

PIERCE PAPERS

CORNELIA MARVIN PIERCE PAPERS

- Provenance:** The Cornelia Marvin Pierce Papers were a gift of Cornelia Marvin Pierce and her sister, Mabel Hairgrove.
- Ownership:** Reed College owns the Cornelia Marvin Pierce Papers.
- Access:** Please contact the Special Collections Librarian at Reed College for access to the Papers.
- Size:** 4 manuscript boxes; 2 linear feet.
- Processed By:** Mark Kuestner
- Date:** September 24, 2003

Biography

Cornelia Marvin was born in Monticello, IA, on December 26, 1873. Her parents, Charles Elwell Marvin and Cornelia Moody Marvin had five children, of which Cornelia was the second. The family moved to Minnesota, where Cornelia attended high school. They relocated to Tacoma, WA around 1890, in part due to Cornelia Moody Marvin's Tuberculosis. The children lived with different relatives during this time—Cornelia herself stayed with her parents to recover from an illness. Her mother died in 1892, in Tacoma. Cornelia moved to Chicago in the fall of 1893 to live with a Mrs. Porter. She had a position as a “mother's helper” and took courses at the University of Chicago in her spare time.

On September 20, 1894 Cornelia entered the library school at the Armour Institute in Chicago. Her classes included: book selection, cataloging, loan systems, elementary reference, shelf listing and library handwriting. Cornelia earned her library certificate in 1895, and was appointed reference librarian and instructor in reference and bibliography at the Armour Institute in 1896. She gave a series of 12 lectures in January, 1897 which covered all aspects of librarianship. She also taught one of the first library courses in the care and handling of U.S. documents.

She arrived in Oregon in 1905, serving as the Secretary of the Oregon Library Commission, and eventually becoming the first Oregon State Librarian. During her tenure, she encouraged library outreach to rural areas of the state, expanding the number of libraries in Oregon from 3 to over 100. She also initiated the first free books by mail program in the United States, and expanded

the library's holdings from 2,500 volumes in 1905 to more than 250,000 at the time of her retirement in 1928.

She married former Oregon Governor Walter M. Pierce in 1928. When he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1932, she accompanied him to Washington, D.C. as his secretary. It was a well-known fact that the two were a team—she wrote most of his speeches and enthusiastically supported him in advancing many New Deal Programs.

They returned to Oregon in 1943. Walter M. Pierce died in 1953. Cornelia Marvin Pierce died on February 12, 1957.

Scope and Content

The Cornelia Marvin Pierce Papers consist of the Oregon Library Commission (later becoming the Oregon State Library) biennial reports (1907-1925), portions of her last will and testament along with obituaries and her funeral service. Included also are copies of her writings: publications, editorials, etc. There are various correspondence files, mostly from Reed Professor Dorothy O. Johansen as well as some family letters, mostly from her sister Mabel Marvin Hairgrove. There is a bibliography of her works, Marvin genealogical information, and summaries of the boxes of papers and items she donated to the Oregon State Library. There are also two theses, one about Cornelia and her role in Oregon libraries by Melissa Ann Brisley, the other detailing the development of the State Library by Wilbur D. Rowe. The Collection includes ten day books and diaries kept by Cornelia Marvin Pierce, as well as various family photographs.

Box Index

BOX 1

- 1:1 Library memoirs
- 1:2 Will and funeral service
- 1:3 Copies of correspondence and editorial writings
- 1:4 Papers and notes about Cornelia's correspondence and career, copies
- 1:5 Correspondence: mostly to and from Reed Professor Dorothy O. Johansen; includes various others such as Cornelia M. Pierce's executor, Arthur Bone
- 1:6 Estate papers and property leases

BOX 2

- 2:1 Correspondence: family—mostly to her sister, Mabel Marvin Hairgrove

- 2:2 Correspondence: Walter M. Pierce to his children and to Oregon Governor Oswald West [1937] (includes handwritten note on Pierce's letter from O. West to Dorothy Johansen, dated 3/24/48)
- 2:3 Notes: Walter M. Pierce and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Oregon Politics leading up to the Governor's Race, 1922 (unclear as to whose notes these are, Dorothy O. Johansen?)
- 2:4 Bibliography of Cornelia M. Pierce and Walter M. Pierce's Papers donated to the Oregon State Library
- 2:5 Family and friends: handwritten notes (author unknown)
- 2:6 Interview of Mabel Marvin Hairgrove by Reed Professor Dorothy O. Johansen, 1958—transcripts
- 2:7 Correspondence with friends and associates—copied transcriptions/notes (author unknown)
- 2:8 Summaries of boxes donated to the Oregon State Library, with notes copied from Cornelia M. Pierce's diaries
- 2:9 Student thesis on Oregon State Library: "Development of the Oregon State Library and its Contributions to the Public Schools," by Wilbur D. Rowe, 1939
- 2:10 "Cornelia Marvin Pierce: Pioneer in Library Extension", Melissa Ann Brisley [reprint from *Library Quarterly*, v. 38, no.2, April 1968]

BOX 3

Contains diaries for years 1930, 1934, 1936 and 1937; Daily Desk Calendar (diaries) for years 1938-1941; a *Tennyson's Birthday Book*, and a diary covering the period 1892 through 1904 [10 books in all]

BOX 4

- 4:1 Photographs: portrait of Cornelia M. Pierce, dated July, 1905; four photographs of Cornelia M. Pierce's Eola, Oregon home: 3 interiors and 1 exterior—explanatory cover letter by Cornelia M. Pierce's executor Arthur H. Bone, dated April 8, 1957; early childhood portrait photograph of Cornelia M. Pierce with her sister Mabel Marvin [Hairgrove]
- 4:2 Framed photograph of Cornelia M. Pierce "during congressional days" [1932-1943]
- 4:3 Framed photograph of Cornelia M. Pierce, circa 1910?
- 4:4 Framed (gold) photograph of Cornelia M. Pierce, with birth/death dates
- 4:5 Two framed photographs (smaller), one of Cornelia M. Pierce in color, dated 1956 at her home, and the other (black and white), of Cornelia M. Pierce and husband Walter M. Pierce
- 4:6 Framed photographs (3); 1 of Cornelia M. Pierce's sister Mabel, 2 of Mabel's husband Dr. J.W. Hairgrove
- 4:7 Pamphlet: "School Atlas to Cummings' Ancient & Modern Geography," 8th Edition (Boston); signed: "Cornelia Marvin"

- 4:8 Framed citation: "Who's Who in America, Posthumous Donation Award" to Cornelia M. Pierce for a "Gift to Reed College" (dated: February 1, 1958)
- 4:9 Negative of print of Cornelia M. Pierce (see 4:1 for print of this negative), dated July, 1905