

# Guide to the William Alvord Borst travel diary

MS 2066



compiled by Christine Connolly

May 2017

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
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(203) 432-1735  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 2066

**CREATOR:** Borst, William A. (William Alvord), 1915-1953

**TITLE:** William Alvord Borst travel diary

**DATES:** 1937-1938

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1.08 linear feet (1 box)

**LANGUAGE:** The materials are in English.

**SUMMARY:** This collection consists of two diaries by William Alvord Borst documenting trips during the summers of 1937 and 1938. The 1937 diary describes sailing from New York, travelling through Europe, and sailing home to New York. The diary focuses on the scenery, art, architecture, and Yale colleagues encountered during travel. Pages 109-115 covering August 22-26 are missing from the diary. The 1938 diary describes Borst's trip to England, visiting the cathedrals, areas of literary significance, and bookstores around the country before visiting Europe. There is also a photograph of Borst, his Yale College roommate, Ashley Olmsted, and a helmswoman, Mara, in a boat off the coast of Rab Island in August of 1938.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.2066>

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## 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.2066>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](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

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of William W. Stowe, 2016.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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### Conditions Governing Use

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### Preferred Citation

William Alvord Borst Travel Diary (MS 2066). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

William Alvord Borst was born in New Haven, on July 6, 1915. He earned three Yale degrees: B.A. in 1937, M.A. in 1942, and Ph.D. in 1945. His dissertation, "Lord Byron's First Pilgrimage (1809-1811)," was published by the Yale University Press in 1948. After teaching in the Yale English Department, 1937-1941 and 1942-1948, and at Pomfret School, 1941-1942, he joined the New York publishing company of Harcourt, Brace & Company, where he remained until his death in a hotel fire at Chapel Hill, North Carolina on May 11, 1953.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection consists of two diaries by William Alvord Borst's documenting trips to Europe during the summers of 1937 and 1938. The 1937 diary describes sailing from New York and crossing the Atlantic, June 26-July 3; travelling through Germany, northern Italy, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Romania, and Greece, July 4 - August 21; sailing in the Mediterranean with stops at Messina, Sicily and Portimão, Portugal, August 27-September 8; and sailing home to New York, September 9-21. Borst travelled with Joseph Toy Curtiss, Yale Assistant Professor of English, who played a role in the World War II Office of Strategic Services, eventually becoming head of American counter-intelligence in Turkey. While there are references to Curtiss' many acquaintances and familiarity with the regions through which they are travelling, the diary focuses on the scenery, art, architecture, and Yale colleagues encountered during travel. Pages 109-115 covering August 22-26 are missing from the diary. The 1938 diary describes Borst's trip by boat from New York to England. Borst departed on June 21 with Joe Curtiss, Ashley Olmstead, and two friends identified only as Bob and Charlie, arriving on June 27 at Southampton. Joe and Charlie departed for the continent on June 29 and Bob headed to Oxford on July 1, leaving Borst and Ashley to visit the cathedrals, areas of literary significance, and bookstores around the country until August 15, ending their visit in London to enjoy the museums and more literary highlights. On August 16, they set out for Paris and

over the next 4 days visited Chartres, Versailles, and Venice before rejoining Joe Curtiss and Charlie at the Isle of Rab on August 21. On August 25, the group set out to visit Split, Herceg Novi, Cetinje, and Dubrovnik. The diary ends on August 31 with Ashley beginning his trip back return to England as the rest prepared to set sail for New York. Also includes a photograph of Borst, his Yale College roommate, Ashley Olmsted, and a helmswoman, Mara, in a boat off the coast of Rab Island in August of 1938.

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## **Arrangement**

The material is arranged as received.

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## Collection Contents

	Travel diaries	1937-1938
b. 1, f. 1	"The Travel Diary of a Philosopher, Being a Chapter from the Life and Adventures of William Alvord Borst" English	1937 June 26- September 9
b. 1, f. 2	"Sentimental Journey: A Stirring Sequel to 'The Travel Diary of a Philosopher'; Mainly in Prose, Being an Account of the Further Adventures on Land and Sea of William Alvord Borst" English	1938 June 21- August 31
b. 1, f. 3	Photograph of Borst, his Yale College roommate, Ashley Olmsted, and helmswoman, Mara, in boat off the coast of Rab Island	1938 August 22

## **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**

Tourism -- Europe  
Travel

### **Geographic Names**

England -- Description and travel  
Europe -- Description and travel

### **Genres / Formats**

Diaries

### **Names**

Borst, William A. (William Alvord), 1915-1953  
Curtiss, Joseph T., 1901-1992  
Olmsted, Ashley