

Gratia Alta Countryman Collection

M/A 1997.01.01-10

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

August 01, 2015

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library

January 2015

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Summary Information

Repository	James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library
Creator - Author	Countryman, Gratia A. (Gratia Alta), 1866-1953
Title	Gratia Alta Countryman Collection
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1886-1925
Date [inclusive]	1836-2006
Extent	10.0 boxes
Language	English

Biography

Gratia Alta Countryman was born November 29, 1866, in Hastings, Minnesota, the daughter of pioneer parents Levi and Alta Chamberlain Countryman. She received her baccalaureate degree from the University of Minnesota in 1889, intending to become a teacher but Herbert Putnam encouraged her to apply for a position at the Minneapolis Public Library which was to soon open under his direction. She began as a cataloguer on October 1, 1889, helping to classify 30,000 volumes before the library began circulation, starting a lifelong career with the Minneapolis Public Library. After one year, she was promoted to head of the catalog department, and two years later, in 1892, she was appointed assistant librarian to James K. Hosmer who had then succeeded Putnam. In 1904 she succeeded Hosmer as chief librarian, becoming the nation's first female head librarian. Countryman was chief librarian for over thirty-two years until 1936 when she was required to retire at the age of seventy. She was then made librarian emeritus.

Upon Miss Countryman's promotion to chief librarian she immediately began to make changes, expanding the Library's services to reach more and more people. In the thirty-two years she directed the Library, service expanded into all areas of the city including elementary and junior high schools, hospitals, engine houses, welfare centers, and factories. By the time of Miss Countryman's retirement, the book collection had increased to 662,842 volumes and the circulation, which was 519,000 in 1904, had increased to 3,293,484 in 1936. The number of registered borrowers had increased from 40,500 in 1904 to 181,582 in 1936. Of the 11 branch library buildings in Minneapolis, 9 were built during her administration. Miss Countryman was instrumental in local, state, and national library work, and was elected President of the American Library Association from 1933-34 becoming the sixth woman to hold that distinction in the association's hitherto sixty year history. From 1938 until 1941, Miss Countryman was the head of the newspaper indexing project for the Works Progress Administration at the Minneapolis Public Library.

Civic-minded, socially aware, historian, visionary, educator, social worker, missionary, leader, are all terms that have been used to describe Gratia Countryman. Her vision of library service was expressed in the many speeches she gave, the journal articles she wrote, and especially in her annual reports. The first annual report she submitted included the following view of a library's purpose:

"A Public library is the one great civic institution supported by the people which is designed for the instruction and pleasure of all the people without age limit, rich and poor, without class limit, educated and uneducated, without culture limit.... It should be "all things to all men" in the world of thought.... The library should be a wide-awake institution for the dissemination of ideas, where books are easily accessible and readily obtainable. It should be the center of all the activities of a city that lead to social growth, municipal reform, civic pride and good citizenship. It should have its finger on the pulse of the people, ready to second and forward any good movement.... It should be a quiet retreat for the scholarly man, and the most inviting and hospitable of places for the ordinary reader or casual visitor.... It is obvious that if a library is to perform its function of elevating the people, it will need to adopt methods other than buying a fine collection of books and housing them in an attractive building and then waiting in a dignified way for the people to come. The scholarly and studious will come as surely as the needle

turns to the north, but the others will wait until the library goes to them.... How to reach the busy men and women, how to carry wholesome and enjoyable books to the far-away corners of the city, how to enlist the interest of tired factory girls, how to put the workingman in touch with the art books relating to his craft and so increase the value of his labor and the dignity of his day's work—these are some of the things which I conceive to be my duty to study, if I would help this public library to become what it is for.”

Gratia Countryman died in Duluth, Minnesota, on July 26, 1953. She had never married but was survived by her adopted son, Wellington Greenway Countryman.

References:

Pejsa, Jane. *Gratia Countryman: Her Life, Her Loves, and Her Library*. (Nodin Press, 1995)

Rohde, Nancy Freeman. *Dictionary of American Library Biography: Gratia Alta Countryman*. (Libraries Unlimited, 1978)

Description of the Collection

Ten boxes of materials from 1836-2006, pertaining to the life and work of Gratia Alta Countryman. Included in the collection are four boxes of personal and professional correspondence from 1876-1997. Two boxes of speeches and other writings related to the library profession and the Minneapolis Public Library from 1904-1948, as well as clippings from 1888-2006. One box of photographs, a drawing book, an autograph book, and a Countryman family photograph album. Also in the collection is a box of biographical honoraria, ephemera, and mementos and one box of documents regarding the Countryman legacy and estate. A memory book created by the staff of Minneapolis Public Library on the occasion of Countryman's retirement.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library January 2015

Donor Note

Some of the materials of Gratia Alta Countryman were donated to the James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library at the Hennepin County Library by Mr. Robert Shaw and Mrs. Virginia Buffington Shaw in July of 1997, and a second set of papers was donated by Mr. Robert Shaw in December of 2008.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Minneapolis Public Library -- History.

Personal Name(s)

- Countryman, Alta, 1833-1922
- Countryman, Levi, 1832-1924

Subject(s)

- Library administrators -- Minnesota -- Minneapolis.
- Public librarians -- Minnesota -- Minneapolis.
- Women library administrators.

Correspondence, Personal (Outgoing)

Collection Inventory

Correspondence, Personal (Outgoing)

Levi Countryman

Scope and Contents note

There are many letters written by Gratia Countryman, living in Hastings, MN to her father working in Reeds Landing, MN. Gratia writes of homework and mentions that her mother encourages her to write letters to her father. One of the letters is accompanied with an encouraging poem. Some envelopes accompany letters bearing postmarks. The location changes from Reeds Landing to Fargo, SD at the Pitts Agricultural Works. There is mention of weather, catching colds and household visitors. Gratia recounts a picnic to Lake Minnetonka.

Miss Countryman writes to her father about the qualities she admires in leaders.

A good portion of the letters are written on Minneapolis Public Library letterhead (James K. Hosmer librarian).

The subseries also includes a letter from the father of the Wright Brothers.

Controlled Access Headings

Personal Name(s)

- Countryman, Levi, 1832-1924 -- Correspondence

	Box	Folder
Correspondence Undated	1	1

Levi Countryman

Correspondence 1881-1882	1	2
Correspondence 1883-1884	1	3
Correspondence 1885 (Jan - Jun)	1	4
Correspondence 1885 (Jul - Dec)	1	5
Correspondence 1886	1	6
Correspondence 1891	1	7
Correspondence 1900 (Jan - Jun)	1	8
Correspondence 1900 (Jul - Dec)	1	9
Correspondence 1907-1908	1	10
Correspondence 1909	1	11
Correspondence 1910	1	12
	Bin	Folder
Correspondence 1911	1	13
	Box	Folder
Correspondence 1913-1924	1	14

Alta Countryman

Alta Countryman

Controlled Access Headings

Personal Name(s)

- Countryman, Alta, 1833-1922

	Box	Folder
Correspondence Undated	1	15
Correspondence 1899-1900	1	16
Correspondence 1907-1910	1	17
Correspondence 1910, 1913 (Jan - Jun)	1	18
Correspondence 1913 (Jul - Dec)	1	19
Virginia Buffington	Box 1	Folder 20

Scope and Contents note

Most of the letters in this subseries are from Miss Countryman to Miss Virginia Buffington. The content ranges from the passing of heirlooms from Miss Countryman to Miss Buffington to birthday well-wishes

Controlled Access Headings

Countryman Family

Personal Name(s)

Buffington, Virginia, (Virginia Buffington Shaw)

Countryman Family**Box** **Folder**

Correspondence 1886-1909

2 21

Correspondence 1910

1 22

Correspondence 1911-1947, undated

1 23

Box **Folder**

MacDonald, Genevieve Genevieve MacDonald

1 24

Scope and Contents note

The letter in this subseries between Miss Countryman and Miss Macdonald were written when Miss Macdonald was in Canada visiting family. The majority of the 1948 correspondence is from Miss Macdonald, who faced health issues during this time.

Correspondence, Professional (Incoming)**Box** **Folder**

Professional Correspondence Pre-1913

2 7

Correspondence, Professional (Incoming)

Professional Correspondence 1913-1929	2	8
Professional Correspondence 1930-1936	2	9
Professional Correspondence 1938-1952	2	10
Professional Correspondence Undated	2	Folder 11
Danica Pavlic Correspondence 1952-1954	2	12
Geographic Society of Chicago. Goode, John Paul , 1862-1932 J. Paul Goode	2	13
Controlled Access Headings		
Corporate Name(s)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Chicago. 		
1928		

	Box	Folder
Letter 1/14/1928	3	19
Scope and Contents note		
Mr. Goode writes of his wife's passing.		
Controlled Access Headings		

Correspondence, Professional (Incoming)

Personal Name(s)

- Goode, Katherine Hancock
- Goode, Kenneth Hancock

Lecture Announcement Brochure 1/14/1928

	Box	Folder
Letter	3	19
	Box	Folder
Brochure	3	19

Scope and Contents note

Sepia colored brochure for a lecture series by Mr. Goode.

Box **Folder**

Geographic Society of Chicago. Award Ceremony Program 1/14/1928

3

19

Scope and Contents note

This is a program from an address in which Mr. Goode was awarded the "Helen CUIver Gold Medal of the Geographic Society of Chicago." The address was given by Ulysses S. Grant, a professor at Northwestern University in Fullerton Hall of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1/26/1923.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

Correspondence, Professional (Incoming)

- University of Chicago.

	Box	Folder
Letter 7/25/1919	3	19

Scope and Contents note

Mr. Goode writes of the value of his friendship with Countryman.
Envelope attached.

Letter 6/14/1921	3	19
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Scope and Contents note

Mr. Goode writes of familial achievements. Envelope attached.

Letter 9/23/1924	3	19
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Scope and Contents note

Mr. Goode Writes of establishing a scholarship in the name of Maria Sanford.

Controlled Access Headings**Personal Name(s)**

- Sanford, Maria Louise., 1836-1930

Letter 3/19/1932	3	19
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Correspondence, Personal (Incoming)

Scope and Contents note

Mr. Goode writes of the passing of a mutual friend, "K.C." Envelope attached.

Miscellaneous Correspondence 1883-1884	2	14
Miscellaneous Correspondence 1885-1886	2	15
Miscellaneous Correspondence 1896-1900	2	16
Miscellaneous Correspondence 1906-1910	2	17
Miscellaneous Correspondence 1914-1989	2	18
Miscellaneous Correspondence undated	2	19

Correspondence, Personal (Incoming)

	Box	Folder
Countryman, Levi, 1832-1924 Levi Countryman 1913	3	1
Countryman, Alta, 1833-1922 Alta Countryman	3	2
Other Family Members 1911	3	3
MacDonald, Genevieve Genevieve MacDonald	3	4

Correspondence, Professional (Outgoing)

Correspondence, Professional (Outgoing)		
	Box	Folder
Professional Correspondence 1914-1919	2	1
Professional Correspondence 1921-1929	2	2
Professional Correspondence 1930-1935	2	3
Professional Correspondence 1936	2	4
Professional Correspondence 1944-1952	2	5
Professional Correspondence undated	2	6
Diaries 1879-1948		Box 4
Scope and Contents note		
4 diaries from the years 1879, 1947, 1948, and one spanning the years 1910-1949, as well as a log book from a European trip in 1899.		
	Box	Folder
Diary 1879	4	1
Scope and Contents note		
This was one of Miss Countryman's childhood diaries. There is a pressed flower pinned in the back.		

Diaries

Diary 1910-1948	4	1
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Scope and Contents note

The entries in this diary span from 1910 to 1949. She writes that "Adda dies" on December 23, 1949.

Bicycle Trip Log Book 6/1899	4	7
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Scope and Contents note

Miss Countryman details her expenses for a European trip from June 12, to August 20, beginning with the cost of the steamer, including luggae fees.

Controlled Access Headings**Subject(s)**

- Bicycle touring

Diary 1/1/1947-1/31/1947	4	3
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Scope and Contents note

Miss Countryman sporadically lists goings on throughout the year, as well as expenses in tha back of the diary. "Gilbert Buffington Company" with the address is embossed on the cover.

Diary 1948	4	3
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Scope and Contents note

Miscellaneous

Miss Countryman sporadically lists goings on throughout the year, as well as expenses in the back of the diary, as well as (what looks like) a gift list. "Gilbert Buffington Company" with the address is embossed on the cover.

Diary (excerpt) 1903	4	7
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Miscellaneous

	Box	Folder
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Autograph Book c1876	4	4
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Gratia's First Drawing Book	4	4
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Civic Service Honor Medal 1931	4	5
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Inscribed Book: S.D. Pond's "Legends of the Dakota"	4	6
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World War II Ration Tokens	8	10
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Countryman, Theo. R., Last Will and Testament	9	12
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Buffington Family Tree and Luther Buffington Will 1836	9	14
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Library Ann's Cook Book	9	15
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General note

Ms. Countryman's copy

Writings

Levi Countryman's "Men's Club" Membership	9	17
Jane Pejsa's Research Project on Countryman	9	18
Printer's Plates of Countryman	9	19
Writings 1904-1948		
Scope and Contents note		
This series contains Miss Countryman's published writings and drafts from 1904 to 1948. Some of the titles included in this subseries are as follows: "Facing the Future," 1933; "The School's Best Friend," 1930; and "Historical Sketch of the Library," 1936.		
	Box	Folder
Excerpts from Librarian's Report 1904	5	1
Library Work as a Profession 1923	5	2
Government and Business in the Special Library 1925	5	3
Untitled	5	4
A Book Wagon for Every County 1926	5	5
Library Administration 1928	5	6
Library Service to the Schools of Hennepin County 1929	5	7

Writings

Untitled poem July 26, 1930	5	8
School's Best Friend 1930	5	9
County Library Administration of Country School Libraries [Illinois Teacher] March, 1930	5	10
Love of Reading 1931	5	11
County Libraries 1932	5	12
Publicity 1932	5	13
Facing the Future 1933	5	14
Library Cooperation in Minneapolis 1933	5	15
Maria L. Sanford Convocation 1933	5	16
Notices to Staff About Slovenly and Careless Work 1933	5	17
Staff Memorandum 1933	5	18
Building for the Future 1934	5	19
Value of Library Must Be Sold to City Officials 1934	5	20

Writings

Historical Sketch of the Library 1936	5	21
Staff Message 1936	5	22
Staff Stuff 1936	5	23
Annual Librarian's Report 1936	5	24
Gratia Countryman Interview	5	25
The World Challenges Peace 1938	5	26
Early History of the M.L.A. 1942	5	27
World Government 1948	5	28
Office Bulletin 1928	5	29
Office Manifesto 1930	5	30
Staff Stuff 1932	5	31
Address by Gratia Countryman	6	1
America's Resources	6	2
Recruiting Suggestions for Librarianship	6	3

Photographs

Library Questionnaire for Teachers	6	4
Miss Countryman Says	6	5
School Libraries of the United States	6	6
George Eliot's Romola	6	7
A Call to Service	6	8
Present Day Problems of the Library	6	9
MPL Publicity and Press Release Materials 1918-1936	6	10
Love's Bondage 1916	6	10
Photographs		
	Box	Folder
GAC001-005	7	1
GAC006-010	7	2
GAC011-015	7	3
GAC016-020	7	4

Photographs

GAC021-025	7	5
GAC026-030	7	6
GAC031-035	7	7
GAC036-040	7	8
GAC041-045	7	9
GAC046-050	7	10
GAC051-055	7	11
GAC056-060	7	12
GAC061-116	7	13
GAC117-121	7	14
GAC122-162	7	15
GAC205-214	7	16
30th U of MN Reunion Class of 1889; Silhouette of Countryman	7	17

Box

News Clippings

7

Photo Album

News Clippings 1888-2006**Scope and Contents note**

This series contains news clippings and articles from 1904 to 2006 about Miss Countryman's library appointment, career, achievements and retirement. There are also obituaries and tributes.

	Box	Folder
MPL Publicity and Press Release Materials 1918-1936	6	11
Clippings 1888-1902	6	12
Clippings 1903-1924	6	13
Clippings 1925-1929	6	14
Clippings 1930-1934	6	15
Clippings 1935-1936	6	16
Clippings 1937-1939	6	17
Clippings 1940-1964	6	18
Clippings 1984-2006	6	19

News Clippings

Articles

Scope and Contents note

One of the articles in this file was written by Miss Countryman for a Missouri publication regarding a donation from Miss Todd's estate to the library. The other article is about a school Miss Countryman referenced in the previous article.

Box **Folder**

Article January-February 1950

3

32

Scope and Contents note

This publication contains an article written by Miss Countryman about a donation from Miss Todd's estate in the amount of \$2000 to purchase art books for the library.

Controlled Access Headings

Personal Name(s)

- Todd, Marie A.

Article 1945

3

32

Scope and Contents note

This is Reader's Digest feature, "The Little Professor of Piney Woods." The article is about a black educator who started the Piney Woods Country Life School. The same school Miss Countryman referenced in another

Biographical and Personal

article detailing the establishment of an art book fund at the Piney Woods Library.

Controlled Access Headings**Personal Name(s)**

- Todd, Marie A.

Biographical and Personal

	Box	Folder
Biographical (General)	8	1
Clubs and Organizations	8	3
School and College Mementos-U of M 1889	8	8
Travel: Mementos and Booklets	8	9
Estate Distribution 1947-2007	9	3
Estate Settlement: M.P.L. 1954	9	4
Funeral and Cemetery	9	5
Countryman, Gratia A., Last Will and Testament	9	6

Professional Life

Probate Court: Documents	9	7
Property: Mille Lacs, Minnesota	9	8
Property: Frazer, Montana	9	9
Property: Williston, North Dakota	9	10
Stocks, Bonds, Securities	9	11
Copy of Land Grant	9	13
"Evangel of Education" by Nancy J. Rohde 1977	9	16
Professional Life		
	Box	Folder
Honoraria	8	2
Library: Gratia's 20th Anniversary	8	5
Library: Gratia's Retirement Commemoratives	8	6
Library: Gratia's Retirement Commemoratives-Staff	8	7
W.P.A. 1938-1939	8	11

Professional Life

American Library Association	8	12
University of Minnesota Library School	8	13
Gratia Countryman Memorial Fund 1954-1986	9	1
Gratia Countryman Branch Library Proposal 1959-1967	9	2
		Box-folder
<i>Memory Book of Fact and Fancy</i> by the Minneapolis Public Library Staff Association 1937		10