

Guide to the William Winston Pettus Papers

MS 786



compiled by John Dojka

October 1977

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 786

CREATOR: Pettus, Winston, 1912-1945

TITLE: William Winston Pettus papers

DATES: 1928-1945

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1 linear foot (3 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Correspondence, diaries, writings, and memorabilia of William Winston Pettus, surgeon at the Hsiang-Ya Hospital of the Yale-China Association in Changsha, China. His letters to his parents, beginning in 1928, report on his undergraduate life at Yale and later on medical school. After 1940, when he returned to China, his letters discuss his day-to-day activities as a doctor in wartime at the hospital in Changsha. The writings include diaries and drafts of unpublished articles. Also in the papers is correspondence among family members after his death about a biography, a memorial fund, and related matters.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0786>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0786>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Given to Yale University as part of the Yale-in-China Association Records.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

William Winston Pettus Papers (MS 786). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

William Winston Pettus, missionary-surgeon, was born in Shanghai, China, on February 25, 1912. He entered Yale College in 1929 after attending the American School in Peking where his father, William Bacon Pettus, was President of the College of Chinese Studies. After completing his undergraduate work in 1933, he enrolled at the Yale Medical School where he received the M.D. degree in 1937. During the same year he married Maude Miller of Inwood, West Virginia, and began a residency in surgery at the Presbyterian Hospital in New York City.

In 1940, after completing his residency, Pettus received a Yale-in-China Association appointment as Professor of Surgery at Hsiang-Ya Hospital in Changsha, Hunan. He worked at Changsha until January 1942, when the Japanese Army captured the city. After a brief occupation the Japanese retreated, and Pettus was among the first to return to Changsha. It was largely due to his efforts that medical work was begun again in the seriously damaged hospital.

During the spring of 1943, Pettus returned to the United States for advanced study in surgery. In October 1944 he resumed his work at Hsiang-Ya, then located at Kweiyang, Kweichow, and later at Chungking.

In September 1945 Pettus flew into Changsha before the Japanese relinquished control of the city and began working to re-open the Yale-in-China medical facilities. He was killed when the airplane he was piloting crashed at Hwangping, Kweichow, on November 18, 1945.

For further information see the biography of Pettus, *Dauntless Adventurer*, by Edward H. Hume (New Haven, 1952).

Scope and Contents

The William Winston Pettus Papers are arranged in four series: I. CORRESPONDENCE OF WILLIAM WINSTON PETTUS; II. CORRESPONDENCE OF THE PETTUS FAMILY AND OTHERS; III. WRITINGS; and IV. MISCELLANY.

Series I, CORRESPONDENCE OF WILLIAM WINSTON PETTUS, is divided into four sections: 1. Correspondence with Parents, 1928-1945; 2. Correspondence with Maude Miller Pettus, 1936-1945; 3. General Correspondence: Incoming, 1932-1945; and 4. General Correspondence: Outgoing, 1929-1945.

Section 1, "Correspondence with Parents," contains weekly, and later monthly, summaries of Pettus' activities from the time he left Peking to attend Yale College to his death in 1945. Subjects discussed by Pettus include: undergraduate life at Yale; medical school; his decision to return to China as a surgeon; and his day-to-day activities as a doctor in wartime China.

Section 2, "Correspondence with Maude Pettus," contains the letters Pettus wrote to his wife during their courtship (1936-1937) and during the period 1944-1945 when he returned to China without his family. Subjects discussed include family business and Pettus' day-to-day activities as a surgeon.

Section 3, "General Correspondence: Incoming, 1932-1945," and section 4, "General correspondence: Outgoing, 1929-1945," contain letters between Pettus and Yale-in-China Association staff members, primarily Executive Director Robert Ashton Smith and Recording Secretary Rachel Dowd. Subjects discussed include Yale-in-China finances; travel plans; hospital movements during the war; and Pettus' efforts to set up a regional blood bank and to re-open the Hsiang-Ya facilities in Changsha after the war.

Series II, CORRESPONDENCE OF THE PETTUS FAMILY AND OTHERS, is divided into four sections: 1. Correspondence of Maude Miller Pettus, 1944-1958; 2. Correspondence of William and Sarah Pettus, 1942-1955; 3. Correspondence of John DeForest Pettus, 1945-1952; and 4. Correspondence of Others, 1943-1954.

Series II contains correspondence of Maude Miller Pettus (Pettus' wife), William and Sarah Pettus (Pettus' parents), and John DeForest Pettus (Pettus' brother) with Yale-in-China Association staff members. Also included is a small quantity of correspondence between Yale-in-China staff members. Subjects discussed include Pettus' death, the Pettus memorial fund, and Edward H. Hume's biography of Pettus, *Dauntless Adventurer*.

Series III, WRITINGS, contains several of Pettus' diaries, drafts of several unpublished articles, and a copy of a published article. With one exception the diaries are from Pettus' college years and contain brief comments on his social activities and spiritual life. The one exception is a mimeographed fragment of a 1940 diary describing a portion of the Pettus family's trip to China. The original copy of this diary, as well as others kept by Pettus during the war years in China, were apparently lost in the war. The unpublished manuscripts include the following: "Report on the Effect of the Third Battle of Changsha (Jan. 1942) on the Work and Property of Yale-in-China;" "The Case of the Stolen Clock or How Our House Was Looted on Aug. 21, 1940," describing a theft by a servant; "The Five Day Occupation of Changsha by the Japanese;" and "Air Raids in Changsha," written in 1941. The one copy of a published article is "Dental Surgeon on the China Front," a description of the work of Russian dentist Dimitri Afonsky.

Series IV, MISCELLANY, contains obituary notices and memorials to Pettus including a transcript of a sermon on Pettus by his brother John DeForest Pettus; "A Life for China," a brief biographical sketch of Pettus by his mother; several financial documents; and sixteen photographs of Pettus and his family.

The William Winston Pettus Papers came to Yale University Library as part of the Records of the Yale-China Association.

Arrangement

Arranged in four series: I. Correspondence of W. W. Pettus. II. Correspondence of Family and Others. III. Writings. IV. Miscellany.

Collection Contents

Series I: CORRESPONDENCE OF WILLIAM WINSTON PETTUS, 1928-1945

0.5 linear feet (1 box)

CORRESPONDENCE OF WILLIAM WINSTON PETTUS is arranged chronologically.

Correspondence with Parents

b. 1, f. 1-14	1928-1943	1928-1943
b. 1, f. 15	1945 English	1945

Correspondence with Maude Miller Pettus

b. 1, f. 16-17	1936-1937	1936-1937
b. 1, f. 18-19	1944-1945	1944-1945

General Correspondence: Incoming

b. 1, f. 20	1932 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1932
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b. 1, f. 21-22	1936-1937 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1936-1937
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b. 1, f. 23-28	1940-1945 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1940-1945
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General Correspondence: Outgoing

b. 2, f. 29-32	1929, 1935, 1937, 1939 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1929, 1935, 1937, 1939
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b. 2, f. 33-38	1940-1945 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1940-1945
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Series II: CORRESPONDENCE OF THE PETTUS FAMILY AND OTHERS, 1942-1958

0.25 linear feet (1 box)

CORRESPONDENCE OF THE PETTUS FAMILY AND OTHERS is arranged chronologically.

Correspondence of Maude Miller Pettus

Incoming

b. 2, f. 39-48	1944-1958	1944-1958
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Outgoing

b. 2, f. 49	1940 English	1940
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b. 2, f. 50-57	1944-1954, 1952-1954, undated	1944-1954, 1952-1954, undated
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Correspondence of William and Sarah Pettus

Incoming

b. 2, f. 58-60	1942-1949	1942-1949
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b. 2, f. 61	1952-1955	1952-1955
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Outgoing

b. 2, f. 62	1928 English	1928
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b. 2, f. 63-65	1940-1948	1940-1948
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b. 2, f. 66-67	1951-1955, undated	1951-1955, undated
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Correspondence of John DeForest Pettus

b. 2, f. 68	Incoming	1945-1952
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b. 2, f. 69	Outgoing	1945-1952
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Correspondence of Others

b. 2, f. 70	Re: Travel arrangements of Pettus family to United States	1943
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b. 2, f. 71	Re: Death of William Winston Pettus	1944-1945
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b. 2, f. 72	Re: William Winston Pettus memorial fund	1946-1950
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b. 2, f. 73	Re: <i>Dauntless Adventurer</i> by Edward H. Hume	1951-1954
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Series III: WRITINGS, 1929-1943*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*

WRITINGS are arranged alphabetically by title.

b. 3, f. 74	Diaries	1929-1935
b. 3, f. 75	Diary: mimeographed fragment A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1940
b. 3, f. 76	"Air Raids on Changsha," English A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1941
b. 3, f. 77	"The Case of the Stolen Clock or How Our House Was Looted on Aug. 21, 1940" English	
b. 3, f. 78	"Dental Surgeon on the China Front," English	1943
b. 3, f. 78	"The Five-Day Occupation by the Japanese," English	1941
b. 3, f. 79	"Report on the Effect of the Third Battle of Changsha (Jan. 1942) on the Work and Property of Yale-in-China," English	1942
b. 3, f. 79	"A Trip to Yali Institutions," English	1941
b. 3, f. 79	Valedictory Address, Peking American School	1929

Series IV: MISCELLANY, 1945, undated*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*

The materials in MISCELLANY are grouped together according to form.

b. 3, f. 80	Folder 80 A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	
b. 3, f. 80	"A Life For China," biographical sketch of William Winston Pettus by Sarah Pettus English	undated
b. 3, f. 80	"William Winston Pettus," sermon by John De Forest Pettus English	1945
b. 3, f. 81-84	Memorial and obituary notices A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	
b. 3, f. 85	Financial records A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	
b. 3, f. 86	Photographs: William Winston Pettus and family A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	

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

Missionaries
Physicians
World War, 1939-1945

Geographic Names

Asia
Changsha Shi (China)
China -- History -- 1937-1945

Genres / Formats

Diaries

Names

Pettus, John DeForest, 1909-
Pettus, Maude Miller
Pettus, Sarah
Pettus, William B. (William Bacon), 1880-1959
Pettus, Winston, 1912-1945
Smith, Robert Ashton, 1914-

Corporate Bodies

Yale-China Association
Yale University -- Officials and employees
Yale University -- Students