Edwin Roscoe Sleight World War II Correspondence collection
Finding aid prepared by Jill Cline

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August 13, 2019
Describing Archives: A Content Standard
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary Information</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical/Historical note</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Contents note</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement note</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Information</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection Inventory</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originals</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies</td>
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</tr>
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### Summary Information

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**Language of Materials note** The material is in English.

**Preferred Citation note**

[Item], [Folder], [Box], [Collection Number and Title], Archives and Special Collections, Stockwell-Mudd Library, Albion College. Albion, MI.
Biographical/Historical note

Alumnus and professor at Albion College, Edwin Roscoe Sleight graduated from Albion College in 1901 and joined the Albion faculty as a mathematics instructor in 1908. In 1931, he earned his Doctor of Science degree. His responsibilities changed in 1943 with the advent of World War II. Sleight was one of several instructors charged with teaching a special class for prospective Air Force cadets, beginning second semester in March of 1943.

There were 250 students in all, in ten sections. Sleight taught one section of 42 students, meeting with them four times weekly. The course ran 20 weeks. The last 4 weeks the students learned to fly at the flying field in Marshall, Michigan. Coursework consisted of a review of arithmetic, algebra, geometry and trigonometry, and what Sleight called "the finer points of mathematics". The students came from a variety of backgrounds and preparation; for example, one student had had no math since arithmetic. Another was in his senior year of chemical engineering. All the students, candidates for Officers' Training School, came and went on a rotating basis. When 50 left, 50 more would arrive.

On campus in 1943, there were three women students to every male. Sleight jokes about Albion College reverting to a "women only" status as when it was originally a seminary and girls' college. The prospective cadets lived in fraternity houses on Erie St. and ate meals at the Methodist church. Girls' organizations opened their lounges to men. Each night, curfew sounded at ten p.m. at which time taps was played and it was lights out.

Many of these students wrote to Dr. Sleight after they moved on. He responded to all letters and kept them on file. A common theme the young men expressed as they moved through their experience in the war was loyalty to Albion College, affection for Dr. Sleight and gratitude for his teaching. Sleight expressed his motivation for letter writing and keeping in a letter to Lt. Herbert McCoy on 1941 February 19. "During the last War, I had many fine letters from boys in service and I often wish I had kept them. Some of them were from boys who never came back. This time, I plan to keep them all...."

Scope and Contents note

The Edwin Sleight World War II Correspondence collection consists of letters from former students who were serving in World War II. Many of the letters describe experiences in the mathematics refresher course at Albion College, experiences in training for the military, observations on wartime life, desires for return to the civilian job market, and more. The letters arranged chronologically in three main files. Copies of each letter are in a separate file for research purposes. The numbers after each "boy's" name (1, 2, 3) indicate that letters from that "boy" are in that file. Sleight's reply to each individual letter is included.
Correspondence List:


Omer Bartow -2 Bartow was in the U.S. Navy for two years, originally stationed in San Diego, California. In a letter of note written on 1945 October 5, he speaks of Pearl Harbor, his plans to return to Michigan and his former job in Marysville which will be waiting. He speculates his salary will be $380.00 for 10 months.

Fusajero Aburano-3 Originally stationed at Camp Roberts, CA, Fusajero was in training for radio communications for the infantry.

Louis E. Bell-3 Bell became a Corporal. In a letter dated 1945 January 25, written to Bell, Sleight discusses the changes that the war has wrought on Albion's campus. There are not as many boys (only 120 are registered). The basketball team is playing. Track and tennis are planned for the spring and football will be returning in the Fall.

Leroy Benjamin-2 Benjamin was a radio operator involved in War Shipping Administration. Seattle, Washington.

Robert Benjamin-2 Robert is Larry's brother. Warrenton, Virginia. He was in the U.S. Signal Corps, Company B. In a letter of 1943 February 17, he tells Sleight about "secret work" that he "cannot divulge". Everyone in the group in question is a technical, 5th grade which is the equivalent of a corporal.

Peter Blashkiw-2,3 Blashkiw was a frequent correspondent. In a letter of 1942 February 17, he lamented that he "could not return to Albion for Semester II due to the war. In a letter dated 1942 April 16, he tells of being deferred from military duty for a welding production job. In 1942, he confers with Sleight in terms of planning his mathematics career. As of March, 1942, Blashkiw is in the Officer training program at the University of Michigan, followed by Meteorology training at Chanute Field. In a letter of 1945 September 23, V-J Day has come and Blashkiw's squadron has been deactivated. Men were dispersed to weather stations throughout the country to mobile weather stations (each station is mounted on a truck so that it can move with the infantry and the artillery). He says he is "just as glad I didn't have to land on any beaches". In a letter of 1945 November 5, Blashkiw tells Sleight of applying for a discharge from the Armed Forces "in the interest of national welfare" due to his holding a college degree and a teaching certificate". He requests Sleight to write a letter of support that will accompany his application. In a letter of 1945 November 12, Blashkiw says that Washington, D.C. has decided that any officer who reported for active duty on or before the first of March shall not go overseas. In a letter dated 1945 December 19, Blashkiw says he can have "the job at Jackson High School if he can secure a release from the Army". In a letter of 1946 March 16, Blashkiw is still in the service at Mt. Clemens, MI and is waiting for news
of possible discharge. He has applied for a Michigan State civil service position and is also looking into teaching positions at Jackson High School in Jackson, Michigan.

Joe Britton, Pvt. -2,3 Britton is in the 3rd Platoon, Company A, the 87th Infantry Training group at Camp Roberts, CA. He is training in combat intelligence along with Gable, Goff, Linny, Blackburn, Van Osdol, Pettingill and Steinkie (Aug., 1943 letter)...these must be others who went through the Albion program. Some are not included in the correspondent list. In a letter of 1945 December 11, he is in Panama, planning on returning to Albion. His plan is to complete his final semester of college there, and then proceed on for a degree in Educational Administration.

Thomas Brock-1,2,3 Brock was a 1st Lieutenant in Combat Infantry in France. In a letter of note dated 1945 July 17, he describes a trip to Paris to Sleight. "You should see how the people of Paris must live; never enough to eat, no meat, butter, no coal or transportation". Many are turning to communism. In his opinion, America's choice is "to be insular and deny sending supplies to Europe or to sacrifice our own resources and earn the eternal gratitude of Western democracies". In a letter of note dated 1945 May 6, Brock lauds the continuation of ODK as an honorary fraternity, then talks at length about the post-war education effort that is planned, which will be in place 30 days after V-E Day. He describes a plan which involves "unit schools all over Europe", each for 1000 men, which will concentrate either on Basic Courses like Grammar, Accounting, and Math or on Radio, Chemistry and Business Methods. In bigger cities, Army University centers will arise for college course work. Note: All expenses will be paid for each student plus their Army wages will continue.

Arthur Brown, Jr., Pvt.

Richard Chauncey-2 In a letter of 1942 March 31, he speaks of applying for a commission as a specialist and describes giving basic training to 2500 Air Corpsmen per month.

John Daskaloff Describes waiting to go into ASTP, while being in clerk school.

K.R. Fergerson, Pfc.-3 In a letter dated 1945 December 19, Fergerson states "Every day that passes indicates, however, that the problems of harnessing the atom were quite elementary compared to those involved with keeping the world at peace."

Charles Filbert Took an intensive course in Japanese at the University of California.

Lewis Gould-2,3 Awdn. F. (Met) BTC, No. 1 Gould took a University of Chicago meteorology course. In a letter dated 1945 May 28, he talks about being a weather officer for a fighter group and forecasting weather for each mission. He tells of the Albion boys he met in Italy. After the war, Gould plans to teach math in a vocational school.

Richard Hadley-2 Worked for the B.F. Goodrich Company in the physical research department.

Kathryn Hawes-2 Member of the WAVES, in meteorology training.

Roy Sutherland Hazen In a letter dated 1943 January 7, he asks Sleight for a letter of recommendation as he is seeking a deferment, with the plan of attending medical school.

J.E. Hill, Ensign-2 Meteorlogy studies at UCLA (1943 December 11)

James Hollingsworth Stationed in Ann Arbor, MI
Don Horger, Ensign-1 Midshipman P.O. box out of San Francisco, CA

Henry Dean Hudnut, Pvt. Aviation Engineer, in Squadron 44 of Marine Corps Air Station as of 1943 July 1.

Harris D. Iler, Dr.-3 At Evac Hospital in New York, N.Y. In a letter of 1945 June 15 from Sleight, the professor calls Albion "almost a female institution" with a population of "130 boys only". The Goodrich Chapel building fund is in good shape, he states, with over one million dollars in pledges and cash. Total of $200,500 needed to start construction.

C.A. Jocokes, Pfc. -1,2 Worked in the Military Police as a guard for prisoners of war.

Segarth N. Johnson-2 Discusses his own "poor record in school" and thanks Sleight for his teaching efforts. At Naval Training Station in Chicago, IL.

Cpt. Howard Krall Fort Bragg, NC

Don March Deemed 4-F, Texas.

Robert Maynard, Lt. -2,3, In a letter of 1942 April 14, Maynard discusses his training in observation and reconnaissance in Field Artillery division. He sustained a collapsed lung. Returned to limited service at school in Camp McCoy, WI. He describes the training there..."in huts. Over 1000 huts in a group for the purpose of Officer's Training students. "Graduating 400-500 lieutenants each week. " In a letter of 1945 May 30 he is in Salzburg and Berchtesgaden. He donates to the Goodrich Chapel building fund and says it is "symbolic of things for which I have been fighting these past years".

Herbert McCoy, Capt. -1,2, In a letter of 1942 February, he talks of completing the course in Engineering School and being kept on at Quantico as an instructor for Demolitions and Refrigerations Courses. In a letter dated Dec., 1941, he states that the young officers "know no more about what is going on or what will happen to us than anybody else. It seems likely that we will be in the field".

Bob McCoy, Pvt.-1,2 In a letter dated 1945 August 30, he talks of being "down Brazil way". His wife Jean arrived in July and then the war ended on August 11. His comment: " I suppose the hilarity was all right but personally I just felt thankful that we could end this terrible destruction and start to work on those constructive plans again. "

Russell Meier-3 In a letter dated 1945 November 3, he says that after the war he was shipped to a weather station in Phoenix, AZ.

Ralph T. Millette, USN-1,2, Pre-flight

Van D. Olmstead-2 Pre-flight school in San Antonio, TX.

Frank C. Pearson, Pvt. -2 Member of ODK ( Omicron Delta Kappa) Attended Electric Engineering course at Virginia Polytechnic Institute...radio school.

Chaplain Pierce At Fort Bragg, NC. Attended Albion College in 1929.

Warren Poor, Cpl. -2 At aviation factory in Inglewood, CA. Evidently a poor student but writes with enthusiasm about Sleight's teaching abilities.
Gertrude Pratt - Letter of note on 1945 October 18. Pratt is in role of Chief of Education Reconditioning at a hospital and finds herself in the role of math professor. She asks Sleight for help on two calculus problems. He responds with answers and tells her that some 50 veterans have returned to Albion in a letter of 1945 October 18. In a letter on 1945 October 31 delineating her career Pratt writes that: "hospitals are turning out wounded as fast as possible". Pratt was in the service 40 months. The Educational level of most that she met at Newton D. Baker General hospital was between eighth and ninth grade. About 10 per cent took classes from the U.S. Armed Forces Institute.

M.S. Putnam Discharged from Army

J.A. Ringer, Ensign On new ammunitions ship as of 07-1942. In 1943, Navigator executive officer.

Webster Sawyer

Harrison Roack - Letter of note on 1945 September 10, transferred from Camp Stoneman, 45 miles from San Francisco to "process troops returning from the Pacific Theatre"; Sleight answers in letter of 1945 October 3, to say that Albion College has a registration of 600, with between 80 and 90 freshman boys and that they are happy with that number and hope for more, including returned veterans, in the second semester.

Charles F. Sebert, Sgt. 1944- Intensive study in Japanese language

Howard Sherman, Ensign Writes in a letter of 1945 October 25, questioning Dr. Sleight as to his student status. Albion College votes to grant him his degree upon completion of his work in the Engineering school.

Charles Sibert, Pfc.-1,2 Detachment Finance

Robert Sill Pilot training at Maxwell Field, AL

J. Stuart Storey, Sgt. -3 Letters near 1945 October 22, Dr. Sleight writes half a dozen letters of recommendation to area superintendents (in and around Albion) in an effort to secure a post-war teaching job in mathematics for Storey

William Sullivan-2 Navy Flight School

Charles Surland-1,2 Meteorology Course at University of Chicago

John C. Telander, Pfc. Applying for flight engineer program

Lesther L. Thayer-3 Letter of Note: 1945 September 20. He studied telephone carrier and repeater work and was later sent overseas and worked on special military adaptation of radio telephone in mountains of Northern India near Calcutts; requested school recommendation for continuing education from Dr. Sleight

James E. Tobias, Pvt.-1,2,3 1942 July He completes Engine Mechanics course in St. Louis, MO where he is promoted to Captain. In a letter of 1945 July 10, he says he is stationed in Manila headquarters of Far Eastern AF...He states that weather forecasting will be "destruction and ruin of Manila. I will never forget it." He writes wondering how far his previous credits would go toward a BA degree in Albion. In a letter of 1945 October 6, he worked at FEAF Weather Central. Because of their forecasts, General MacArthur's headquarters postponed landing operations for two days in August). After surrender came, his biggest function is forecasting typhoon tracks. He wants to complete degree at Albion as "I think of Abion as my
Alma Mater...." He is pleased to see that Delta Sigma Phi is to be reactivated on campus again. In a letter of 1946 March 25, he states that he is teaching at the General Motors Institute because of the increased enrollment of 1000 students this semester. He teaches 9 physics and Industrial Materials labs per week.

Keith Tobin-2 Deferred from duty. Works at Elliott Co. in Jeanette, PA, a manufacturer of power plant equipment and diesel superchargers.

Eugene V. Van Osdol, Pvt.- 2,3 In a letter of 1945 September 9, states the war is over. He spent 165 days at the front. He spent two weeks in Manila recruiting Chinese and Filipino-Americans. The 25th Division battled across the Central Plains after landing at Lingayen, and taking Balete Pass, gateway to Cagayen Valley. Van Osdol writes that he is "taking correspondence courses to refresh my mind". Sleight's letter of 1945 October 3 states that at Albion, they are having the first Homecoming since the war started. Sleight is chairman of this event. Freshman group has double the number of boys in mathematics. Sleight's section has 18 boys out of 26. Dr. Fuller is now back at Albion (He was at Oak Ridge helping to develop the atomic bomb).

John Waite, Pvt.- 1,2 Took meteorology course through Washington University in St. Louis, MO.

Robert Webber, Ensign-2,3 At Naval Supply Depot in Mechanicsburg, VA and is in charge of 6 officers, 8 WAVES and 35 civilians in interchangeability and engineering section. In a letter of 1945 April 26, he talks about a huge project to consolidate buying options for engine parts a la Meade Commission. Technical manuals are also being produced and Webber is heading up this effort. In a letter of note of 1945 November 19, he writes that he saw several other Albionites at Pearl Harbor. Webber was the Maintenance Officer to the staff of Commander Mine Craft Pacific. They lost a total of 15 ships to the typhoon and must salvage them now. He will be going back to a job at Detroit Diesel. He wrote extensively about his impressions of Okinawa: The natives are about "as primitive as they can be." Women do most of the field work. Men ride in horse carts gathering wood and building supplies. The wealth of a family was measured by the size of the family tomb. Tombs were built into the sides of hills and when a family member dies, the body is cut into small pieces and placed in a jar within the tomb. People live in villages and the farmland belongs to villages. The expectation is that some 3000 illegitimate children will be left behind at the end of the war.

Norris C. Wetters-1,2 Weather officer for the fighter bomber replacement unit. Trained in 1942 July at University of Chicago...enlisted in Army Air Force. Currently residing at Windermere Hotel on an allowance of $2.35 per day. Is in the Div. of Meteorology, forecasting.

Donald Wright-1,2 Midshipman on sea duty.

Drew E. Young, Pvt. - 1,2 Camp Shelby, MI

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Arrangement note

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The collection is divided into two series: originals and photocopies. Within the series, the letters are arranged chronologically. Folder 1 includes one photograph.

Administrative Information

Publication Information
Albion College Archives and Special Collections 2014 May 5

Conditions Governing Access note
This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use note
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## Collection Inventory

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<th>Folder</th>
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