

# WORCESTER HISTORICAL MUSEUM

30 Elm Street  
Worcester, Massachusetts

## ARCHIVES

Vernon Hill Spiel  
World War II  
Letters Collection

2016.30

Processed by Robyn Conroy  
July 2016

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### Collection Information

Abstract: Originals and photocopies of 1400 letters written by World War II soldiers to Donald Gibbons editor the Vernon Hill Spiel. Also included are materials relating to a November 2002 event that took place at the National Guard Armory called, "Mail Call." It was an attempt to reunite soldiers and/or soldiers' families with their letters.

Finding Aids: Finding Aid in print form available at Worcester Historical Museum Library and Archives.

Preferred Citation: Worcester Historical Museum Archives, 30 Elm Street, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Provenance: Donated by Frank Carroll in 2016

Access: Finding Aid is cataloged in MARC under the following subject headings (lcsh, aat, tgm, gmgpc, rbgenr) :

### Historical Background

This collection includes some 1,400 letters home written by Worcester soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines on active duty during the Second World War. Mailed to a local newspaper, the Vernon Hill Spiel, that shared news from servicemen from the Worcester neighborhood who were in action around the globe. The letters were sent during the war to the editor of the Spiel, a Worcester firefighter named Donald F. Gibbons, who with the aid of volunteers working out of booths at Leavitt's Spa published 43 editions of the newsletter between 1943 and 1945.

Gibbons brother George joined the Navy in 1938. He was captured in the Philippines and survived the Bataan Death March. He died when an Allied ship torpedoed the Japanese vessel that was taking him to Tokyo. Another brother, Warren, was shot down over Germany, taken prisoner and survived. It was through these correspondences with his brothers and other friends that he came up with the idea of The Vernon Hill Spiel (slang for "talk").

During the war nearly 500 Vernon Hill residents wrote to the Spiel from around the globe. It had a circulation of 850 mailed every two weeks. To get a subscription, a soldier or sailor had to promise to write one letter a month to the newsletter. Letters poured in from all over, from Europe and North Africa, from across the Pacific, from locations that couldn't be named because of military censorship.

### Scope and Content

Originals and photocopies of 1400 letters written by World War II soldiers to Donald Gibbons editor the Vernon Hill Spiel. Also included are materials relating to a November 2002 event that took place at the National Guard Armory called, "Mail Call." It was an attempt to reunite soldiers and/or soldiers' families with their letters.

### Series Description

Series 1: Letters – binders arranged alphabetically by author. Note: refer to index to determine if collection contains original and photocopy of just photocopy.

Series 2: Lists – various lists of letter writers. Lists include comments on each letter, attendees to November 9, 2002 event, next of kin.

Series 3: Vernon Hill Spiel - Photocopies of a select number of Vernon Hill Spiels.

Series 4: Press - Various newspaper articles relating to the November 9, 2002 “Mail Call” event and other articles about the collection and the Vernon Hill Spiel

Series 5: Operation Mail Call – Media Call, Press Releases and program notes regarding November 9, 2002 event.

Series 1, Letters

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
		2016.30.1.1	Copies of letters (A – B)
		2016.30.1.2	Copies of letters ( C )
		2016.30.1.3	Copies of letters (D)
		2016.30.1.4	Copies of letters (E and F)
		2016.30.1.5	Original letters (A – H)
		2016.30.1.6	Copies of letters (G – K)
		2016.30.1.7	Copies of letters (L)
		2016.30.1.8	Original Letters (J – M)
		2016.30.1.9	Copies of Letters (M)
		2016.30.1.10	Copies of Letters (N – P)
		2016.30.1.11	Original Letters (N – R)
		2016.30.1.12	Copies of Letters (Q – V)
		2016.30.1.13	Original Letters (S – W)
		2016.30.1.14	Copies of Letters (W)

Vernon Hill Spiel  
World War II Letters Collection  
2016.30  
Series 2, Lists

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	2016.30.2.1	List of soldiers with next of kin
1	1	2016.30.2.2-.3	List of letter writers with handwritten notes on if contacted and if attending November 9, 2002 event.
1	1	2016.30.2.4	Various lists printed to help find veterans to return letters.
1	2	2016.30.2.5	192 page index of all the letters in collection with date and notes about letters.

Vernon Hill Spiel  
World War II Letters Collection  
2016.30  
Series 3, Vernon Hill Spiel

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	3	2016.30.3.1	September 1943
1	3	2016.30.3.2	December 15, 1943
1	3	2016.30.3.3	September 15, 1944
1	3	2016.30.3.4	July 1, 1945
1	3	2016.30.3.5	September 1, 1945

Vernon Hill Spiel  
World War II Letters Collection  
2016.30  
Series 4, Press

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	4	2016.30.4.1	Folder of newspaper articles about November 9, 2002 "Mail Call" event as well as articles about the archive and the Vernon Hill Spiel.

Vernon Hill Spiel  
World War II Letters Collection  
2016.30  
Series 5, Operation Mail Call

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	5	2016.30.5.1	Media releases and program notes regarding event.
1	6	2016.30.5.2	Media kits
1	7	2016.30.5.3	Letters sent to veterans and their family's after the event.
1	8	2016.30.5.4	Thank you letters
2		2016.30.5.5	Letters of invite to event