



Summer 2015

MS-177: Lillian Quinn Letter Collection

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MS-177: Lillian Quinn Letter Collection

Description

The collection consists primarily of letters written from Lillian Quinn to Lillian Carling. The letters span from January 27, 1937 to August 8, 1949 and focus on family health, activities, and troubles of the Quinn family, as well as their opinions about World War II and how it impacts the family.

Keywords

World War II, WWII, Second World War, War Correspondence, Homefront, Pacific Theater, Rationing

Disciplines

Cultural History | European History | History | Military History | Social History | United States History | Women's History



Guide to the Lillian Quinn Letter Collection



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

Processed by Avery Fox '16, Smith Intern

June 2015

MS-177: Lillian Quinn Letter Collection

(3 binders, 0.5 cubic feet)

Inclusive Dates: 1937-1949

Bulk Dates: 1937-1942, 1945-1949

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Provenance

Purchased by Gettysburg College Special Collections from the Denning House Antiquarian Books and Manuscripts in Philadelphia in March 2014 (Accession # 2014-0098).

Biography

Lillian Quinn, originally raised in Glencoe, Illinois, was a housewife during the 1930s and 1940s. Lillian, her husband, Joe, and two daughters, Mary and Kathleen, lived in Maywood, Cook County, Illinois prior to 1937. While in Maywood, the Quinns befriended the Carling family; Oscar, Lillian, and sons Roy and Leonard. In 1937, the Quinn family moved to Grosse Pointe, Michigan and Mrs. Quinn and Mrs. Carling kept in contact by exchanging lengthy letters. The correspondence between the pen pals continued throughout the Quinn family's migrations from Grosse Pointe to Berwyn, Illinois, then finally to Piedmont, Oakland, California.

The letters written by Mrs. Quinn illustrated life on the Pacific Coast home front during World War II. She describes in great detail the hardships that came with rationing and strikes, as well as the increasing fear of Japanese attacks on the coast. Mrs. Quinn clearly emphasizes her opinions on the war and politics in her correspondence. While commenting on national and international issues, Quinn also writes of her family, primarily focusing on her daughters; their graduations, employment, and marriages. Through her letters, the sentiments and personality of Lillian Quinn are illuminated. She shares valuable insights into the experiences of an individual on the home front during World War II.

Scope and Content Notes

The collection consists primarily of letters written from Lillian Quinn to Lillian Carling. The letters span from January 27, 1937 to August 8, 1949, exempting the years 1943-1944. Along with the letters from Mrs. Quinn, there is some correspondence from the Quinn daughters, Mary and Kathleen. The collection also includes a few letters from Mrs. Quinn to Roy Carling. The

majority of the letters are typed, however, a few handwritten letters from 1937 are included and the letters from the Quinn daughters are handwritten. Few other materials are included with the letters, however, newspaper clippings, a birth announcement card, as well as a piece of her daughter's wedding night negligee are enclosed. The correspondence predominantly notes updates on the health, activities, and troubles of the Quinn family. Usually lengthy passages are dedicated to Mrs. Quinn's interest in flowers and the upkeep of her household. Another subject that dominates the letters is the war and how it impacts the Quinn family. She is aggressive with her opinions on the war and shares her thoughts in the letters.

The content of the collection would be valuable to researchers looking for information about the home front during World War II, particularly its influence on the Pacific Coast. The letters also provide insight into a woman's point of view on the war. Additionally, the letters demonstrate the daily life and domestic expectations of women and young girls during the World War II era and would be useful for researchers looking for information on female experiences during the mid-twentieth century.

Though the letters discuss factual information the correspondence is highly opinionated and in some cases, hostile. The content in a number of the letters includes negative language and slurs against Germans, Japanese, Russians, and Communists. Many of this crude language stemmed from Mrs. Quinn's fear of the war and threat of attack on the coast. In addition, there is missing correspondence from 1943-44, leaving out ample information on the Carling and Quinn family.

Series Description

This collection consists of two binders of correspondence that are organized into one series:

Series 1- Letters January 27, 1937- August 8, 1949. There are no letters in the collection from 1943-1944.

Series 1- Letters January 27, 1937-August 8, 1949

Binder 1:

Finding aid

- 1-1 *January 23, 1937-* The Quinn family moves to Grosse Pointe, Michigan, near Detroit.
- 1-2 *February 15, 1937-* Mrs. Quinn describes their new home and discusses life in their new residence.
- 1-3 *April 12, 1937-* Mr. Quinn is afflicted with an illness and Mrs. Quinn discusses her housework and daughters.
- 1-4 *June 9, 1937-* The Detroit auto strikes are discussed and the impact they have on Mr. Quinn's job.
- 1-5 *September 8, 1937-* The Quinn family visits the amusement park on Bah-Lo Island in the Detroit River. Mrs. Quinn mentions the spread of polio in Detroit schools.
- 1-6 *December 28, 1937-* The Quinn family moved residences in Grosse Pointe due to disagreements with their landlord.

- 1-7 *February 3, 1938*-Mrs. Quinn complains of how dirty Detroit is and her fear that her husband will be laid off due to the strikes.
- 1-8 *March 8, 1938*-A cold and wet winter and the Quinn daughters are sick with chicken pox.
- 1-9 *May 4, 1938*-Mrs. Quinn discusses her ladies' church society and the unemployment in Detroit.
- 1-10 *September 4, 1938*-The Quinn family's summer in Michigan is discussed.
- 1-11 *October 10, 1938*-The threat of another World War is mentioned, and Mrs. Quinn's frustrations with the Detroit strikes are voiced.
- 1-12 *December 28, 1938*- A letter from Mary, thanking Mrs. Carling for the Christmas gifts she sent.
- 1-13 *December 28, 1938*- The first letter on a typewriter and the Quinn family Christmas is recapped.
- 1-14 *December 29, 1938*- Letter from Mary thanking Mrs. Carling for the Christmas gifts.
- 1-15 *February 2, 1939*-The strikes in Detroit are discussed and Mrs. Quinn argues that a new president is needed.
- 1-16 *February 26, 1939*-Blizzard in Detroit and the Quinn family celebrated Valentine's Day.
- 1-17 *April 24, 1939*- Mrs. Quinn describes her fear of the United States getting involved in the European conflict. She also discusses her plan to lose weight on a "reduced diet."
- 1-18 *June 29, 1939*-The Quinn family visits Belle Isle on the Detroit River.
- 1-19 *August 11, 1939*-Mrs.Quinn discusses the negative effects of the strikes on Detroit and how her summer was spent.
- 1-20 *October 26, 1939*- Mrs. Quinn shares her hopes that the United States stays out of the war and how she detests the dictators involved in the European conflict.
- 1-21 *December 13, 1939*-Mrs. Quinn writes about a baking business she and her family had when they lived in Maywood, Illinois. She complains of those on strike in Detroit and her loss of respect for the workers.
- 1-22 *December 28, 1939*- The Quinn family celebrates Christmas.
- 1-23 *February 1, 1940*- The Quinns move back to Illinois settling in Berwyn, IL so Mr. Quinn can work in his employer's Chicago Office. Mary stays in Michigan until she graduates. The fighting between Russia and Finland is mentioned.
- 1-24 *February 27, 1940*- Mrs. Quinn describes the family's new home.
- 1-25 *March 7, 1940*- Mrs. Quinn discusses how the Quinn family was settling in and Mrs. Quinn planned a visit to see the Carlings.
- 1-26 *March 28, 1940*-Mrs.Quinn discusses her daughters' attempts at perfecting their domestic skill.
- 1-27 *April 6, 1940*- Letter from Mary telling Mrs. Carling about her latest dance with the "current interest" and her feelings toward graduation.
- 1-28 *May 13, 1940*-Letter from Virginia Miller, the President of the Plymouth Church Women's Society, inviting Mrs. Carlings to a Society meeting to honor her as a former president.
- 1-29 *May 30, 1940*-Mrs. Quinn notes how she has been following the war in Europe and that she is worried to leave Kathleen alone to care for the house while she retrieves Mary after graduation.
- 1-30 *June 13, 1940*- Letter from Mary on her graduation day.
- 1-31 *July 31, 1940*-Mrs. Quinn discuss the war and her feelings about Hitler and Germany

- 1-32 *November 14, 1940-* Mary got a first job and Mrs. Quinn analyzes the candidates of the 1940 election.
- 1-33 *August 20, 1941-* The Quinn family moves to Oakland, California. Mary got another job and the scenery of Oakland and San Francisco is discussed.
- 1-34 *September 4, 1941-* Mrs. Quinn discusses how her family is settling in California.
- 1-35 *November 21, 1941-* The Carling family moves to Sand Creek Michigan.
- 1-36 *January 22, 1942-* Pearl Harbor is discussed and how busy the Pacific Coast has become after the attacks. Mrs. Quinn mentions how she idolizes MacArthur.
- 1-37 *February 2, 1942-*The fear of further Japanese attacks is discussed and black out exercises and strategies to stay safe during attacks are mentioned. Sugar rationing has begun. Mrs. Quinn also mentions the disappearance of Japanese residents on the coast due to internment.
- 1-38 *February 7, 1942-*Mrs. Quinn writes of all of the men arriving in San Francisco to join the war effort in the Pacific.
- 1-39 *March 23, 1942-*The fall of Singapore is mentioned and the United States move to protect Australia. Mrs. Quinn also describes the tactics that were encouraged to be used by Pacific Coast civilians to combat potential Japanese parachuters in the event of an attack.
- 1-40 *March 31, 1942-* The Quinn family has the flu.
- 1-41 *April 21, 1942-*Mr. Quinn develops pneumonia.
- 1-42 *May 8, 1942-*The fall of the Philippines with the surrender to the Japanese at Corregidor is noted.
- 1-43 *August 10, 1942-* The Quinn family starts a Victory Garden and Mrs. Quinn notes the capture of German spies in the United States. She also discusses the United States' victory at the Battle of Coral Sea. Mrs. Quinn volunteers with the American Women's Volunteer Service and she mentions the strikes in San Francisco from grocery stores to the shipyards.
- 1-44 *October 8, 1942-* Mrs. Quinn discusses rising food prices due to the lack of farm help because of men in the service and Japanese internment. She notes knitting for the Red Cross and making scrapbooks for wounded soldiers.
- 1-45 *December 16, 1942-* The high price and scarcity of meat and other products is discussed as well as the rising employment in the shipyards.
- 1-46 *January 2, 1945-* Letter from Mary thanking Mrs. Carling for Christmas gifts.
- 1-47 *January 8, 1945-*Leonard Carling joined the service and Mrs. Quinn shares her distress over her fear of bombings.
- 1-48 *January 31, 1945-*Mrs. Quinn discusses how the Russians were getting close to Berlin and the fear that the Pacific War will last longer. She also notes the Japanese submarine attack on the Liberty ship. "K" rations as well as food scarcity is mentioned.
- 1-49 *March 1, 1945-*Mrs. Quinn mentions the rescue of service men from Bataan as well as the crisis for finding homes for the large population of servicemen that came to the Pacific coast.
- 1-50 *March 22, 1945-*Mrs. Quinn writes about a parade in San Francisco for the rescued men from Bataan and that Leonard was at sea.
- 1-51 *March 24, 1945-*Mrs. Quinn continues to complain about the difficulty of finding food.
- 1-52 *April 9, 1945-*Leonard Carling's duties in the Philippines are discussed. Mrs. Quinn mentions Red and Blue points in rationing and how she is forced to be innovative with the low selection of food available.

- 1-53 *April 19, 1945-* The death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt was discussed and Mrs. Quinn described it “like losing my best friend.” She continued with commentary on the war and her opinions on the subject. She also sends a newspaper clipping with the picture of a street in Piedmont with her own notes included.
- 1-54 *May 8, 1945-* VE Day is celebrated. Mrs. Quinn notes her distrust of Stalin as well as her dislike for Gerald K. Smith with the Nuremburg Trials.
- 1-55 *July 1, 1945-* The Quinns celebrated Independence Day and Kathleen graduated. A German POW camp was found near the Carling’s home.
- 1-56 *July 24, 1945-* Mrs. Quinn mentions that a B25 bomber crashed into the Empire State building.
- 1-57 *September 10, 1945-* VJ Day was celebrated and the Quinns attended a parade for General Wainwright. Mrs. Quinn describes the violence and craziness that overtook San Francisco during VJ day. She also notes some alleviation from rationing.
- 1-58 *October 30, 1945-* Leonard Carling transferred to Japan.
- 1-59 *November 13, 1945-* Mr. Quinn took a job with Independent Pneumatic Tool Co. Mrs. Quinn discusses the continued presence of the United States in Europe and the Pacific , the Office of Price Administration(OPA), and the continued strikes in San Francisco.
- 1-60 *December 26, 1945-* Mrs. Quinn criticizes the citizens of California for drinking too much which in her opinion led to violence and accidents. Leonard Carling sent his mother as well as Mrs. Quinn gifts from Japan for Christmas.
- 1-61 *January 1, 1946-* Letter from Kathleen thanking Mrs. Carling for Christmas gifts.
- 1-62 *January 7, 1946-* Letter from Mary thanking Mrs. Carling for Christmas gifts.
- 1-63 *January 23, 1946-* Roy Carling sends Mrs. Quinn his own cartoons that Mrs. Quinn raves over. She also discusses the scarcity and expense of food due to the strikes and how she feels a woman was needed as president to bring order.
- 1-64 *January 31, 1946-* Mrs. Quinn gets news that Leonard is coming home from Japan. She mentions how strikes are taking over San Francisco and that her doctor diagnosed her with an overly active mind.
- 1-65 *March 19, 1946-* Mrs. Quinn expresses her fear of war with Russia and the expense of food.

Binder 2

- 2-1 *March 27, 1946-* Mrs. Quinn notes the difficulty of finding particular products like rayons, sheets, and pillow cases.
- 2-2 *April 17, 1946-* Leonard Carling arrives home from Japan and Kathleen starts dating a sailor.
- 2-3 *May 13, 1946-* Mrs. Quinn criticizes John L. Lewis and the mine strikes, comparing him to Hitler.
- 2-4 *August 5, 1946-* The detonation of the second atomic bomb, Baker, on Bikini Island is heard by Mrs. Quinn. She asserts a buyer’s strike over frustration with the strikes in the stores and industries in San Francisco. Mary is engaged and Mrs. Quinn begins to teach Mary domestic skills.
- 2-5 *September 23, 1946-* The OPA is disbanded and Mrs. Quinn complains of even higher prices without their regulation. The farms are lacking in help and there are many homeless veterans in Oakland. Mrs. Quinn also mentions the use of freezers.

- 2-6 *December 10, 1946-* Mrs. Quinn's brother, Louis, died and she mentions how the grocery stores are barren.
- 2-7 *January 2, 1947-* Mrs. Quinn yells at Union picketers outside of her grocery store out of frustration and she shares her dislike of Communists and her fear of them infiltrating the government.
- 2-8 *January 8, 1947-* Letter from Mary and she says that she is planning on marrying Ray Friedrichson next year.
- 2-9 *January 22, 1947-* Mrs. Quinn notices that more food is making it to store shelves and that she has mixed feelings about Mary's fiancé, Ray, and their marriage.
- 2-10 *February 8, 1947-* Mrs. Quinn continues to describe the strikes and picket lines.
- 2-11 *February 16, 1947-* Mrs. Quinn discusses Kathleen's boyfriend, her sister's visit, and Mary's wedding plans.
- 2-12 *March 23, 1947-* Mrs. Quinn discusses gardening and Mary's wedding plans.
- 2-13 *April 13, 1947-* Mrs. Quinn expresses her desire for more people to read the Bible and she describes the Forest Lawn Memorial Park's Easter services.
- 2-14 *May 18, 1947-* Mary prepares her hope chest, and the threats of communism and strikes occur in her workplace. The Quinn family is also preparing their home for Kathleen's boyfriend, Chuck's visit. Mrs. Quinn also encloses a piece of fabric that will be used for Mary's negligee.
- 2-15 *July 9, 1947-* Mrs. Quinn discusses her distrust and fear of Russia, as well as Mary's honeymoon plans, as well as Mary and her husband's plans to move to Iowa.
- 2-16 *September 7, 1947-* Mrs. Quinn is travelling back to Illinois to see her ailing mother and she explains the droughts on the Pacific coast and in the Midwest.
- 2-17 *October 7, 1947-* Mary's wedding date is officially set and Mary and her fiancé disagree on where to live. Mrs. Quinn's mother was quite ill and the potential war with Russia is again mentioned.
- 2-18 *November 15, 1947-* The Quinn family saw the Freedom Train as it travelled around the country.
- 2-19 *December 16, 1947-* Mrs. Quinn and her siblings are at a loss on what to do with their ailing mother and Mary continues to prepare for her wedding.
- 2-20 *December 25, 1947-* A letter from Mary Quinn to Mrs. Carling thanking her for gifts, explaining a work Christmas party she had, as well as the plans for her wedding day.
- 2-21 *January 1, 1948-* Christmas is discussed as well as further description of Mary's wedding plans. Mrs. Quinn also notes that there was artificial snow made for the Golden Gate Park.
- 2-22 *January 19, 1948-* Letter from Mary discussing her wedding schedule.
- 2-23 *January 21, 1948-* Mrs. Quinn's mother died and Mary's wedding was set for January 31.
- 2-24 *February 5, 1948-* Mary's wedding is discussed. Mrs. Quinn sends Roy Carling cartoons; Bobby Soxer, Animal Crackers, Grinn and Bear It. Mrs. Quinn also sent a newspaper clipping of a picture of a farm in California.
- 2-25 *February 12, 1948-* Mary and her husband Ray leave for Iowa.
- 2-26 *February 12, 1948-* Letter from Mary and Ray thanking the Carlings for the wedding gifts.
- 2-27 *February 20, 1948-* Mrs. Quinn criticizes the unions and Mary and Ray arrive in Iowa.
- 2-28 *February 27, 1948-* Mary moves in with her in-laws and Mrs. Quinn relates how intolerable Mary's mother-in-law is.

- 2-29 *March 15, 1948-* Day light savings is mentioned and Mary and Ray discuss buying a pre-fab house.
- 2-30 *March 23, 1948-* Mrs. Quinn breaks off a friendship due to her friend's sympathies to Russia. She continues to note her fear of Russia as well as Mary's troubles with her in-laws. She also notes on the drought and brownout in California.
- 2-31 *April 5, 1948-* Letter from Mrs. Quinn to Roy Carling, sending him cartoons.
- 2-32 *April 17, 1948-* The Gatow Air Disaster on April 5th, 1948 is discussed as well as Mrs. Quinn's feelings on Russia.
- 2-33 *June 14, 1948-* The presidential election of 1948 is discussed and Mrs. Quinn describes her thoughts on the candidates.
- 2-34 *June 21, 1948-* A brief note about sending Mrs. Carling LC bulbs and plants.
- 2-35 *June 30, 1948-* Kathleen is engaged to Chuck and Mary comes back to live at home until Ray buys a house. Mrs. Quinn's thoughts on Russia and communism are related.
- 2-36 *August 24, 1948-* Mary is able to move into her own home and she is pregnant.
- 2-37 *October 20, 1948-* Mrs. Quinn witnessed Navy Day at the naval base and observed Portola festival which celebrates the founding of San Francisco. She also discussed her nephew who was in an accident and had a leg amputated.
- 2-38 *January 2, 1949-* Christmas passed and Mrs. Quinn fears war with Russia.
- 2-39 *January 20, 1949-* Mary's pregnancy is discussed as well as the cold California winter that is impacting bird migrations.
- 2-40 *January 21, 1949-* Mary's life on her farm is discussed.
- 2-41 *February 2, 1949-* Mrs. Quinn discusses the birds in California due to the colder weather.
- 2-42 *February 12, 1949-* Includes a letter to Roy about cartoons and also announces the birth of Mary's daughter Virginia Rae born on February 9, 1949.
- 2-43 *February 16, 1949-* Mary and the baby are discussed as well as communism in Hungary. Mrs. Quinn also sends a birth announcement card for the baby.
- 2-44 *March 7, 1949-* Mrs. Quinn continues to discuss how communism is sweeping through Europe, particularly the threats occurring in Denmark and Sweden.
- 2-45 *March 25, 1949-* The Quinn family prepares for Kathleen's wedding.
- 2-46 *April 12, 1949-* The preparations for the wedding and Easter are discussed.
- 2-47 *June 5, 1949-* The wedding showers held for Kathleen are described as well as further preparations are discussed.
- 2-48 *July 6, 1949-* Kathleen and Chuck are married and Mrs. Quinn relates all of the events.
- 2-49 *July 7, 1949-* Mrs. Quinn writes of being lonely without her daughters.
- 2-50 *August 8, 1949-* Mary and Ray plan on moving to California and Mrs. Quinn continues to feel lonesome without her daughters nearby.