



Viola Woodall Papers (S0481)

Collection Number: S0481

Collection Title: Viola Woodall Papers

Dates: 1942-1946

Creator: Woodall, Viola, 1902-1995

Abstract: The Viola Woodall Papers contain service men's letters, newsletters, and ledgers. During the 1940s, Viola Woodall directed the Young Men's Choir of Immanuel Baptist Church in St. Louis City. After many choristers joined the armed services during World War II, Woodall organized church women, "service mothers," to write them as a means of bolstering morale.

Collection Size: 0.4 cubic feet
(25 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](https://www.shsmo.org/research-center-st-louis). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Viola Woodall Papers* (S0481); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection by Viola Woodall on December 12, 1988 (Accession No. SA2898).

Processed by: Processed by Rachael Heriford, AJ Medlock, and Isaac Alexander, October 2023

Biographical Note:

Viola Virginia Woodall was born in St. Louis, Missouri, to Anvil (1859-1947) and Elizabeth Johnson (1866-1964). Viola married Roland Woodall in 1923. The couple had two children:

Calbert A. (1924-2021) and Paul A. (1925-2017). The Woodalls lived in St. Louis, where Viola worked as a homemaker, secretary, and accountant. During the 1940s, Viola served as the music director of the Immanuel Baptist Church in St. Louis City. As music director, Woodall directed the Young Men's Choir. During World War II, many members of the men's choir joined the armed services. In response, Viola organized a group of women from the church to serve as "Service Mothers" and write to the newly drafted choristers. The letters attempted to inform service members about church activities, boost morale, and let them know what was happening to other service members from the church. From 1943-1944, Viola compiled the letters and general church news for Immanuel Baptist Church to create the newsletter *Armed Services News* to distribute to the soldiers and members of the church. During the 1980s, Viola relocated to St. Charles and lived there until she died on March 8, 1995.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following three series:

Correspondence
Lists and Ledger
Church Bulletin

Scope and Content Note:**Correspondence**

This series contains the letters written to Viola Woodall from the servicemen. The servicemen primarily addressed the letters to Viola as "Mom." The bulk of the letters come from Woodall's son, Paul Arthur, referred to in other men's letters as "Artie." In their letters, servicemen primarily discussed experiences while serving, their relationships with women, and their desire to return home. Materials in this series span from 1942 to 1946 and are arranged alphabetically by last name.

Lists and Ledger

The Lists and Ledger series contains a ledger listing correspondent names and dates of the letters sent to each of the "Service Mothers." Further materials of interest include lists of the service men's birthdates, their wives, and wives' addresses. The materials in this series have been arranged chronologically and contains materials from 1944 to 1946.

Church Bulletin

This series documents the creation of the first issue of *Armed Service News*, the wartime church bulletin of the Immanuel Baptist Church. The series also includes the stencil master and design sketch of the first issue and handwritten notes chronicling the creation of the bulletin. The materials in this series have been maintained in their original order and contain materials from 1945.

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