

## MSS. Collection #36

**William P. D. Bush Papers, ca. 1917-1945. 1½ boxes (34 folders), ca. 500 items.**

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

### INTRODUCTION

The William P.D. Bush Papers contain correspondence, photographs, printed materials, and legal materials. The bulk of the collection, however, is primarily correspondence. Bush served in the U.S. Army during World War I and World War II, writing numerous letters to his mother in Greensboro. The letters discuss a wide range of topics from the scenery where he was stationed to military politics. While there is little information about Bush's personal life, researchers interested in various aspects of military life will find this collection useful. Also of interest is a group of postcards with images of different historic sites, cathedrals, street scenes, and military subjects in Europe during World War I.

**Arrangement:** The William P.D. Bush papers are arranged by document type and then chronologically by date. The series are: **Correspondence, Photographs, Printed Materials, and Legal.**

**Provenance:** This collection was donated by Miss Mary D. Bush, 1503 Fairmont St., Greensboro, in 1971 and assigned the accession number 1971.59.1

**Processing:** Initial processing of this collection was undertaken by Archivist J. Stephen Catlett, and the finding aid was completed by Christine Dumoulin, Archives Assistant, in July 2001.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE<sup>1</sup>

William Pope Duval Bush was born on March 4, 1897, in Louisville, Kentucky, the son of Ellen Douglass Mark Bush and Harry R. Bush. He was named for his grandfather, William Pope Duval Bush, of Frankfort, Kentucky, a lawyer, publisher, and judge.

Bush's early years were spent in Atlanta, Chicago, and Newark, New Jersey, his numerous residences being dictated by his father's work in the insurance industry and the transfers incidental thereto. The family moved to Greensboro when young Bush was 12 years old and his father joined the Dixie Fire Insurance Company. Rising rapidly through company management, his father became the president of Dixie Fire Insurance Company in 1912 and served in that capacity until his death in 1934. Young William attended the Greensboro public schools and then went to Woodberry Forest for a 2-year stint, graduating with honors and receiving several scholastic medals.

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<sup>1</sup> This biographical sketch was not prepared by the Archivist, and its sources and author are unknown.

After graduating from high school, William Bush entered the University of Virginia, but his education was soon interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. He enlisted with the ambulance group formed at the University in May 1917, went to a training camp in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and was sent overseas in August 1917. He served for some six months with the military government of Paris and then his ambulance unit was involved in evacuating the wounded under heavy fire during several engagements, including the battle for the Argonne Forest. He was slightly wounded in this action and sent to the south of France for recuperation. He was cited for distinguished conduct and the citation read in part: "Always ready to volunteer for the most dangerous missions, setting a fine example of coolness and energy at Exermont, France, through an intense bombardment." Bush was awarded the Silver Star for valor, the Croix de Guerre Francaise, and the Victory Medal with six bronze stars. After his wounding he was a French instructor at the Army Area School at Nantes, France, and remained with the army of occupation in Germany after the armistice until discharged in June 1919.

Upon returning to the United States, Bush took a position with the Niagara Fire Insurance Company in their New York office and later served as assistant special agent in Georgia, Florida and Alabama. In 1924 he joined the Hartford Fire Insurance Company as a special agent, serving for two years in North Carolina and eight years in Louisiana. For six of his eight years in Louisiana, he served as chairman of the Rate Making Committee of the Louisiana Rating and Fire Prevention Bureau. In addition, he was chairman of the Advisory Committee of the National Automobile Underwriters Association for two years and secretary of the Southeastern Hail Insurance Association for four years.

In 1929 the Dixie Fire Insurance Company became a member of the American Insurance Company group, retaining its name, officers and considerable autonomy. Shortly after his father's death in 1934, William Bush returned to Greensboro as Assistant Manager of the Carolina-Virginia Department of the American Insurance Company. In 1938 he was elected Secretary of the American Insurance Company and moved to the home office in Newark, New Jersey. In this capacity he had the active supervision of insurance in a number of states and was in charge of the company's automobile underwriting as well as all of its foreign services. His career was again interrupted when he volunteered on June 4, 1942, for service in the Army of the United States. During the four years from June 1942 to June 1946 he served as a Combat Intelligence Officer in the Pacific area, attaining a rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Corps prior to his discharge. Among the areas in which he served were Hawaii, Saipan, Guam, Peliliu and Korea, earning the American Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, and Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal.

Upon his discharge in 1946 he returned to his position as Secretary of the American Insurance Company in Newark, and in 1949 was elected to a vice presidency in that company. In this capacity he developed and supervised the operations of the American Insurance Company in Mexico, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Bush served continuously as Vice President of the American Insurance Company until October 1958, when his health forced him into retirement. He died on March 17, 1959, in Greensboro.

Throughout his life, Bush regarded insurance as an avocation as well as a vocation and spent many of his leisure hours in research dealing with the whole field. In the summer of 1937 he visited England, France and Germany to study the operation of the insurance business in Europe, and for many years he collected books on all aspects of the insurance field. He took an active part in the Insurance Institute of America, serving as lecturer in many of its instruction courses and, in addition, acted as visiting lecturer in the Schools of Business Administration of Loyola

University, University of Mississippi, Duke University and the University of North Carolina. At different periods in his lifetime he served as director of the Cotton, Fire and Marine Underwriters, a trustee of the American Foreign Insurance Association, officer of the Southeastern Underwriters Association, and on the Executive Committee of the Marine Office of America and the American Reinsurance Exchange.

In addition to his interest in insurance, Mr. Bush was an enthusiastic sportsman and particularly enjoyed golf and fishing. He was a polished chef and delighted in preparing Creole and Mexican dishes. He was an amateur photographer and linguist and read extensively in French literature. He collected a large personal library that included a variety of works in history, biography, science and fiction and contained fine sets of the works of his favorite French and Russian authors. Of all his hobbies, however, his insurance library was the dearest and to it he devoted his most serious efforts. His library, which has been donated to the University of North Carolina, was long regarded as one of the finest insurance libraries belonging to any individual in the United States and Bush poured much of himself into it.

Bush was the eldest of five children and was survived by three sisters and one brother in addition to his mother, Mrs. Ellen Douglass Mark Bush of Greensboro. His siblings were:

Mark L. Bush of Charleston, West Virginia, also in the insurance business

May D. Bush, on the faculty of the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina

Carolyn Bush Lyday, the wife of Greensboro surgeon Dr. Russell O. Lyday

Ellen Douglass Bush of Raleigh, the Director of Field Services for the NC Department of Public Welfare

Bush was a member of the Chess and Checkers Club in New Orleans and the Essex Club in Newark, New Jersey, but always retained close ties with his home and family in Greensboro.

### **SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE**

This collection consists primarily of letters from William Bush to his mother in Greensboro. They focus on Bush's service in the U.S. Army during World War I (1917-1919) and World War II (1942-1946). He writes detailed letters explaining his movements, training, and military "politics," and includes geographic descriptions and comments on people, events, and military preparations. This is true both for his World War I correspondence, which focuses on the U.S. and France, and for his World War II service in the U.S. and Pacific Theater.

In addition to the letters to his mother, there are a few from other individuals for the World War I period, and much additional World War I material: miscellaneous printed material (including a University of Virginia bulletin & related publications, and a U.S. War Savings Certificate. See 3:1), military cartoons (3:2), and two song sheets, including "Camp Songs of the U.S. Army Ambulance Corps" (3:3). There are also many photographs and numerous postcards from France.

Bush's World War II correspondence includes interesting observations on the occupation of Korea (1:23-24), with comments on its people, climate and political situation. In general, his World War II correspondence reports negatively on the military bureaucracy and waste he encountered in the Pacific Theater. His service can be tracked through his "201" file (4:1).

Although Bush was a prominent insurance company executive (as was his father, Harry R. Bush), there is little if any information about his life beyond his years of military service.

## **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

### **1. Correspondence. 26 folders. ca. 1917-1945.**

This series contains mostly personal letters from William Bush to his mother describing events and daily activities in the military. The bulk of the correspondence is divided into two time frames: 1917-1919 and 1942-1946. Earlier letters are from the University of Virginia and Allentown, Pennsylvania, where he trained before heading overseas. In one long letter, Bush mentions attending the Salem Reformed Church where the Tuskegee Singers were performing; they walked 22 miles from camp to “here the Negroes” (1:2). Another letter from France compares the difference between the American and French markets (1:3).

From 1942-46, the letters are mostly from different Army Air Force bases around the country, especially from western states such as Utah, Oklahoma, and California. Bush details his hectic schedule while attending Intelligence School in Pennsylvania (1:14). An interesting observation is that numerous letters had to be inspected and passed by a government examiner, who had the authority to censor all correspondence. The overseas letters focus primarily on his experiences in Japan and Korea.

### **2. Photographic Material. 4 folders. ca. 1917-1945.**

This series is a miscellaneous collection of photographs and postcards with images. The photographs are mostly of Bush during his military career. Folder 2:1 contains photos of Bush in uniform and the barracks in Virginia (1917-1919). The World War II photos show Bush as an older man. One is a portrait with a fiddlehead fern and with his company. The postcards are mostly images of European cities during World War I. One series shows the destruction caused by bombing raids in Louvain, a section of Brussels, Belgium (2:2). Others include French castles, street scenes in Nice, the square in Darmstadt, Germany, the ambulance of the American Hospital in Neuilly-Paris, and the U.S.A.A.C. Camp in Pennsylvania (2:2-3).

### **3. Printed Materials. 3 folders. 1917-1919.**

The printed materials are mostly souvenirs from Bush’s stint in the military. Of particular interest is a tiny 1918 Petit Almanach in French. It includes names days, postage prices, and the starting dates of the four seasons (3:1). There are also several Alumni News pamphlets from the University of Virginia and a U.S. War Savings Certificate (3:1). Also of interest is a page of cartoons depicting military life (3:2) and a series of song sheets from the U.S. Army Ambulance Corps and the Rotary Club (3:3).

### **4. Legal**

This series is the “201” personnel file of Bush when he served during World War II. It contains special orders, clothing rations, certificates such as a diploma for completing Combat Intelligent Officers Course, and a thank you letter from President Harry Truman.

**FOLDER LISTING**

| <b>Series</b> | <b>Folder</b> | <b>Contents</b>       |  |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1             | 1             | Correspondence        | -- Bush, William – 1917, March-June        |
|               | 2             | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1917, July              |
|               | 3             | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1917, Aug.-Sept.        |
|               | 4             | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1917, Oct.-Dec.         |
|               | 5             | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1918, Jan.-April        |
|               | 6             | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1918, May-Sept.         |
|               | 7             | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1918, Oct.-Dec.         |
|               | 8             | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1918 -- Citation        |
|               | 9             | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1919                    |
|               | 10            | “                     | -- Bush, William -- [1917-1919] Jan.-March |
|               | 11            | “                     | -- Bush, William -- [1917-1919]            |
|               | 12            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1941 (?)                |
|               | 13            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1942, Feb.-Aug.         |
|               | 14            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1942, Sept.-Dec.        |
|               | 15            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1943, Jan.-March        |
|               | 16            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1943, April-Aug.        |
|               | 17            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1943, Sept.-Dec.        |
|               | 18            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1944, Jan.-June         |
|               | 19            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1944, July-Sept.        |
|               | 20            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1944, Oct.-Dec.         |
|               | 21            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1945, , Jan.-Feb.       |
|               | 22            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1945, March-July        |
|               | 23            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1945, Aug.-Sept.        |
|               | 24            | “                     | -- Bush, William – 1945, Oct.-Dec.         |
|               | 25            | “                     | -- Crenshaw, Lewis D. -- 1918              |
|               | 26            | “                     | -- Weaber, Thomas H. -- 1917, Aug. 7       |
| 2             | 1             | Photographic Material | -- 1917-1919                               |
|               | 2-3           | “                     | -- 1917-1919 -- Postcards                  |
|               | 4             | “                     | -- 1941-1945                               |
| 3             | 1             | Printed Materials     | -- 1917-1919                               |
|               | 2             | “                     | -- 1917-1919 – Cartoons                    |
|               | 3             | “                     | -- 1917-1919 – Song Sheets                 |
| 4             | 1             | Legal Documents       | -- Bush, William -- "201" File             |

**Index to the William P. D. Bush Papers (ca. 1917-1945)**

Note: The numbers following the name/subject entry -- e.g., 1:1 -- Series#:Folder# (or, if no ":", Series only) that name/topic can found.

**Bush**, William P. D.: correspondence, 1; military file, 4:1

**Crenshaw**, Lewis D.: 1918 letters, 1:25

**France**: correspondence from (World War I), 1:1-11; World War I postcards, 2:2-3

**Korea**: correspondence concerning occupation of (1945), 1:23-24

**Pacific** Islands: during World War II, 1:12-24

Postcards: France (World War I), 2:2-3

**U.S. Army**: (1917-19), 1:1-11; (1941-45), 1:12-24;

U.S. War Savings Certificate: World War I, 3:1

University of Virginia: printed material (1917-19), 3:1

**Weaber**, Thomas H.: 1917 letter, 1:26

World War I: "Camp Songs of the U.S. Army Ambulance Corps," 3:3; cartoons, 3:2;  
correspondence, 1:1-11

World War II: correspondence, 1:12-24; occupation of Korea (1945), 1:23-24;  
Pacific Theater, 1:12-24