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## Collection Summary

**Repository:** Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries

**Creator:** Grove, Elsa Butler, 1884-1969

**Title:** Elsa Butler Grove Papers

**Inclusive  
Dates:** circa 1915-1969

**Bulk Dates:** 1919-1924

**Quantity:** 0.4 cubic feet (1 box)

**Abstract:** The Elsa Butler Grove Papers contains correspondence, typescripts, printed materials, and photographs, primarily related to Grove's service in the Baltic States and work with the American Red Cross and the Vassar Unit in France during World War I.

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## Biographical Note

Elsa May Butler was born in St. Louis, Missouri on May 16, 1884, the daughter of William Borton and Marie Lange Butler. A 1905 graduate of Vassar College, Grove received her master's degree from the Washington University School of Social Work in 1914 and was a fellow at Bryn Mawr from 1915-1916. She later became a student at Columbia University Graduate School of Political Science, where she studied economics, sociology, and anthropology.

Elsa devoted much of her life to medical social work. During World War I, she was in charge of the Vassar College Red Cross welfare unit at Verdun, France and was decorated by the French government for her services. On June 14, 1921, Grove began an one-year position directing social work in child relief units in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania for the American Red Cross. During this period of service in the Baltic States, she took extensive notes on the conditions witnessed by the inhabitants of Latvia. Her observations provide an account of the difficulties of conducting health work overseas, in terms of those administering aid as well as those who are receiving the assistance.

Upon her return to the United States, Grove taught hospital service at Teacher's College of Columbia University, Fordham University, Dillard University, Smith College, and Mt. Sinai Hospital (1923-1942). She served as President of the Class of 1905, Vassar College from 1935 to 1940, and was active in numerous professional societies, including the New York Urban League, the National Institute of Immigration Welfare, and the American Association of Social Workers.

In preparation for Vassar's 100th Anniversary, Grove took a determined interest in the campaign for the establishment of a Women's Archives at Vassar College. It was her considered belief that the gathering of an extensive collection of materials relating to the role of women throughout history would serve as a valuable tool in the betterment of Vassar's academic resources.

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## Scope and Content Note

The collection primarily contains records of Elsa Butler Grove's work with the American Red Cross, and includes correspondence, 1921-1924; a diary with entries about her Baltic experiences, 1921; typescript articles about government, children, women, labor, and charity work in the Baltic States based on her work there, 1921-1922; photographs of Grove and Verdun; and miscellaneous maps, booklets, and articles. Other items include eight letters relating to the proposed Vassar Archives, 1956; and her obituary, 1969. In addition, there is an unbound scrapbook containing, correspondence, notes, and photographs of her work with the Vassar Unit in France, 1919-1920.

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## 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](#).

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## Related Material

### Related Materials

- [Vassar Red Cross Relief Unit](#)

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## Subject Headings

### Organizations:

- American Red Cross
- Townsend, Fanny P. Simpson, 1881-1970
- Vassar Red Cross Relief Unit

### Subjects:

- Charities--Baltic States
- Children--Baltic States
- International relief
- Labor and laboring classes--Baltic States
- Medical social work--Europe
- Social work with children
- Women social workers
- Women--Baltic States
- Women--Diaries
- World War, 1914-1918--War work--Red Cross

**Places:**

- Baltic States--Politics and government
- Baltic States--Social conditions
- Estonia--Description and travel
- Latvia--Description and travel
- Lithuania--Description and travel
- Verdun (France)--Description--Views

**Document Types:**

- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Photographs

**VCL Categories:**

- War and War Crimes

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

Encoded by Elizabeth Clarke, April 2007. Updated by Emma Gronbeck, October 2025.

[Top](#)**Administrative Information****Preferred Citation**

Elsa Butler Grove Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

**Processing Information**

Original processing date unknown.

Container list updated by Laura Streett, April 2007.

**Acquisition Information**

Gift of Elsa Butler Grove, 1955.

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[Series I.](#) Correspondence, 1919-1924

[Series II.](#) Writings, 1921-1954

**Series III. Printed Materials, circa 1915-1969****Series IV. Photographs, circa 1919-1936****Series V. Vassar Unit Scrapbook, 1919-1920****Container List****Series I. Correspondence, 1919-1924**

- Folder 1 Letters from the American Red Cross, 1921-1922
- Folder 2 Letters from Grove, Elsa Butler to various, 1920-1924
- Folder 3 Letters from Grove, Elsa Butler to various about the Vassar Unit, 1920 Aug-Oct
- Folder 4 Letters to/from Kenyon, Helen, 1920 May-Jul
- Folder 5 Letters to/from MacCracken, Henry Noble, 1920 Aug-Oct
- Folder 6 Letters to/from Townsend, Fanny, 1919 Nov-1920 Aug

**Series II. Writings, 1921-1954**

- Folder 7 Date Book, 1921
- Folder 8 "Experience Outlines" (resumes), [1942], 1954
- Folder 9 Notes on Baltic States - Outline of Notes, 1921-1922 (cc, 1p.)
- Folder 9 Notes on Baltic States - Letts, 1921-1922 (TS, 3p.)
- Folder 9 Notes on Baltic States - Latvia, 1921-1922 (TS, 4p.)
- Folder 9 Notes on Baltic States - Before the War, 1921-1922 (TS, 5p.)
- Folder 9 Notes on Baltic States - The War, 1921-1922 (TS, 3p.)
- Folder 10 Notes on Baltic States - Experiment in Government, 1921-1922 (TS, 5p.)
- Folder 10 Notes on Baltic States - Municipal Bankruptcy, 1921-1922 (TS, 1p.)
- Folder 10 Notes on Baltic States - The Policy of Self-Protection, 1921-1922 (TS, 2 copies, 3p. each)
- Folder 10 Notes on Baltic States - Railroad Travel, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)
- Folder 11 Notes on Baltic States - Fuel Situation, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)
- Folder 11 Notes on Baltic States - Lettish Language, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)
- Folder 11 Notes on Baltic States - Interpreters, 1921-1922 (TS, 3p.)
- Folder 11 Notes on Baltic States - The Returning Population, 1921-1922 (TS, 2 copies, 4p. each)
- Folder 12 Notes on Baltic States - Russians, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)
- Folder 12 Notes on Baltic States - Widows, 1921-1922 (TS, 3p.)
- Folder 12 Notes on Baltic States - Orphans, 1921-1922 (TS, 1p.)
- Folder 12 Notes on Baltic States - Orphanages, 1921-1922 (TS, 5p.)
- Folder 12 Notes on Baltic States - Schools, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)
- Folder 12 Notes on Baltic States - University Students, 1921-1922 (TS, 1p.)
- Folder 13 Notes on Baltic States - Rural Child Labor, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)
- Folder 13 Notes on Baltic States - Unemployment, 1921-1922 (TS, 1p.)

Folder 13 Notes on Baltic States - Lettish Women's Corps, 1921-1922 (TS, 1p.)  
Folder 13 Notes on Baltic States - Public Charities, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)  
Folder 13 Notes on Baltic States - Lettish Private Organizations, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)  
Folder 14 Notes on Baltic States - German Charities, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)  
Folder 14 Notes on Baltic States - General Impressions, 1921-1922 (cc, 2p.)  
Folder 14 Notes on Baltic States - American Contact, 1921-1922 (TS, 3p.)  
Folder 14 Notes on Baltic States - The Attitude of the Letts Toward Foreign Charities, 1921-1922 (TS, 1p.)  
Folder 15 Notes on Baltic States - Some Reflections on American Philanthropy Overseas, 1921-1922 (TS, 15p.)  
Folder 16 Notes on Baltic States - Running an Office Overseas, 1921-1922 (TS, 4p.)  
Folder 16 Notes on Baltic States - Case Work, 1921-1922 (TS, 3p.)  
Folder 16 Notes on Baltic States - American Red Cross...Clothing Distribution in Latvia, 1921-1922 (TS, 7p.)  
Folder 16 Notes on Baltic States - Lesson VII, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)  
Folder 16 Notes on Baltic States - A Letter to the American Red Cross Commission, 1921-1922 (TS, 1p.)  
Folder 16 Notes on Baltic States - General Conclusions Regarding Health Work Overseas, 1921-1922 (cc, 2p.)  
Folder 16 Notes on Baltic States - Foreign Agencies, 1921-1922 (TS, 2p.)

### **Series III. Printed Materials, circa 1915-1969**

Folder 17 Bank Note - Austro-Hungarian, circa 1915  
Folder 18 Bank Note - Russian, circa 1918  
Folder 19 Clippings, 1920  
Folder 20 Maps of the Baltic States, undated (2 maps, 1 with Xerox)  
Folder 21 Miscellaneous documents, 1924, undated  
Folder 22 Newspaper obituary, 1969 (1 article)  
Folder 22 Passenger list for steamer to Rotterdam, 1921 (1 item)  
Folder 22 The Baltic Republics, 1922 (1 booklet)  
Folder 23 The New Jersey Club Woman, Vol. XXI, No. 4, 1946 Dec

### **Series IV. Photographs, circa 1919-1936**

Folder 24 Elsa Butler Grove, undated (4 photos)  
Folder 25 "La Ferme Madalaine", circa 1919  
Folder 26 Goutte de Lait and Verdun, with captions, 1920  
Folder 27 Wartime and post-war snapshots, primarily of Verdun, France, circa 1919-1936 (13 photos)

### **Series V. Vassar Unit Scrapbook, 1919-1920**

Folder 28 "Advice given bearing on Work in France," correspondence and notes, 1919 Dec - 1920 Oct  
Folder 29 "La Dispensaire" and "Goutte de Lait," records, 1919-1920  
Folder 30 "Forming the Committee," correspondence and notes, 1920  
Folder 31 "French correspondence forwarded by Fanny Townsend," 1919-1920  
Folder 32 "Luxembourg," correspondence and notes, 1920 Aug  
Folder 33 "Monsieur de Goeljen/Holland," correspondence, 1920 Aug-Nov  
Folder 34 "Report of the Work of the Vassar Unit," 1919-1920  
Folder 35 "Summary of Work of the Vassar Unit," 1919 Feb-Aug

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