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## MS-082: Capt. Russell Miller and Claudia Lewis Miller Correspondence, 1916-1919

### **Description**

This collection consists of 297 letters written between Russell Miller and Claudia Miller from Washington in 1916-1919 during their courtship and marriage before Russell was deployed to Europe during World War I. Almost all letters are attached to their original envelopes with stamps.

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### **Keywords**

World War I, War Correspondence, Western Theatre

### **Disciplines**

European History | History | Military History | Social History | United States History

**Guide to the  
Capt. Russell Miller and Claudia Lewis Miller  
Correspondence, 1916-1919**



**Gettysburg College, Musselman Library  
Special Collections & College Archives**

**Processed by Amy Sanderson  
October 2006**

## **MS-082: Capt. Russell Miller and Claudia Lewis Miller Correspondence, 1916-1919**

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October 2006*

### **Biography:**

Russell Miller and Claudia Lewis both attended Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington and there began their courtship. After graduating in 1916/7, Russell participated in an R.O.T.C. training camp in San Francisco, California, and was later stationed as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant serving in the 347<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion, Co A, 91<sup>st</sup> Division at Camp Lewis on American Lake outside of Tacoma, Washington. Claudia continued to live with her parents in Wenatchee, Washington and worked as a stenographer. Russell and Claudia were married in April of 1918, approximately two months prior to Russell being deployed to serve in Europe. Russell Miller returned safely from his service and it can be inferred from a few letters in the collection that the Millers had at least two sons, both of whom serve in the military in the 1940's and 1950's.

### **Scope and Content:**

297 letters written more or less daily between Russell Miller and Claudia Miller from Washington in 1916-1919. Almost all letters are attached to their original envelopes with stamps.

- SERIES I** – Breaks from Whitman College - 1916 (3 Folders); Letters from Russell Miller to Claudia Lewis – Letters postmarked from Walla Walla, Washington refer to the various summer employments of both Russell and Claudia, happenings of fellow fraternity and sorority members, and their break-up at the end of the summer. Two letters from December are written after Russell and Claudia's reconciliation.
  
- SERIES II** – Summer at R.O.T.C. Training Camp - 1917 (7 Folders); Letters between Russell Miller and Claudia Lewis – Letters refer to day-to-day happenings at camp in the Presidio, San Francisco, California and gossip about college acquaintances.
  
- SERIES III** – Camp Lewis – 1917-1918 (22 Folders); Letters between Russell Miller and Claudia Lewis while Russell was stationed at Camp Lewis on American Lake near Tacoma, Washington. Most of the letters refer to day-to-day happenings, gossip at either Camp Lewis or the various offices that Claudia works at in Wenatchee, and arranging visits to see each other. Many letters address the issue of Russell and Claudia's impending marriage. There are references to training, marches, and time spent at the rifle range, as well as Claudia's time spent in Seattle for the Red Cross Home Service Institute, which are noted in the folder inventory. Claudia also writes about knitting Russell a sweater and an averted elopement in her family. There are some letters to and from

family and friends that are enclosed with other letters and noted in the folder inventory.

**SERIES IV** – After Marriage – 1918-1918 (5 Folders); Letters between Russell Miller and Claudia Lewis Miller. Letters mainly discuss Russell and Claudia's status as newlyweds while Russell is still stationed at Camp Lewis. Russell writes about hearing rumors of when another draft will take place and is eventually sent to Camp Merritt, New York at the end of June, 1918. Claudia sends ahead her daily letters to New York commenting on the daily headlines about the war, passing troop trains, the draft, and saving money for her and Russell's future.

**SERIES V** – Russell Miller in Action – 1918-1919 (1 Folder); Three letters from Russell Miller after his arrival in Europe. Documents described in folder inventory.

**SERIES VI** – Russell Miller Correspondence (1 Folder); Twelve letters, see folder inventory

**SERIES VII** – Claudia Lewis Miller Correspondence (1 Folder); Six letters, see folder inventory

**SERIES VIII** – Undated Correspondence (1 Folder); Three letters, see folder inventory

**SERIES IX** – Miscellaneous – (1 Folder); Nine items, see folder inventory

## **BOX 1**

(Box/folder)

1/1 Finding Aid and Correspondence with Whitman College

### **SERIES I** – Breaks from Whitman College

1/2 Postmarked June 24 - July 9, 1916 (7 Letters)

1/3 Postmarked July 11-27, 1916 (7 Letters)

1/4 Postmarked August 4 - December 23, 1916 (6 Letters)

### **SERIES II** – Summer at R.O.T.C. Training Camp

1/5 Postmarked May 13-23, 1917 (6 Letters)

1/6 Postmarked May 24 - June 1, 1917 (6 Letters)

1/7 Postmarked June 2-11, 1917 (6 Letters)

- Two newspaper articles are attached to the letter postmarked June, 7 1917.

1/8 Postmarked June 12-21, 1917 (6 Letters)

1/9 Postmarked June 22 - July 9, 1917 (6 Letters)

## **BOX 2**

2/1 Postmarked July 10-14, 1917 (7 Letters)

2/2 Postmarked July 18 - August 4, 1917 (7 Letters)

- There is a letter postmarked August 12, 1917 from Claudia Lewis in Wenatchee, Washington.

## **SERIES III – Camp Lewis**

2/3 Postmarked September 1-14, 1917 (6 Letters)

- There is a check for \$20.00 enclosed in the letter postmarked September 5, 1917.

2/4 Postmarked September 16-24, 1917 (6 Letters)

2/5 Postmarked September 25 – October 3, 1917 (6 Letters)

2/6 Postmarked October 4-9, 1917 (6 Letters)

2/7 Postmarked October 11-17, 1917 (6 Letters)

2/8 Postmarked October 19-25, 1917 (6 Letters)

2/9 Postmarked October 29 – November 4, 1917 (7 Letters)

## **BOX 3**

3/1 Postmarked November 5-8, 1917 (6 Letters)

- There is a newspaper article enclosed in the letter postmarked November 5, 1917.

3/2 Postmarked November 8-14, 1917 (6 Letters)

- There is a note written about bayonet training on the envelope postmarked November 8, 1917.
- Russell writes about a possible draft.

3/3 Postmarked November 15-20, 1917 (6 Letters)

- Russell writes about Colt machine gun training and a bayonet demonstration.

3/4 Postmarked November 23 – December 4, 1917 (6 Letters)

- Russell writes about teaching non-commissioned officer courses.

3/5 Postmarked December 5-10, 1917 (6 Letters)

- Russell writes about shooting practice with French instructors, gas training, illness quarantine, and his opinion about which men in camp are better to train.

3/6 Postmarked December 10-19, 1917 (6 Letters)

- Russell writes about his impatience regarding his promotion to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt.
- Claudia enclosed receipts for some pigs in the letter postmarked December 15, 1917.

3/7 Postmarked December 21-27, 1917 (6 Letters)

- Russell writes about starting machine gun school.

- 3/8 Postmarked December 28-31, 1917 (7 Letters)
- Russell writes about his leading a 24 hour guard with the use of a motorcycle.
  - There is also a Western Union Telegram dated December 31, 1917.
  - One letter from Claudia does not have an envelope with a postmark and is placed in order according to context.

#### **BOX 4**

- 4/1 Postmarked January 1-4, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Russell writes about taking horseback riding lessons.
  - Claudia writes that her brother is planning on enlisting despite having a wife and children.
- 4/2 Postmarked January 5-10, 1918 (6 Letters)
- There is a card with a poem attached to the letter postmarked January 10, 1918.
- 4/3 Postmarked January 12-24, 1918 (7 Letters)
- Russell writes about how the officers are treated better in camp.
  - One letter from Claudia does not have an envelope with a postmark and is placed in order according to context. It mentions Claudia's friend, Kathleen, and the possibility of her serving in some capacity in France.
- 4/4 Postmarked January 25-28, 1918 (6 Letters)
- There is a letter from Walter Lee (Claudia's ex-beau) in France enclosed in Claudia's letter postmarked January 25, 1918. It had been reviewed by a censor.
  - There are also two letters written on the same day (January 27 or 28, 1918), one of them unsent and later given to Claudia, about issues regarding their marriage.
  - Claudia writes about her friend, Kathleen, enlisting as an operator and details her training and pay.
  - Claudia also writes about a murder in Wenatchee, Washington.
- 4/5 Postmarked January 29 – February 8, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Debating issue of their marriage.
- 4/6 Postmarked February 8-11, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Debating issue of their marriage.
- 4/7 Postmarked February 11-20, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Russell writes about gas training.
  - Claudia writes about making plans to attend the Red Cross Home Service Institute (RCHSI) for ten days in Seattle.
- 4/8 Postmarked February 23-26, 1918 (6 Letters)
- There are two letters from Claudia's friend, Kathleen, enclosed in the letter postmarked February 25, 1918.

- Claudia writes about continuing to make plans for the RCHSI. There is a letter from Virginia McMechen, Bureau of Civilian Relief, enclosed in the letter postmarked February 26, 1918.
- Russell writes again about his lack of promotion and the possibility of a draft.

## **BOX 5**

- 5/1 Postmarked February 27 - March 5, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Russell writes about payroll, muster and review, the state of the war and Germany, and men being transferred to North Carolina from Camp Lewis.
  - Claudia writes about happenings at the RCHSI
- 5/2 Postmarked March 6-15, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Russell writes about range practice
- 5/3 Postmarked March 19-26, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Russell writes about Vickers machine gun school, a night march, and an incident regarding accidental night fire while he led a guard post.
- 5/4 Postmarked March 28 - April 4, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Russell writes about being a witness at the Benzene Board regarding a night fire incident.
  - Claudia writes about a trip she took to Marietta and Bremerton, Washington
  - Russell and Claudia write about the possibility of elopement and begin to work out the details if they decide to do so.
- 5/5 Postmarked April 5-9, 1918 (5 Letters)
- Two envelopes have a “Buy U.S. Bonds” postmark on them.
  - There is a copy of a letter from Russell to Claudia’s mother enclosed in Russell’s letter postmarked April 9, 1918.

## **SERIES IV – After Marriage**

- 5/6 Postmarked April 25 - May 8, 1918 (7 Letters)
- All letters to Claudia Lewis are now addressed to Mrs. Russell Miller.
  - Claudia and Russell refer to themselves as “Toady” and “Rusty” respectively.
  - Russell continues his service at Camp Lewis and writes about a divisional march and that the draft may be delayed again.
  - There is a postcard of Bordeaux France from C.C. Ludwig addressed to Claudia enclosed in Claudia’s letter postmarked May 7, 1918.
  - One letter from Claudia has a postmark that is illegible and is placed in order according to context.



- 5/7 Postmarked May 11-24, 1918 (6 Letters)
- There is a Western Union Telegram dated May 11, 1918.
  - Russell writes about agricultural furloughs not being permissible anymore and rumors about a draft in July.
  - It can be inferred that Russell received his promotion to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt.
  - One letter from Claudia has a postmark that is illegible and is placed in order according to context.

## **BOX 6**

- 6/1 Postmarked June 23-27, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Claudia's letters are being sent ahead to meet Russell in New York. She writes about a report of Austrian retreat, the difficulties of a German woman sending a telegram to Germany, buying war savings stamps, and the number of troop trains passing through Wenatchee, Washington.
- 6/2 Postmarked June 28 - July 4, 1918 (6 Letters)
- Claudia writes about draft reclassification, comfort kits, rumors of troops being sent to Italy, and women having work harder with all the men being gone.
  - Claudia receives word that Russell has arrived safely at Camp Merritt, New York
- 6/3 Postmarked July 6-9, 1918 (4 Letters)
- There is a newspaper article attached to the letter postmarked July 9, 1918.

## **SERIES V – Russell Miller in Action**

- 6/4 Written December 15, 1918 - April 30, 1919 (3 Letters)
- December 15, 1918, Westvleteren, Belgium - Russell (now a Captain) writes about issues with drinking in the company, getting a picture taken, the weather, gossip about men he knew at Camp Lewis, messing up pay allotments to Claudia, and asking Claudia about being initiated into a Greek society.
  - January 6, 1919, Ige, France - Russell writes about the a wife enquiring about the death of one of his former Camp Lewis roommates, his duties as the company commander, furlough orders, salary allotment, Ige, and his living quarters.
  - April 30, 1919, Camp Upton, New York – Russell write to let Claudia know when he will be home.

## **SERIES VI – Russell Miller Correspondence**

- 6/5 (12 Letters)

- Letter dated December 25, 1917 to Mr. R.M. Lewis (Claudia's father) in Vale, Oregon. Russell writes about life at Camp Lewis and his thoughts on the war.
- Letter dated February 7, 1918 to Mrs. R.M. Lewis (Claudia's mother). Russell writes about being anxious to be deployed.
- Letter dated March 28, 1918 from Herman R. Page, informing Russell about Episcopal Church Services for Easter at the Y.M.C.A. at Camp Lewis.
- Letter dated November 28, 1918 from 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. John U. Calkins, Jr. at the Army General Staff College in Langres, France to "Truck" [Capt. Russell Miller]. He writes to catch up and congratulate Russell on his promotion.
- 3 letters from Russell and Claudia's son, Russell C. Miller, at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. He writes about his political views on the war and possibly being returned to Army Ground Forces.
- 1 partial letter from Russell and Claudia's son, Russell C. Miller, on Red Cross Stationary dated February 24, 1945. He writes about not receiving packages because the Germans probably have taken them.
- 2 letters from Russell and Claudia's son, Bob [Robert Reed Miller], in the Navy. He writes about a trip he took with a friend to Los Angeles, California, the new phonetic alphabet adopted by the US Navy, and arriving home earlier than planned from Caribbean.
- 1 letter from Russell Miller to his son Bob from the Hôtel Ritz, Place Vendôme, Paris, while on vacation with Claudia.
- 1 Letter from Russell and Claudia's son, Bob, while stationed and being trained in San Diego, California. Bob writes about gun training, his liberty, and the benefits of being in the military.

#### **SERIES VII – Claudia Lewis Miller Correspondence**

6/6 (6 Letters)

- Invitation for Claudia to attend a Delta Phi Delta dance on December 12, 1913.
- Note dated January 20, 1917 from Randall S. Pratt and W[illia]m E. Berney in Eugene, Oregon to Claudia. They write about how they met each other and bonded by realizing both were acquainted with Claudia.
- Letter dated December 23, 1917 to Claudia from Mary Helen, an acquaintance from Whitman College.
- 2 letters to Claudia from her Uncle Evan in Cardiff, Wales. He writes about not being able to meet up with Russell, the customs duty on a package, and the well being of his family.

#### **SERIES VIII – Undated Correspondence**

6/7 (6 Letters)

- 4 letters to Russell from Claudia
- 1 letter to Russell from Claudia, possibly regarding their children while he is away.
- Letter from Russ in Florida. Not sure if this is father or son.

**SERIES IX** – Miscellaneous

6/8 (9 Items)

- Invitation postmarked March 20, 1909 sent to Miss Frances Lewis regarding the Salt Lake High School Annual Dance.
- Letter dated November 9, 1909 in Salt Lake City to “Little Humbug” [Frances Lewis] from Hortense [Lockhart].
- Letter to Miss Frances Lewis dated September 1, 1911 in Park City, [Utah], from H.L. The envelope attached has a January 6, 1911 postmark.
- Party menu dated February 3, 1913 for Claudia Lewis
- Letter dated January 30, 1918 to Lt. Chas J. Newland at Camp Lewis from Jane Thomas in Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- Congratulations note to Mrs. Russell Miller from Mr. and Mrs. Harry W. Martin on her marriage.
- Note dated August 24, 1922 in Oakland, California to Mrs. Lewis from Helen Tweed. She writes about trying to convince her family to move to California.
- Address list including Hortense Lockhart.
- Lyrics of a song to the tune of “How Can I Leave Thee”