

# Guide to the Daniel Webster Crofts Papers

RG 240



Compiled by Martha Lund Smalley

2012

409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301

[divinity.library@yale.edu](mailto:divinity.library@yale.edu)

<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
Preferred Citation .....	4
Processing Information .....	4
Biographical / Historical .....	4
Scope and Contents .....	5
Arrangement .....	5
Collection Contents .....	6
Correspondence, 1892-2008 .....	6
Family correspondence .....	6
To extended family .....	6
To children .....	6
General correspondence .....	7
Circular letters .....	7
To/from others .....	7
Writings, 1933-1934 .....	8
Biographical Documentation, 1942-1955 .....	9
Selected Search Terms .....	10

---

## Collection Overview

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

**CALL NUMBER:** RG 240

**CREATOR:** Crofts, Daniel Webster, 1866-1960

**TITLE:** Daniel Webster Crofts Papers

**DATES:** 1892-2008

**BULK DATES:** 1892-1950

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1 linear foot (2 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Letters and writings document the life and work of Daniel Webster Crofts, an American missionary serving under the China Inland Mission, primarily in Guizhou Province, China from 1895 to 1944. Detailed letters written to the Crofts children describe the evangelization and literature distribution work of Crofts and his first wife Verna Hammarén Crofts and his second wife Mabel Harlow Crofts, as well as their way of life in a rural area beset by famine, and political disruption.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.240>

---

## 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.240>.

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

b.      box  
f.      folder

---

## Administrative Information

---

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Daniel Wallace Crofts, 2011

---

### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

---

## Preferred Citation

Daniel Webster Crofts Papers (RG 240), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

---

## Processing Information

Place names were modernized in the description, with the name originally used in the collection material or in an older version of the finding aid in parenthesis: e.g. "Beijing (Peking)" or "Benin (Dahomey)".

---

## Biographical / Historical

### Chronology of Daniel Webster Crofts

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 1866 Aug 20   | ○ Daniel Webster Crofts born in Ohio, son of John Byron Crofts and Hannah Kane Crofts. The Crofts had eleven children, ten of whom survived to adulthood: sons Frank, Daniel, Will, Rob, Jim, Tom and daughters Jennie, Ada, Minnie, and Mary.                                      |
| 1891          | ○ Graduated from Muskingum College  |
| 1894          | ○ Graduated from Chicago Theological Seminary   |
| 1895          | ○ While working as minister for a congregation in Peoria, Illinois, applied to become missionary of China Inland Mission.   |
| 1895 Dec 16   | ○ Arrived in Shanghai, having left Tacoma, Washington in November, and stopping in Japan. Began language study.   |
| 1896 - 1901   | ○ Stationed in Laohekou, Hubei Province   |
| 1899 Nov      | ○ Married Verna Hammarén, a missionary sponsored by the Free Church of Finland working under the direction of the China Inland Mission  |
| 1900 Sep 13   | ○ Son John born in Shanghai where Verna had evacuated due to Boxer Rebellion. Daniel arrived in Shanghai in November.   |
| 1901          | ○ After being refugees in Shanghai for several months, lived in Yangzhou and Zhenjiang before returning to Laohekou   |
| 1902 Feb 8    | ○ Daughter Verna born in Hankou. Shortly thereafter the family went on furlough, first to Finland and then to the U.S.  |
| 1903 August 2 | ○ Son Alfred born in Oakland, California. Shortly thereafter the family returned to China, arriving in Shanghai in September  |
| 1904 Apr      | ○ Established new CIM mission in Zhenyuan, Guizhou Province. Crofts' missionary work involved itinerations through countryside to preach and sell books.  |
| 1906 Sep 20   | ○ Daughter Saima born.  |
| 1908 - 1911   | ○ Crofts contributed reports and columns to the North-China Herald  |
| 1909          | ○ Son John and daughter Verna traveled to boarding school at Chefoo School in Yantai, Shandong, accompanied by wife Verna and son Alfred. Verna died in Chefoo from dysentery and weak heart. Daniel traveled to Chefoo and spent winter with children before returning to Guizhou. |

### Chronology of Daniel Webster Crofts

- 1912
  - Saima joined her older siblings at Chefoo School, having earlier lived with a missionary family in Panghai following her mother's death.
- 1915-1917
  - Crofts worked with fellow missionary M. H. Hutton in Panghai, using it as a base to work with Black Miao people.
- 1917
  - Escorted son John to U.S. to enroll him in college, returning to China in fall of 1918
- 1919 Aug
  - Married Mabel Harlow, CIM missionary based in Chefoo. They returned to Guizhou, stationed in Zunyi, while two middle children went to U.S. and Saima remained at Chefoo.
- 1922
  - Opened new mission station in Qianxi, in northwest Guizhou.
- 1925-1926
  - Furlough in U.S.
- 1927-1936
  - Following furlough, Daniel and Mabel Crofts initially stayed in Shanghai, due to political disturbances in the interior, but in July 1928 moved to Zhenjiang and from late 1928 were stationed in Qianxi. In 1935-1936 the approach of Communist troops caused them to evacuate from Qianxi to Sichuan Province.
- 1936-1938
  - Furlough in the U.S.
- 1938 Nov-1944
  - Returned to China and were stationed in Qianxi, Guizhou
- 1942 Feb
  - Mabel Crofts died of typhoid
- 1944
  - Daniel Crofts left China and after visiting various relatives settled in Florida
- 1960 Jun 14
  - Crofts died

For additional biographical information see book published by Crofts' grandson Daniel W. Crofts: *Upstream Odyssey: An American in China, 1895-1944* (Norwalk, CT: Eastbridge, 2008).

---

## Scope and Contents

This collection primarily consists of regular, detailed letters written by Daniel Webster Crofts or his second wife Mabel Harlow Crofts to the four Crofts children who from an early age were separated from their parents at boarding school in Chefoo, and then in the U.S. The original format letters in the collection are complemented by scans of some additional documents, as well as the detailed, scholarly biography of Crofts written by his grandson Daniel Webster Crofts, a copy of which is in the Divinity Library's cataloged collection. Series I, Correspondence, is primarily family correspondence with a few folders of non-family letters. Series II, Writings, contains clippings of articles written by Daniel Crofts for the North-China Herald. Series III, Biographical Documentation, contains a few documents regarding the Crofts family and Crofts' wives. Much more detailed information is available in the biography noted above.

---

## Arrangement

- I. Correspondence
- II. Writings
- III. Biographical Documentation

## Collection Contents

### Correspondence, 1892-2008

b. 1, f. 1	CD containing PDF scans of letters and other documents contained in this collection plus some for which the originals are no longer available. Information regarding "Upstream Odyssey: An American in China, 1895-1944" by Daniel Wallace Crofts, grandson of Daniel Webster Crofts	1892-2008
Family correspondence		
To extended family		
b. 1, f. 2	Primarily from Daniel Webster Crofts to siblings, written from Zhenyuan (Chenyuan), Yantai (Chefoo), Qianxi (Kiensi), Palatka	1907-1960
To children		
Letters to children are primarily from Daniel Crofts, with some from second wife Mabel.		
b. 1, f. 3	Letters to children at school in Yantai (Chefoo) from Daniel Webster Crofts in Panghai and Zhenyuan (Chenyuan) and while on trip to U.S. in late 1917	1916 July - 1918 December
b. 1, f. 4	Letters to children, some of whom are in the U.S. at school	1919 Feb-Dec
b. 1, f. 5	Incl. re. trip to Finland and U.S. and return to China	1924 May - 1926 Dec
b. 1, f. 6	Written from Shanghai while waiting for permission to return to Guizhou	1927 Feb - 1928 Dec
b. 1, f. 7	Including re: daily life at Qianxi (Kiensi) station	1929 February-December
b. 1, f. 8	Primarily from Qianxi (Kiensi); including re: trip escorting new missionaries to Chongqing (Chungking), building, medical work	1930 January - 1931 April
b. 1, f. 9	Primarily from Qianxi (Kiensi); including re: civil war conditions; traveling to meetings	1931 June - 1932 February
b. 1, f. 10	Primarily from Qianxi (Kiensi); including re: concerns for children's needs during Depression in U.S.	1932 March-December
b. 1, f. 11	Primarily from Qianxi (Kiensi); including re: robberies, political unrest, country tour	1933 January-September
b. 1, f. 12	Primarily from Qianxi (Kiensi); including re: month's visit to Sinchang, new outstation	1933 October - 1934 May
b. 1, f. 13	Primarily from Qianxi (Kiensi); including re: country travels, Bible school	1934 June-September
b. 1, f. 14	Primarily from Qianxi (Kiensi); Communist troubles; travel	1934 October - 1935 November
b. 1, f. 15	Furlough in U.S., England, Finland - visiting family and friends	1936 Mar - 1937 Dec

## Family correspondence &gt; To children (continued)

b. 1, f. 16	Furlough in U.S. and return to China	1938 May-Oct
b. 1, f. 17	Re: return to mission work, with time spent in Tushan, Guiyang (Kweiyang), and Qianxi (Kiensi); repair to house in Qianxi (Kiensi)	1939 February-May
b. 1, f. 18	Re: mission work in Qianxi (Kiensi)	1939 June-November
b. 1, f. 19	Incl. re. time spent in Kopu [Gebu] teaching classes for church workers	1940 Feb-Jun
b. 1, f. 20	Including re: daily life in Qianxi (Kiensi), opinions re: war in Europe	1940 July-August
b. 2, f. 21	DWC distributing tracts and Bible; medical treatment of soldiers and others	1940 Sep-Dec
b. 2, f. 22	Including re: attendance at conference in Guiyang (Kweiyang), high prices, dispensing medicines	1941 June-July
b. 2, f. 23	Government motor school established in Qianxi (Kiensi), leading to large influx of soldiers; tract ministry	1941 August-November
b. 2, f. 24	Including re: death of Mabel; Daniel Crofts goes to Guiyang (Kweiyang), then Pingba (Pingpa) before return to Qianxi (Kiensi)	1942 January-December
b. 2, f. 25	Daniel Webster Crofts's daily life in Qianxi (Kiensi), teaching English to Chinese men, joined by missionary family	1943 January-December
b. 2, f. 26	Making preparations to leave China; begins journey to U.S. via India	1944 Feb-Dec
b. 2, f. 27	Arrives in California, traveling in U.S. and Canada	1945 Feb-Sep
b. 2, f. 28	Continues travels, visiting friends and family	1946
b. 2, f. 29	Settles in Jacksonville, Florida with sister and after her death in Palatka with daughter Saima and family	1947
b. 2, f. 30	In Palatka, assisting with Saima and family with chicken business	1948
b. 2, f. 31	In Palatka and travels west	1949
b. 2, f. 32	In Palatka and traveling	1950
General correspondence		
Circular letters		
b. 2, f. 33	Typed excerpts of circular letters and diary entries of Verna Hammarén, stationed in Zhenjiang (Chinkiang)	1893-1897
To/from others		
b. 2, f. 34	Incl. to/from Wilkinson, Lagerquist, Solomon, Houghton, Cook	1937-1956
b. 2, f. 35	Letter from Robert Chang to Rev. Yong	1939

## Writings, 1933-1934

b. 2, f. 36

News articles written by Daniel Webster Crofts while stationed in Qianxi (Kiensi), 1933-1934 including regarding famine, opium, bandits

---

**Biographical Documentation, 1942-1955**

b. 2, f. 37	Incl. re. Crofts family history, biographical sketch re. Verna Hammarén, death certificate of Catherine Mabel Harlow Crofts, lists of household items	1942-1955, n.d.
b. 2, f. 38	Collected material: cards, clippings	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 -- China

### **Names**

Crofts, Daniel Webster, 1866-1960

### **Corporate Body**

China Inland Mission