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# **Finding aid for the Beineman/McSorley World War II letters and papers Collection 471**

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections  
Department

111 Library Street NE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

[localhis@grpl.org](mailto:localhis@grpl.org)

URL: <http://www.grpl.org>

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
<b>Title:</b>	Beineman/McSorley World War II letters and papers
<b>ID:</b>	Collection 471
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1941-1945
<b>Physical Description:</b>	2 Linear Feet
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Abstract:</b>	The Beineman/McSorley papers are comprised mostly of letters written between husband and wife, John & Alta (Beineman) McSorley, during the United States' involvement in World War II. John enlisted in the United States Army in March 1943 and was discharged in October 1945. He went abroad during the later part of the war, spending at least some time in Paris and the French countryside. The couple wrote letters nearly every day. Most of Alta's letters relate to life at home in Grand Rapids, Michigan with her family, telling of the death of their dog and her father. Most of John's letters revolve around Army life: training, waiting, then action. Among the papers are a scrapbook Alta kept during John's time away, and some photographs of the couple together, at home or while Alta visited John stateside. Many photographs also depict John and Army personnel in European cities.

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## Biographical / Historical

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John James McSorley (1912-1972) was the son of Irish immigrants Daniel and Mary Cox McSorley. John was born in and spent his entire life in Grand Rapids, and worked as a retail grocery manager during his young adulthood. John enlisted in the United States Army in Kalamazoo in March 1943, and was discharged as a private in October 1945. John went abroad during the later part of the war, spending at least some time in Paris and the French countryside.

Alta Beineman McSorley (1913-1996) was born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, to Otto & Lillian Springborn Beineman(n). The family moved to Grand Rapids by the time Alta was six years old, as the 1920 Census showed them living on Shamrock Street. Alta attended high school at South High for at least three years, and worked as a seamstress in a local laundry as a young adult.

John & Alta were married in Kent County in June 1939. They did not have any children, and both died and were buried in Grand Rapids. John died in 1972, and Alta in 1996. Both are interred in Woodlawn Cemetery.

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## Scope and Contents

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The Beineman/McSorley papers are comprised mostly of letters written between husband and wife, John & Alta (Beineman) McSorley, during the United States' involvement in World War II.

The interest of the letters and papers lies in what prolific letter writers the couple was. Letters are dated nearly every day, from one or the other, from 1943 to 1945. Most of Alta's letters relate to life at home with her family, telling of the death of their dog and her father. Most of John's letters revolve around Army life: training, waiting, then action. A few of John's letters were written on U.S. Army stationery, and a few of these have overt Allied propaganda styling.

Among the papers are a scrapbook Alta kept during John's time away, and some photographs of the couple together, at home or while Alta visited John stateside. Many photographs also depict John and Army personnel in European cities.

One copy of the local newspaper, the Catholic Campaigner, dated December 3, 1944, is also part of this collection. It is housed with other newspapers in Coll. 259, the GRPL Newspapers collection.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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## Related Materials

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### Related Materials

Several other collections provide insight and information on events during the World War II era. See Collection 310: Grand Rapids in World War II, 1941-1946, for further information and listings of related collections.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- World War, 1939-1945
- letters (correspondence)
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Personal narratives, American
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- United States. Army.

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## Collection Inventory

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### Letters , 1940-1945

Title/Description	Instances	
Letters (includes ephemera), 1940-1944	Box 1	
John McSorley's dog tags	Box 1	folder 1
Letters, various parties to John and/or Alta McSorley	Box 1	folder 2
Letter fragments, John McSorley to Alta McSorley	Box 1	Folder 3
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley	Box 1	Folder 4
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, 1940	Box 1	Folder 5
Letter, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, May 1941	Box 1	Folder 6
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, 1941	Box 1	Folder 7
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, 1942	Box 1	Folder 8
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, January 1943	Box 1	Folder 9

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Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, March 1943	Box 1	Folder 10
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, April 1943	Box 1	Folder 11
Letter, O.C. Beineman to John McSorley, April 1943	Box 1	Folder 12
Letters, Mr. McSorley to John McSorley, April, June 1943	Box 1	Folder 13
Letters, Dan McSorley to John McSorley, April, May 1943	Box 1	Folder 14
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, May 1943	Box 1	Folder 15
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, June 1943	Box 1	Folder 16
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, July 1943	Box 1	Folder 17
Letter, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, September 1943	Box 1	Folder 18
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, October, November 1943	Box 1	Folder 19
Letter, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, October 1943	Box 1	Folder 20
Letters, various parties to Alta McSorley, 1943	Box 1	Folder 21
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, December 1943	Box 1	Folder 22
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, January 1944	Box 1	Folder 23
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, February 1944	Box 1	Folder 24
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, February 1944	Box 1	Folder 25
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, March 1944	Box 1	Folder 26
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, March 1944	Box 1	Folder 27
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, 1943-03-26-1943-05-13	Box 1	Object 28
Letters, 1944-1945	Box 2	
Miscellaneous papers	Box 2	Folder 1
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, April 1944	Box 2	Folder 2
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, May 1944	Box 2	Folder 3
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, June 1944	Box 2	Folder 4
Letters, Alta McSorley to John McSorley, June 1944	Box 2	Folder 5
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, July 1944	Box 2	Folder 6
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, August 1944	Box 2	Folder 7
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, September 1944	Box 2	Folder 8
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, October 1944	Box 2	Folder 9
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, November 1944	Box 2	Folder 10
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, December 1944	Box 2	Folder 11

Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, January 1945	Box 2	Folder 12
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, February 1945	Box 2	Folder 13
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, March 1945	Box 2	Folder 14
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, April 1945	Box 2	Folder 15
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, May 1945	Box 2	Folder 16
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, June 1945	Box 2	Folder 17
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, July 1945	Box 2	Folder 18
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, August 1945	Box 2	Folder 19
Letters, John McSorley to Alta McSorley, 1943-05-23-1943-07-30	Box 2	object 20

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## Papers

Title/Description	Instances		
Scrapbook	Box 3		
Photographs	Box 3		
The Catholic Campaigner, December 3, 1944	Collection 259	Box 18	folder 1

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