

Yale University Library
Yale Divinity Library

Guide to the Edward L. Bliss Papers

RG 319



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2021

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New Haven, CT 06511
(203) 432-5301

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<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition	3
Conditions Governing Access	3
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
Biographical / Historical	4
Scope and Contents	5
Collection Contents	6
Series I: Correspondence	6
Family correspondence	6
E. Bliss to his parents	6
To/from extended family	7
E. Bliss to his siblings	7
To/from Minnie May Bliss (wife of E. Bliss)	7
Circular letters	7
General correspondence	7
Topical files of correspondence	8
Series II: Personal Items and Memorabilia	9
Series III: Photographs	10
Selected Search Terms	11

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Divinity Library
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New Haven, CT 06511
(203) 432-5301
divinity.library@yale.edu
<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

CALL NUMBER: RG 319

CREATOR: Bliss, Edward, 1865-1960

TITLE: Edward L. Bliss papers

DATES: 1884-1946, 2010

BULK DATES: 1884-1946

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2 linear feet (4 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: This collection includes correspondence personal memorabilia, and photographs documenting the life of missionary Edward L. Bliss. Edward L. Bliss (1865-1960) was stationed in Shaowu, China as a medical missionary by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Bliss contributed to the eradication of rinderpest in cattle and lived in China through the First Sino-Japanese War and the Xinhai Revolution.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.319>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.319>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Bliss family, 2020

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright has not been transferred to Yale University

Preferred Citation

Edward L. Bliss Papers (RG 319), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

Biographical / Historical

Chronology

Date	Event
1865 December 10	○ Edward Lydston Bliss born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, son of Charles and Emily Lydston Bliss
1887	○ B.A. Yale University
1891 June	○ M.D., Yale University Medical School
1892 September	○ Departed from San Francisco to China as a missionary serving under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
1893 February	○ Arrived at station in Shaowu, Fujian Province
1897	○ Building of hospital in Shaowu, funded by Bliss and the First and Second Congregational Churches of Waterbury, Connecticut
1898	○ Furlough in US
1900	○ Return to China
1902 September	○ Married to Minnie May Bortz
1908	○ Furlough in US
1912	○ Son Edward L. Bliss Jr. born. The Blisses also had two daughters, Ruth and Beth.
1916	○ Furlough in US
1932	○ Returned to US where the family lived in Oberlin, Ohio
1946	○ Bliss and his wife moved to Newburyport, Massachusetts
1958	○ Bliss and his wife moved to Boston to live with daughter Ruth
1960 January 22	○ Edward Bliss died
1967	○ Minnie May Bliss died
2001	○ Publication of biography, <i>Beyond the Stone Arches: An American Missionary Doctor in China, 1892–1932</i> by son, Edward L. Bliss Jr.

Scope and Contents

These papers document the life of missionary Edward L. Bliss through correspondence, personal items and memorabilia, and photographs. Born on December 10th, 1865 in Massachusetts, Edward L. Bliss was a teacher, doctor, and missionary stationed in China. Commissioned by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Bliss worked in Shaowu, China as a medical missionary from 1892-1932. According to the biography published by his son in 2001, *Beyond the Stone Arches: An American Missionary Doctor in China, 1892-1932*, Bliss considered some of his most important work in China to be his medical training of young men. Many of these men studied with Bliss for two years and then became "druggists" running their own dispensaries, or "barefoot doctors" who practiced medicine in the countryside. Some went on to Nanjing for additional study.

In addition to his medical teaching, practice, and fundraising for local hospitals, Bliss devoted his missionary life to the immunization of cattle against rinderpest. *Beyond the Stone Arches: An American Missionary Doctor in China, 1892-1932* further details Bliss' medical missionary work and documents the family's response to important developments within Chinese history, including the First Sino-Japanese War and the Xinhai Revolution. Correspondence within the collection provides insight into the daily life of missionaries during the emergence of the Republican era.

Series I, Correspondence, includes family correspondence, circular letters sent to family, and correspondence with notable missionary colleagues including Emily Hartwell. The bulk of documents in Series I consist of letters, spanning from 1887-1925, sent from Bliss to his parents. Bliss sent letters mainly from Shaowu, with the occasional letter from Fuzhou or Shanghai as Bliss was evacuated from Shaowu during the Xinhai Revolution. While stationed as a missionary in China, Bliss also sent individual and circular letters to his extended family--including to his six siblings, aunts, and son. Items from Minnie May Bliss, wife of Edward L. Bliss, are also retained in the collection. Correspondence with notable missionary Emily Hartwell, on the topic of China's Children Fund and orphanages in Fujian province, can be found in the collection. While writing his father's biography, Edward L. Bliss annotated many of his father's letters, arranging them topically. These letters are listed under Topical Files of Correspondence and include important correspondence from Bliss on his vocational choices and personal philosophies.

Series II, Personal Items and Memorabilia, includes a smaller section of material ranging from Bliss' personal notes to items like a passport and calling card. There also includes a recent article from the New York Times (2010) on Bliss' contribution to the eradication of rinderpest in China.

Series III consists of photographs collected by Bliss. Both Western and Chinese colleagues sent Bliss family photographs, often including identification on the back of the image. Photographs in Series III also include photographs of the Bliss family, missionary groups, landscapes and buildings, and unaddressed postcards.

Material in the Donald MacInnis Papers, Record Group 204, Series I, Research Files, filed by individual, "Bliss, Edward, MD (ABCFM, Shaowu), 1997-2000" supplements material available in this collection.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence

Family correspondence

E. Bliss to his parents

b. 1, f. 1	To parents	1887
b. 1, f. 2	To parents	1888
b. 1, f. 3	To parents	1889
b. 1, f. 4	To parents	1891
b. 1, f. 5	To parents	1892
b. 1, f. 6	To parents	1893
b. 1, f. 7	To parents	1894
b. 1, f. 8	To parents	1895
b. 1, f. 9	To parents	1896
b. 1, f. 10	To parents	1897
b. 1, f. 11	To parents	1898
b. 1, f. 12	To parents	1900
b. 1, f. 13	To parents	1901
b. 1, f. 14	To parents	1902
b. 1, f. 15	To parents	1903
b. 1, f. 16	To parents	1904
b. 1, f. 17	To parents	1905
b. 1, f. 18	To parents	1906
b. 1, f. 19	To parents	1907
b. 1, f. 20	To parents	1908
b. 1, f. 21	To parents	1909
b. 1, f. 22	To parents	1910
b. 1, f. 23	To parents	1911
b. 1, f. 24	To parents	1912
b. 2, f. 1	To parents	1913
b. 2, f. 2	To parents	1914

Family correspondence > E. Bliss to his parents (continued)

b. 2, f. 3	To parents	1915
b. 2, f. 4	To parents	1917
b. 2, f. 5	To parents	1918
b. 2, f. 6	To parents	1920
b. 2, f. 7	To parents	1921
b. 2, f. 8	To parents	1922
b. 2, f. 9	To parents	1924
b. 2, f. 10	To parents	1925
To/from extended family		
b. 2, f. 11	To/from aunts	1915–1921
b. 2, f. 12	To son, Edward. L. Bliss Jr. from E. Bliss and family	1928–1949
b. 2, f. 13	To son, Edward. L. Bliss Jr. from E. Bliss and family	1950 - 1958, n.d
b. 2, f. 14	To E Bliss from family	1891–1929
E. Bliss to his siblings		
b. 2, f. 15	To Charles	1889–1919
b. 2, f. 16	To Clara	1918
b. 2, f. 17	To Earnest	1895–1920
b. 2, f. 18	To George	1904
b. 2, f. 19	To Marian	1888–1918, n.d.
b. 2, f. 20	To Mary	1921
To/from Minnie May Bliss (wife of E. Bliss)		
b. 2, f. 21	To Minnie May Bliss from E. Bliss	1928–1931
b. 2, f. 22	To Mother from Minnie May Bliss	1920–1942
Circular letters		
b. 3, f. 1	Circular Letters to/from family	1892–1950
b. 3, f. 2	Unaddressed, most likely circular	1925
General correspondence		
b. 3, f. 3	To Bliss from acquaintances	1914–1931
b. 3, f. 4	From Bliss to acquaintances	1914–1944
b. 3, f. 5	To Emily Hartwell	1947, n.d.

General correspondence (continued)

b. Ovd 16	Unidentified recipient, from Diong Daik [Duang]	1946
Topical files of correspondence		
b. 3, f. 6	From E. Bliss to family - letters annotated by family	1884-1896
b. 3, f. 7	From E. Bliss to Mother - letters annotated by son	1892-1929
b. 3, f. 8	From E. Bliss to Mother - letters annotated by son	1922-1927
b. 3, f. 9	From E. Bliss to Mother - letters annotated by son	1928-1930
b. 3, f. 10	From E. Bliss to extended family - annotated by son	1893-1931

Series II: Personal Items and Memorabilia

b. 3, f. 11	Passport	1929
b. 3, f. 12	Bliss personal notes	1893-1911
b. 3, f. 13	Bliss personal notes	1925, n.d.
b. 3, f. 14	Bliss calling card	n.d.
b. 3, f. 15	New York Times article about Bliss	2010

Series III: Photographs

b. 4, f. 1	Family	1900–1925, n.d.
b. 4, f. 2	Chinese colleagues and acquaintances	1902–1919, n.d.
b. 4, f. 3	Western colleagues and acquaintances	1901–1910, n.d.
b. 4, f. 4	Missionary group photos	1911–1934, n.d.
b. 4, f. 5	Landscapes and buildings	1898–1918, n.d.
b. 4, f. 6	Postcard photos	n.d.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Missions, Medical -- China