



State Historical Society of Missouri Completes Nationwide World War II Letters Digital Collection

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COLUMBIA, MO, May 19, 2020 – Volunteers and staff of the State Historical Society have been working steadily over the past several years to complete the digital collection of World War II letters. In 2016, SHSMO began an ambitious project to provide online access to a large manuscript collection of World War II letters written by over 3,000 enlisted men and women from nearly all 50 states. In addition, letters from family members add perspective on life on the homefront.

The collection is a result of an effort begun in September 1945 by Kansas City radio broadcaster Ted Malone, the host of the nationally syndicated ABC show *Between the Bookends*. Malone asked listeners to send in wartime correspondence to be considered for a book of war letters edited by University of Missouri professor W. Francis English. People from all over the United States were soon contributing letters written by their loved ones who had served in the war.

Although the book was never finished, the stories can now be shared online 75 years later after the war's end. The public can access the letters for free online at digital.shsmo.org.

Over a three-year period, volunteers, college students and staff scanned, transcribed, and added essential metadata to ensure the letters are keyword-searchable and easily accessible. Visitors to the site can group letters by date, location, and hometown of the service member. Researchers and scholars can tailor their searches to explore how the war impacted families and service members depending on where they were from and when and where they served.

The State Historical Society will continue to add to its World War II Digital Collection from other related manuscript collections. The Jean Schwarting Anderson papers, for example, provide a fascinating glimpse into the day-to-day life of a member of the Navy's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) during the war. The collection contains the correspondence of Jean Schwarting, who wrote letters home to her family in Missouri nearly every day of her training in Massachusetts and her service in Washington, D.C., where she worked in communications. The lively and informative letters offer numerous details and insights into her experiences as a WAVE, providing a glimpse into the world of military women during World War II.

Founded in 1898, the State Historical Society of Missouri collects, preserves, publishes, and makes available material related to all aspects and periods of Missouri history. SHSMO also provides educational programs on the cultural heritage of the state through its research centers in Cape Girardeau, Columbia, Kansas City, Rolla, St. Louis, and Springfield.

Link to Entire WWII Collection: <https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/search>

Selected Letters in SHSMO WWII Collection:

V-E Day Letters:

<https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/19089/rec/4>

<https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/11114/rec/1>

May 25, 1945, Letter following V-E Day:

<https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/2552>

KIA letter:

<https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/21705/rec/11>

KIA with photo:

<https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/867/rec/12>

With photo:

<https://digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/wwii/id/14872/rec/31>

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