

WORCESTER HISTORICAL MUSEUM

30 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts

ARCHIVES

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
2014.17

Processed by Caleigh Ross
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Series</u>	<u>Subseries</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Box</u>
	Collection Information	4	
	Historical/Biographical Notes	5	
	Scope and Content	6	
	Series Description	6	
1	Correspondence		
	1 New York Letters	7	1
	2 Somewhere at Sea	7	1
	3 England	7	1
	4 France: August-November 4, 1918	8	1
	5 After the Armistice	8	1
	6 On Leave in Nice, Monte Carlo, Paris	8	1
	7 Neufchateau, February-May	9	1
	8 On Leave in Paris	9	1
	9 Neufchateau, May-June	9	1
	10 Brest, June-July	10	1
	11 On Leave in Scotland and Ireland	10	1
	12 Brest, July-August	10	1

	13	Miscellany	11	1
2		Photo Album		
	1	Photo Album	11	1
3		Ephemera		
	1	Scrapbook	12	BV
	2	Loose Ephemera From Scrapbook	12-13	1
	3	Loose Ephemera	13-14	1
4		Memento Book		
	1	Memento Book	15	1
5		Signal Corp Roster		
	1	Signal Corp Roster	15	1
6		Autograph Book		
	1	Autograph Book	15	1

Collection Information

Abstract : The collection contains documents pertaining to Worcester native Martha M. Henshaw, who served as a telephone operator in the Signal Corps of the Allied Expeditionary Force in France during World War I. The collection contains correspondence, a photo album, a scrapbook, and ephemera related to Henshaw's experience in France as a "Hello Girl."

Finding Aid : Finding Aid in print form is available in the Repository.

Preferred Citation : Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Provenance : Donated by Kenneth Starbard

MARC Access :

Historical/Biographical Notes

Martha M. Henshaw

Martha May Henshaw was born on May 28th, 1897(?) to Mr. and Mrs. Josiah W. Henshaw. Martha was a telephone operator living at 22 Castle Street in Worcester prior to the First World War. In the spring of 1918, at the age of 21, Henshaw volunteered to travel to France, becoming a member of the Signal Corps of the American Expeditionary Force. As a Signal Corps member, Henshaw worked at a switchboard that communicated between the front lines and the army headquarters.

Experiences with the Signal Corps, American Expeditionary Force

Martha left for France with 48 other members of the Signal Corps in July 1918, landing first in Liverpool, England before travelling on to France. After making their way through Rouen, Paris, and Tours, the fifth unit, including Henshaw, settled in Neufchateau, in the department of Vosges. During her time in Neufchateau prior to the armistice, Henshaw and her colleagues in the Signal Corps kept extremely busy, working at a ten position switchboard and living in the army barracks. Following the armistice, Henshaw and the women of the Signal Corps were able to enjoy a greater degree of mobility, visiting the front lines and going on leave. In June Henshaw was transferred to Brest in Brittany, working in coordination with both the army and the navy.

Life after the Signal Corps

In 1925 the Henshaw family relocated to 67 Hadwen Road in Worcester, where they resided for 10 years before moving to Framingham around 1935. Martha continued to work as a chief telephone operator for the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, living in Haverhill from around 1948 to around 1955. Martha then settled in Lawrence, where she passed away in 1977.

Scope and Content

This collection includes correspondence, photographs, a scrapbook, and ephemera from Henshaw's time in the Signal Corps. The correspondence includes letters from Henshaw to her parents describing her experiences in France working as a telephone operator in the last months of the war until her departure for home in August 1919.

Series Descriptions

Series 1: Correspondence

Series description: This series contains letters from Martha May Henshaw to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Henshaw of 22 Castle Street. The letters were sent between July 1918 and August 1919.

Series 2: Photo Album

Series description: This series contains an album of photographs collected during Henshaw's time with the Signal Corps. Many of the photographs were taken by Henshaw herself, documenting her experiences. Other photographs in the album are souvenir photos of battlefields, trenches, and war-ravaged cities. This series is also available in digital format.

Series 3: Ephemera

Series description: This series contains a scrapbook curated by Henshaw that documents her experiences in the Signal Corps. The scrapbook includes ticket stubs, official Signal Corps documents, dance cards, menus, and newspaper clippings. This series also contains folders of ephemera relating to Henshaw's experiences in the Signal Corps.

Series 4: Memento Book

Series description: This series contains a memento book given to Henshaw containing letters and photographs from high-ranking officers, expressing gratitude for the efforts of the Telephone Operating Unit of the Signal Corps.

Series 5: Signal Corps Roster

Series description: This series contains a Roster of Signal Corps members, including unit number, present address, and married name, if applicable.

Series 6: Autograph book

Series description: This series contains an autograph book possibly belonging to Martha M. Henshaw's grandmother. The autograph book contains signatures from Worcester and surrounding towns including Clinton, Oxford, Sterling, and Leicester.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 1: Correspondence
 Subseries 1: New York Letters
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	2014.17.1.1.1	July 28, 1918—Letter to Mrs. J. W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, having just arrived in New York.
1	1	2014.17.1.1.2.A-B	July 30, 1918—Letter to Mrs. J. W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, from New York. Envelope with letter.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 1: Correspondence
 Subseries 2: Somewhere at Sea
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1 Martha the	2	2014.17.1.2.1.A-B	1918—Letter to Mrs. J. W. Henshaw from M. Henshaw, written during her voyage over Atlantic. Envelope with letter.
1	2	2014.17.1.2.2	1918—Postcard to Mrs. J. W. Henshaw from the American Expeditionary Forces, signifying that Martha's ship had arrived safely overseas.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 1: Correspondence
 Subseries 3: England
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	3	2014.17.1.3.1.A-B	1918—Letter to Mrs. J. W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, from England. Envelope with letter.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 1: Correspondence
Subseries 4: France, August-November 4, 1918
2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	4	2014.17.1.4.1-17	August 1918- November 4 th , 1918— Letters to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, from undisclosed location in France. Envelopes with letters.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 1: Correspondence
Subseries 5: After the Armistice
2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	5	2014.17.1.5.1-12	November 15 th , 1918- January 22 nd , 1919— Letters to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, from Neufchateau in France. Envelopes with letters.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 1: Correspondence
Subseries 6: On Leave in Nice, Paris, Monte Carlo
2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	6	2014.17.1.6.1-4	January 29 th , 1919- February 12 th , 1919— Letters to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, on leave in Nice, Paris, and Monte Carlo. Envelopes with letters.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 1: Correspondence
Subseries 7: Neufchateau February-May
2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	7	2014.17.1.7.1-12	February 17 th , 1919- May 7 th , 1919— Letters to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, from Neufchateau in France. Envelopes with letters.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 1: Correspondence
Subseries 8: On Leave in Paris
2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	8	2014.17.1.8.1-3	May 11 th , 1919- May 17 th , 1919— Letters to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, while on leave in Paris. Envelopes with letters.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 1: Correspondence
Subseries 9: Neufchateau May-June
2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	9	2014.17.1.9.1-7	May 20 th , 1919- June 2 nd , 1919— Letters to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, from Neufchateau in France. Envelopes with letters.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 1: Correspondence
 Subseries 10: Brest June-July
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	10	2014.17.1.10.1-14	June 5 th , 1919- July 9 th , 1919— Letters to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, from Brest in France. Envelopes with letters.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 1: Correspondence
 Subseries 11: On Leave in Scotland and Ireland
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	11	2014.17.1.11.1-3	July 13 th , 1919- July 23 rd , 1919— Letters to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, on leave in Scotland and Ireland .Envelopes with letters.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 1: Correspondence
 Subseries 12: Brest July-August
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	12	2014.17.1.12.1-6	July 26 th , 1919- August 6 th , 1919— Letters to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, from Brest in France. Envelopes with letters.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 1: Correspondence
 Subseries 13: Miscellany
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	13	2014.17.1.13.1	Undated—Postcard of Long Island, Maine, to Martha M. Henshaw in France, sender unknown.
1	13	2014.17.1.13.2	Undated— Soldier's Mail Postcard to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Martha M. Henshaw, from France.
1	13	2014.17.1.13.3.A-B	June 10 th , 1918—Letter to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from A. Wilforn? Envelope with letter.
1	13	2014.17.1.13.4.A-B	December 13 th , 1918—Letter to Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Henshaw from Nelson Wheeler in Colombes les Belles, France. Envelope with letter.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 2: Photo Album
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	BV	2014.17.2.1	Undated—Photo Album containing photographs collected and taken by Martha M. Henshaw during her time in the Army Signal Corps in France and on leave. Digital folder available.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 3: Ephemera
 Subseries 1: Scrapbook
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
BV		2014.17.3.1.1	Undated—Scrapbook containing documents, ticket stubs, dance cards, and ephemera collected by Martha M. Henshaw during her time in the Army Signal Corps in France and on leave.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 3: Ephemera
 Subseries 2: Loose Ephemera from Scrapbook
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	14	2014.17.3.2.1	Undated—Tintype photograph of two soldiers found in the back page of the scrapbook.
1	14	2014.17.3.2.2-12	Undated—French postcards from various locations collected during Henshaw’s time in France. Found in the back page of the scrapbook
1	14	2014.17.3.2.13	Undated—Postcard of George D. Carpenter, a.k.a. “Red,” a cook in one of the French hospitals, originally from Cambridge, MA who used to make fudge and pies for the Signal Corps girls. Found in the back page of the scrapbook.
1	14	2014.17.3.2.14-16	Undated—Pictures of unnamed men. Found in the back page of the scrapbook.
1	14	2014.17.3.2.17	Undated—Dance card. Found in the back page of the scrapbook.
1	14	2014.17.3.2.18	1932 —Timecard. Found in the back page of the scrapbook.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 3: Ephemera
 Subseries 2: Loose Ephemera from Scrapbook
 Continued

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	14	2014.17.3.2.19-24	Undated—Newspaper clippings Found in the back page of the scrapbook.
1	14	2014.17.3.2.25.A-B	Undated—Clothing patches. Found in the back page of the scrapbook.
1	14	2014.17.3.2.26	Undated—Silk American Flag. Found in the back page of the scrapbook.
1	14	2014.17.3.2.27-28	Undated—Silk armbands. Found in the back page of the scrapbook.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
 Series 3: Ephemera
 Subseries 3: Loose Ephemera
 2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	15	2014.17.3.3.1-2	Undated—Postcard of Jean d’Arc from Paris.
1	15	2014.17.3.3.1-2	Undated—Postcard of Jean d’Arc from Paris.
1	15	2014.17.3.3.3	Undated—Postcard of Marta’s friend Mildred L. Lewis in regulation uniform.
1	15	2014.17.3.3.4	Undated—Postcard of young girls in kimonos with parasols.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 3: Ephemera
Subseries 3: Loose Ephemera
Continued

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	15	2014.17.3.3.5	August 4 th , 1918-April 16 th 1919—Typed transcriptions of letters from Martha M. Henshaw.
1	15	2014.17.3.3.6	July 28 th 1918—Information and instructions for the Fifth Group of Signal Corps Telephone Operators in New York. Includes baggage allowances, shopping lists and sizes, and instructions for shopping locations.
1	15	2014.17.3.3.7	Undated—Typed recollection of experiences in the Signal Corps, written by Martha.
1	15	2014.17.3.3.8.A-B	November 26 th , 1977 — Certificate of Recognition from President Jimmy Carter in memory of Martha M. Henshaw. Envelope with certificate.
1	15	2014.17.3.3.9	Undated — Typed transcript of a talk given by Martha describing her experiences at a conference at Glacier National Park, sponsored by the Women’s Overseas Service League after World War I.
1	15	2014.17.3.3.10	Undated —5 th Battalion Signal Corps shoulder patch.
1	15	2014.17.3.3.11-16	Undated —Newspaper clippings.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 4: Memento Book
2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	BV	2014.17.4.1	1918 —Memento book given to Henshaw containing letters and photographs from high-ranking officers, expressing gratitude for the efforts of the Telephone Operating Unit of the Signal Corps.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 5: Signal Corps Roster
2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	16	2014.17.5.1	Undated —Roster of Signal Corps members. Includes unit number, present address, and married name, if applicable.

Martha M. Henshaw Collection
Series 6: Autograph book
2014.17

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	17	2014.17.6.1	Undated —Autograph book possibly belonging to Martha's grandmother. Contains signatures from residents of Worcester, Leicester, Sterling, and surrounding towns.