, Gerald, Virginia Dale (most often called "Dale" or "Tater"), and Lois. Most of the letters in the collection are written by Minerva, Charles, Gerald, and Dale to relatives and friends. The family was based in Camden-on-Gauley, West Virginia, but as the children branched out to live, work, or study elsewhere, the family relied heavily on letters to communicate and share news. Significant correspondence describes the experiences of Gerald and Charles at their Army postings during World War II and of Dale and Lois during their time at Berea College. Many of the letters in later years show Dale reaching out to members of her extended family as she attempts to compile a family history.

Correspondence includes letters, postcards, holiday cards, thank you cards, wedding invitations, graduation announcements, valentines, sympathy cards, and telegrams. The collection also includes family photos, newspaper clippings, military documents, birth and death certificates, marriage certificates, business cards, school report cards, a copy of Dotsy Kyer's will, notes and notebooks from Dale's time at school, and receipts for Minerva from a state TB sanitarium.

Folder 1 contains postcards from and identification for Emiline Workman, mother of Dotsy Kyer. Postcards are dated from 1917-1925, and some are undated.

Folder 2 contains letters to Minerva and Dotsy dated 1936-1946 telling of life before and during World War II. They include several letters from Minerva's nephew Private Edward Spencer, a Marine who writes from his wartime stations. There are also a few letters from Dale and Lois from their time at Berea College.

Folders 3-5 contain letters, cards, and a graduation invitation. The letters are mostly to and from Minerva and Dotsy dated 1947-1977, from the time their daughters were at Berea College to the time when all their children were grown and scattered across the country. Many of the later letters deal with loneliness and grief.

Folder 6 contains receipts from the West Virginia State Tuberculosis Sanitarium in Hopemont, W.Va. dated 1927-1928 for Minerva Kyer.

Folders 7-21 contain documents relating to Gerald Kyer during his time in the Army during World War II, from 1940-1945. Papers primarily consist of correspondence from Gerald to members of his family that include letters, photos, newspaper clippings, cards, telegrams, and postcards. Gerald's letters share wartime news and accounts of military training and homesickness. He also shares his pastimes of deer hunting and going to the movies, which help keep the boredom at bay. While stationed in California at Camp Callan and Camp Haan, Gerald

watched the Pacific coast for Japanese submarines and air raids; he mentions the California blackout being lifted in October 1943. He was deployed overseas in 1944 and writes from France and Germany. Folders 19 and 20 contain Gerald's vital records and official military documents.

Folders 22-25 contain documents relating to Charles Kyer's time during and after World War II. 22-23 contain correspondence from Charles Kyer and his wife Virginia, or "Ginny," from his time in the Army during WWII (1940-1943), during which he was stationed in New York and Iceland, to his later years (1953-1994). Folders 24-25 contain Charles's official military documents, as well as newspaper clippings about, invitations to, and certificates for marksmanship and shooting competitions, including the 1955 All Second Army Rifle and Pistol Squad, the 1957 Second United States Army Indoor Rifle and Pistol Championship Matches, the 1957 Second United States Army Commander's Small Arms Championship, and the 1957 U.S. Army International Olympic Rifle Team.

Folders 26-33 contain correspondence from Virginia, "Dale," ranging from 1928-2012. Correspondence includes letters, holiday cards, wedding invitations, "In memoriam" and sympathy cards, newspaper clippings, and artwork from grandchildren. In the letters Dale details her struggles caring for sick and dying parents and sorting out her and her siblings' inheritance. Many of the letters are to and from distant relatives as Dale tries to collect her genealogical history, intending to write a book about the family.

Folders 34-36 contain Dale's school materials from Sunday school and from her time at Berea College. An early notebook contains copied poems, inspirational quotes, and Bible verses. Berea College papers include sketches from an art class, a 1949 term bill receipt, and a 1950 college graduation program.

Folders 37-51 contain miscellaneous letters, documents, certificates, invitations, postcards, valentines, newspaper clippings, and business cards dealing with the Kyer family from 1906-2010. Folder 39 contains vital records for Dotsy Kyer and a copy of Dotsy's will.

Related Collections:

Hutsell, Virginia Dale Kyer, 1924-2018. Genealogy Research Collection. (Mss. A H981)

Kyer family photograph collection

Kyer family museum collection.

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Biographical Note

Dotsy Fitzhugh Kyer (1890-1976), son of Charles William Kyer and Emiline Morton, was a farmer and insurance agent. He lived with his wife, Minerva Spencer, in Camden-on-Gauley, West Virginia. They had four children: Gerald Spencer, Charles Morton, Virginia Dale, and Lois (b. 1922).

Gerald Spencer Kyer (1917-1995) was a taxi driver in White Sulphur, West Virginia, prior to his induction into the Army in June 1941. Gerald was stationed in California for most of World War II, where he worked as an electrician. He married Hilda Lutz Dolginoff of Los Angeles on October 28, 1944. He was deployed to France in December 1944 and was involved in the battle of the Rhineland, serving as Section Chief with the 245th Anti-Aircraft Artillery in France and Germany. He attained the rank of Staff Sergeant. Gerald died in Belmont, California on March 22, 1995.

Charles Morton Kyer (1919-2008) also served in the military during World War II. He served with the 5th Engineers and later was a Technical Sergeant with the 278th Engineer Combat Battalion. Following the war, Charles had a continued interest in marksmanship. He was involved in many competitions and was a member of the team that won the Le Clerc Small Arms Competition in 1954. In 1957, he received an invitation to try out for the U.S. Army International Olympic Rifle Team. He married Virginia "Ginny" Hamrick on July 3, 1941.

Virginia Dale Kyer was born on February 17, 1924. She attended Berea College and after graduation moved to Louisville, Kentucky to take care of her sick sister. In Louisville she worked as a librarian and teacher. She also met her husband, Thomas Hutsell, and they were married on August 30, 1958. Virginia Dale's interests included genealogy, and she conducted extensive research on her family history.

Sources:

"Obituary for Virginia Dale Hutsell," *Courier-Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, 23 January 2018.

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Folder List

Box 1

- Folder 1: Emiline Morton Kyer Workman papers, 1917-1925, undated
- Folder 2: Dotsy F. and Minerva Spencer Kyer correspondence, 1936-1946
- Folder 3: Dotsy F. and Minerva Spencer Kyer correspondence, 1947-1977
- Folder 4: Minerva Spencer Kyer correspondence to Ellen Harris, 1963-1977
- Folder 5: Minerva Spencer Kyer correspondence to Alice Henkel Rupe & Leona Henkel, 1970-1977
- Folder 6: Minerva Spencer Kyer - W. Va. State Tuberculosis Sanitarium receipts, 1927-1928
- Folder 7: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, 1940-July 1941
- Folder 8: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, August 1941
- Folder 9: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, September-October 1941
- Folder 10: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, November-December 1941
- Folder 11: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, January-March 1942
- Folder 12: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, April-May 1942
- Folder 13: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, June-August 1942
- Folder 14: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, September-November 1942
- Folder 15: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, 1943
- Folder 16: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, 1944
- Folder 17: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, 1945-1985
- Folder 18: Gerald S. Kyer correspondence, undated
- Folder 19: Gerald S. Kyer military papers, 1940-1946
- Folder 20: Gerald S. Kyer vital records, 1917-1995
- Folder 21: Gerald S. Kyer newspaper clippings and miscellaneous, 1939-1972
- Folder 22: Charles Morton and Virginia Hamrick Kyer correspondence, 1940-1943
- Folder 23: Charles Morton and Virginia Hamrick Kyer correspondence, 1953-1994
- Folder 24: Charles Morton Kyer military and marksmanship competition papers, 1940-1976
- Folder 25: Charles Morton Kyer newspaper clippings, 1944, 1956, undated
- Folder 26: Virginia Dale Kyer correspondence, 1928-1949
- Folder 27: Virginia Dale Kyer correspondence, 1950-1977
- Folder 28: Virginia Dale Kyer correspondence, 1978-1980
- Folder 29: Virginia Dale Kyer correspondence, 1981-1984
- Folder 30: Virginia Dale Kyer correspondence, 1985-1988

Box 2

- Folder 31: Virginia Dale Kyer correspondence, 1989-1999
- Folder 32: Virginia Dale Kyer correspondence, 2000-2012
- Folder 33: Virginia Dale Kyer correspondence, undated
- Folder 34: Virginia Dale Kyer church composition books and certificate, 1933-1940s

Folder 35: Virginia Dale Kyer church role call book, 1939
Folder 36: Virginia Dale Kyer college class notes and term bill from Berea college, c. 1940s
Folder 37: Kyer family letters, c. 1930s-2003, undated
Folder 38: C. W. Kyer business cards for taxi service, c. 1930s
Folder 39: Vital records and copy of Dotsy F. Kyer's will, 1818-1977
Folder 40: School report cards & student newsletter, 1925-1940s
Folder 41: Birth, wedding, graduation and funeral announcements, 1953-1995
Folder 42: Commencement programs and graduation announcements, 1931-2006
Folder 43: Poems, writing, and clippings, undated
Folder 44: Postcards and greeting cards, 1906-1942, undated
Folder 45: Newspaper clippings re: Kyer & Spencer families, 1944-2010, undated
Folder 46: Rita Cunningham's newspaper clippings and letters to Virginia Dale Kyer, 1973-1980
Folder 47: Obituaries, 1975-2002
Folder 48: Newspaper clippings re: Tawnia Key, 1983-1986
Folder 49: Miscellaneous newspaper clippings, 1982-2002
Folder 50: Empty envelopes, 1944-1987
Folder 51: Miscellaneous

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Subject Headings

Kyer, Charles Morton, 1919-2008
Kyer, Gerald Spencer, 1917-1995
Hutsell, Virginia Dale Kyer, 1924-2018
Greeting cards
Air raid warning systems - United States
April Fools' Day
Berea (Ky.)
Berea College
Blackouts in war - California
Camden-on-Gauley (W. Va.)
Camp Callan (Calif.) - 1941
Camp Haan (Calif.) - 1941-1944
Deer hunting
Fort Thomas (Ky.) - 1940
France - World War, 1939-1945
Genealogy
Germany - World War, 1939-1945
Iceland - World War, 1939-1945
Inheritance and succession
Mother's Day
Poetry
Practical jokes
Shooting contests
Tuberculosis - Treatment - West Virginia
United States. Army. Engineer Combat Battalion, 278th
United States. Army. Engineer Combat Battalion, 5th
United States. Army. Field Artillery Battalion, 245th
Sexism
World War, 1939-1945
Education - West Virginia