

Table of Contents

- [Collection Summary](#)
- [Biographical Note](#)
- [Scope and Content Note](#)
- [Subject Headings](#)
- [Related Material](#)
- [Administrative Information](#)
- [Access and Use](#)
- [Encoding Information](#)
- [Series List](#)
- [Container List](#)

Collection Summary

Repository: Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries

Creator: Lowrie, Rebecca Lawrence, 1891-1975

Title: Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1846-1996

Bulk Dates: 1909-1977

Quantity: 3.3 cubic feet (11 boxes with circa 1000 items)

Abstract: The bulk of the collection consists of Lowrie's manuscripts of published and unpublished book reviews, 1934-1952. Other items include correspondence relating to Vassar College, her work as a book reviewer, responses to her reviews, her health, comments on people and politics, popular culture, her dogs, and other personal issues. There is also family and biographical material, her Christmas card collection, and other items.

[Top](#)

Biographical Note

Ella Rebecca Lawrence (1891-1975) was born in Galesburg, Illinois on December 14, 1891, the third child of George Appleton and Ella Louise Park Lawrence. Rebecca graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Vassar College in 1913 and received her M.A. in history from Radcliffe College. Having returned to Galesburg to accept a teaching position at Knox College, Rebecca met John Marshall Lowrie, a practicing attorney. The two were married on December 19, 1916.

The Lowries lived in New York City, where Mrs. Lowrie spent two years working for Macmillan Company and subsequently became a book reviewer for Harper Brothers (now Harper and Row). In addition to her regular assignments at Harper's, she reviewed occasional books for *The New Yorker* and *The Saturday Review of Literature*. In 1928, while pursuing her literary career, Mrs. Lowrie wrote Cambric Tea, a book describing her rather lonely childhood in Galesburg. In 1931, Mrs. Lowrie resigned from Harper Brothers to accept a job as first reader for the Book-of-the-Month Club, a position she would hold until 1943.

Rebecca Lowrie served as a trustee of Vassar College from 1944 to 1952. Following her husband's death in 1954, she moved to Chicago. After closing the Galesburg home, Mrs. Lowrie gave to Vassar a collection of over 3,000 volumes, many of which are now housed in the Special Collections Library. In 1965, Mrs. Lowrie made an outright gift to Vassar of the Elmwood Farm in Galesburg -- a tract of nearly 900 acres. To this generous gift, her will added 4,500 acres and securities valued in excess of \$10 million, the largest bequest in Vassar's history. Mrs. Lowrie requested in her will that after being held in trust for a period of 10 years, the

income derived from the land be used to fund the Lucy Maynard Salmon Chair for American History to a level of \$1.5 million, with the balance going to the Sarah Gibson Blanding Fund for the promotion of academic excellence at Vassar College.

For more Biographical information, see "Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie: An appreciation," by Alan Simpson. *Vassar Views*, July, 1977, no. 49.

[Top](#)

Scope and Content Note

The Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie Collection consists primarily of correspondence, typescripts, news clippings, articles, speeches and addresses, and photographs. Also contained within the collection are a set of 22 Christmas cards designed for Rebecca Lowrie by Ralph Fletcher Seymour, a hand-written catalogue for the Park-Lawrence private library, and a scrapbook of newspaper reviews of [Cambric Tea](#).

The bulk of the collection consists of over 600 book reviews written by Lowrie between 1934 and 1952. Personal correspondence includes letters of general information. Contained within the Lowrie Collection are a set of 95 letters written by Rebecca Lowrie to Mary Simpson between 1963 and 1971. A set of 64 letters written by Lowrie to Eloise Ellery (1936-1956) can be found within the Eloise Ellery Collection at Vassar College. Also, a series of 27 letters from Rebecca Lowrie to Lucy Maynard Salmon written between 1912 and 1926, together with one letter from Lowrie to Mrs. Clark (1936) can be located within the Lucy Maynard Salmon Collection at Vassar.

[Top](#)

Access and Use

Access

This collection is open for research according to the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#) without any additional restrictions.

Restrictions on Use

Permission to quote (publish) from unpublished or previously published material must be obtained as described in the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#).

[Top](#)

Related Material

Related Materials

- There are letters written by Rebecca Lowrie to Dr. C. Stanley Urban in the Fishburn Archives at Park University. The letters were written in 1957 and relate to research Dr. Urban was doing on the Park family.

[Top](#)

Subject Headings

Names:

- Couch, Helen
- Foote, Barbara
- Garnsey, Gertrude, 1904-1989
- Lowrie family
- Seymour, Ralph Fletcher, 1876-1966
- Simpson, Mary

Organizations:

- Book-of-the-Month Club
- Harper & Brothers
- Vassar College--Alumni and alumnae
- Vassar College. Board of Trustees

Subjects:

- American literature
- Books--Reviews
- Christmas cards
- Decedents' estates
- Dogs
- Family--New York (State)
- Women in the book industries and trade

Places:

- United States--Politics and government--20th century
- United States--Social life and customs--20th century

Document Types:

- Correspondence
- Musical instruments
- Photograph albums
- Photographs
- Printed ephemera

VCL Categories:

- Literature and Writing
- Vassar College

[Top](#)**Encoding Information**

Encoded by Elizabeth Clarke, February 2007. Updated by Emma Gronbeck, June 2025.

[Top](#)

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

Processing Information

Original processing date unknown. Updated August 1998 and June 2009.

Bugle of Captain James Lawrence (Box 10) was removed from the Vassar College Realia Collection and added to the Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie Papers by Emma Gronbeck, June 2025. The bugle, which was the gift of the Estate Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie in 1977, was likely separated from the Lowrie Papers and added to the Realia Collection at the time of its accession.

Acquisition Information

The bulk of the collection was a gift of Barbara Foote, Mary Simpson, and the Estate of Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie. A later addition of land records was transferred from the Vassar College Office of the Vice President for Finance by Anthony Stellato in 1996.

[Top](#)

Series List

[Series I.](#) Correspondence (Boxes 1-2, 7)

[Series II.](#) Book Reviews Written By Lowrie (Boxes 3-5, 7)

[Series III.](#) Printed Material (Box 6)

[Series IV.](#) Unpublished Works (Box 6)

[Series V.](#) Legal Documents (Boxes 7-8)

[Series VI.](#) Lawrence - Lowrie Family (Box 7)

[Series VII.](#) Park - Lawrence Library (Box 7)

Series VIII. Photographs (Box 7)**Series IX. Miscellaneous (Boxes 7-8, 10-11)****Container List****SERIES I: CORRESPONDENCE****Letters To Rebecca Lowrie**

Folder 1.1	Couch, Helen, 1953-1957 (9 letters)
Folder 1.2	Garnsey, Gertrude, 1953-1968 (9 letters)
Folder 1.3	Minor Correspondents, A-Z, 1931-1966, undated (10 letters, 1 telegram, 2 postcards)

Letters from Rebecca Lowrie

Folder 7.87	to Dorothy and Albert Britt, circa 1934-1954
Folder 1.4	to Mary Simpson, 1963 (5 letters)
Folder 1.5	to Mary Simpson, 1964 (19 letters)
Folder 1.6	to Mary Simpson, 1965 (15 letters)
Folder 1.7	to Mary Simpson, 1966 (11 letters, 3 postcards)
Folder 1.8	to Mary Simpson, 1967 (16 letters)
Folder 1.9	to Mary Simpson, 1968 (12 letters)
Folder 1.10	to Mary Simpson, 1969-1971 (4 letters)
Folder 1.11	to Mary Simpson, undated (3 Christmas cards)
Folder 1.12	to Class of 1913, A-B, 1953 (TS, 18 letters)
Folder 1.13	to Class of 1913, C-D, 1953 (TS, 29 letters)
Folder 1.14	to Class of 1913 E-H, 1953 (TS, 28 letters)
Folder 1.15	to Class of 1913, I-Z, 1953 (TS, 15 letters)
Folder 1.16	to Others, 1913-1951 (4 letters (2 Xerox), 1 Christmas card and envelope)

Miscellaneous Correspondence

Folder 1.17	Letters pertaining to the collection, 1976-1977, undated (10 letters)
Folder 1.18	Letters by and about others, 1933-1948 (2 letters)
BOX 2	Christmas Cards: Catalogue of Christmas card designed for Rebecca Lowrie by Ralph F. Seymour

SERIES II: BOOKS REVIEWS WRITTEN BY LOWRIE**Unpublished Book Reviews**

Folder 3.19	Unpublished book reviews, Feb-June 1934 (TS, 17 reviews)
Folder 3.20	Unpublished book reviews, July-Aug 1934 (TS, 13 reviews)
Folder 3.21	Unpublished book reviews, Sept 1934, [1934] (TS, 17 reviews)
Folder 3.22	Unpublished book reviews, [1934] (TS, 23 reviews)
Folder 3.23	Unpublished book reviews, [1934] (TS, 11 reviews)
Folder 3.24	Unpublished book reviews, [Jan]-July 1935 (TS, 16 reviews)
Folder 3.25	Unpublished book reviews, Aug-Dec 1935 (TS, 19 reviews)
Folder 3.26	Unpublished book reviews, Jan-Apr 1935 (TS, 22 reviews)
Folder 3.27	Unpublished book reviews, May-Aug 1936 (TS, 24 reviews)
Folder 3.28	Unpublished book reviews, Sept-Dec 1936 (TS, 25 reviews)
Folder 3.29	Unpublished book reviews, Jan-Feb 1937 (TS, 20 reviews)
Folder 3.30	Unpublished book reviews, Mar-May 1937 (TS, 25 reviews)
Folder 4.31	Unpublished book reviews, June-Aug 1937 (TS, 22 reviews)
Folder 4.32	Unpublished book reviews, Sept-Dec 1937 (TS, 25 reviews)
Folder 4.33	Unpublished book reviews, Jan-Feb 1938 (TS, 27 reviews)
Folder 4.34	Unpublished book reviews, Mar-June 1938 (TS, 16 reviews)
Folder 4.35	Unpublished book reviews, July-Aug 1938 (TS, 23 reviews)
Folder 4.36	Unpublished book reviews, Sept-Dec 1938 (TS, 20 reviews)
Folder 4.37	Unpublished book reviews, Jan-Mar 1939 (TS, 18 reviews)
Folder 4.38	Unpublished book reviews, Apr-June 1939 (TS, 17 reviews)
Folder 4.40	Unpublished book reviews, July-Aug 1939 (TS, 19 reviews)
Folder 4.41	Unpublished book reviews, Sept-Dec 1939 (TS, 26 reviews)
Folder 4.42	Unpublished book reviews, Jan-[ca. Feb] 1940 (TS, 20 reviews)
Folder 4.42	Unpublished book reviews, [ca. Feb]-June 1940 (TS, 22 reviews)
Folder 5.43	Unpublished book reviews, July-Aug 1940 (TS, 18 reviews)
Folder 5.44	Unpublished book reviews, Sept-Dec 1940 (TS, 17 reviews)
Folder 5.45	Unpublished book reviews, Jan-July 1941 (TS, 22 reviews)
Folder 5.46	Unpublished book reviews, Aug-Dec 1941 (TS, 22 reviews)
Folder 5.47	Unpublished book reviews, Jan-June 1942 (TS, 22 reviews)

Published Book Reviews

Folder 5.48	Published book reviews, 1935 (TS, 3 reviews)
Folder 5.49	Published book reviews, 1936 (TS, 10 reviews)
Folder 5.50	Published book reviews, 1937 (TS, 14 reviews and 7 attached printed reviews)
Folder 5.51	Published book reviews, 1938 (TS, 16 reviews and 8 attached printed reviews)
Folder 5.52	Published book reviews, 1939-1940 (TS, 8 reviews)
Folder 5.53	Published book reviews, 1941 (TS, 11 reviews)

Folder 5.54 Published book reviews, 1942 (TS, 5 reviews)
Folder 7.89 Unbound scrapbook of Cambric Tea Reviews

SERIES III: PRINTED MATERIAL

Book Reviews by Rebecca Lowrie

Folder 6.55 Magazine review clippings, 1935-1942 (25 clippings)
Folder 6.56 The Saturday Review Literature, with review by Rebecca Lowrie, 1938-1941 (2 issues)

Newspaper Articles

Folder 6.57 News clippings concerning Cambric Tea, 1928-1931 (photocopies)
Folder 6.58 Assorted news clippings, 1924-1967 (photocopies)

Miscellaneous Printed Material

Folder 6.59 Printed material by or about Lowrie, 1937-1977 (5 items)
Folder 6.60 Eulogies, 1934-1954 (2 pamphlets)
Folder 6.61 "A Pioneer of Freedom," by George A. Lawrence, 1913 (1 booklet)

SERIES IV: UNPUBLISHED WORKS

Written by Lowrie

Folder 6.62 Poems, 1916, undated (MS, 2 pp., TS, 1 p. 2 Xerox)
Folder 6.63 "1853," [1957] (TS, 13 pp.)
Folder 6.64 "Hob: An Etymological Biography," [1958] (TS, 15 pp. (Xerox))
Folder 6.65 "The Lady and the Brewer," [1961] (TS, 20 pp.)
Folder 6.66 "Report for 45th Reunion Class," 1957 (TS, 4 pp.)

Written by Others About Lowrie

Folder 6.67 "Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie," by Barbara Foote (rough draft), 1977 (TS, 22 pp. (Xerox))
Folder 6.68 "Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie," by Barbara Foote (final draft), 1977 (TS, 20 pp. (Xerox))

Written By and About Others

Folders 6.69 Announcements concerning the Lucy Maynard Salmon Chair and Sarah Gibson Blanding Fund, 1969, undated (TS, 2 items (Xerox))

Gifts Donated by Rebecca Lowrie

Folder 6.70 Announcements, summaries and valuations of gifts, 1944-1977 (TS, 10 items (7 Xerox), MS, 1 item)

SERIES V: LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Folder 7.77 Inventory of estate, 1960 (TS, 15 pp., oversized)

Folder 7.78 Will of Rebecca Lowrie w/ letter from Frederick G. Acker to James Ritterskamp (1976), 1975 (TS, 12 pp. (Xerox))

Folder 8.93 Land records for property in Illinois (subsequently bequeathed to Vassar College) and later documentation, 1846-1853, 1952, 1996, 2009 (16 land warrants, plus additional documentation)

SERIES VI: LAWRENCE-LOWRIE FAMILY

College Bulletins

Folder 7.79 Knox College publications, 1976 (3 items (1 Xerox))

Folder 7.80 Park College Alumniad, 1976 (1 magazine)

Genealogical Information

Folder 7.81 Genealogical charts, etc., undated

Folder 7.82 Daughters of the American Revolution applications, 1914-1919 (5 photocopies)

Folder 7.83 Facsimile of 1877 letter from Matthew Vassar Jr. to Ella Park (with transcript)

SERIES VII: PARK-LAWRENCE LIBRARY

Folder 7.84 Bills and receipts, 1912-1916 (9 pp.)

Folder 7.85 Book listings and catalogue descriptions, 1920-1924, undated (TS, 4 items, MS, 2 items, 2 clippings)

Folder 7.86 Correspondence to Mrs. George A. Lawrence, 1909-1916 (2 letters)

Folder 8.92 Library catalogue of the Park-Lawrence private library, (1 catalog)

SERIES VIII: PHOTOGRAPHS

Folder 7.71 Rebecca Lowrie portraits

Folder 7.72 Rebecca Lowrie with John Lowrie

Folder 7.73 Family

Folder 7.74 Vassar

Folder 7.76 Homes

Folder 7.75 Miscellaneous

Multiple
Collections Box 1 Lawrence family and Rebecca as a child, 1913 (1 photograph, damaged)

Multiple Collections Box 1	John and Rebecca Lowrie on their 25th Anniversary, 1941 Dec 16 (5 photographs)
Multiple Collections Box 1	Portrait of Rebecca as a young woman, undated (1 photograph)
Box 9	Family photograph album

SERIES IX: MISCELLANEOUS

Folder 7.88	Miscellaneous material, items including: report card, addressed envelopes, (12 items)
Folder 8.90	Vassar note cards — "The Dreyfus Case..."
Folder 8.90	Vassar note cards — "The Friendly Hob..."
Folder 8.94	Notes (2 sets)
Box 10	Bugle of Captain James Lawrence, undated (musical instrument)
Box 11	Scrapbook: Knox College - Vassar College, 1896-1916

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)