

# **William Sylvanus Morris collection**

**AFC 2001/001/105979**

**Guides to the Collections in the Veterans History Project**



**Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.**

**March 2017**

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vhp.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017655248>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/eadvhp.vh017014>

Processed by Candace Milburn

Finding aid encoded by Irene Lule, July 2017

## Collection Summary

**Title:** William Sylvanus Morris collection 1917-2016: Veterans History Project (U.S.)

**Inclusive Dates:** 1917-2016

**Call No.:** AFC 2001/001/105979

**Creator:** Morris, William Sylvanus, 1888-1947.

**Extent (Photographs):** 44 photographs.

**Extent (Manuscripts):** manuscripts: 58 items

**Extent (Extent):** 1 computer optical disc ; 4 3/4 in.

**Language:** In English.

**Location:** Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017655248>

**Summary:** William Sylvanus Morris was born on May 5, 1888, in Lynchburg, Virginia. He served in the United States Army, 1917-1919, with the Headquarters Lines of Communication, American Expeditionary Force, at Fort Snelling, Minnesota; Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Paris, France and Bordeaux, France. The veteran served as a camp engineer and camp commander. He worked in a water supply department and designed water systems for camps, hospitals and training centers throughout France. He also oversaw the construction of a large hospital facility. In 1919, he was discharged as a First Lieutenant. Morris died in 1947.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

### People

Hinton, Richard

Morris, William Sylvanus, 1888-1947

Morris, William Sylvanus, 1888-1947--Correspondence.

### Organizations

American Folklife Center

Veterans History Project (U.S.)

### Subjects

World War, 1914-1918--Personal narratives, American.

World War, 1914-1918--Veterans--Virginia.

### Form/Genre

Correspondence.

Diaries.

Manuscripts.

Photographs.

## Arrangement

Arranged into three series: Computer File, Manuscripts and Photographs. Materials are arranged alphabetically by type of record.

## Related Material

Allen Melancthon Sumner, Jr. Collection (AFC/2001/001/105990), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/eadvhp.vh017014.02>

## Copyright Status

Duplication of collection materials may be restricted.

## Access and Restrictions

Collection is open for research; access restrictions apply. To request collection materials, please contact the Veterans History Project at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vhp.contact>

## Preferred Citation

William Sylvanus Morris Collection (AFC/2001/001/105979), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

## Biographical Note

William Sylvanus Morris was born on May 5, 1888, in Lynchburg, Virginia. He was the son of John Speed Morris and Pattie Cary Kean. He was a direct descendent of Thomas Jefferson through his mother's side of the family. His third great-grandmother was Martha Jefferson, the eldest daughter of Thomas Jefferson and Martha Wayles. Morris lived in Duluth, Minnesota, when he joined the United States Army at the age of 29.

On May 15, 1917, Morris reported to the Engineers Officers training camp at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. Along with the rest of the engineer company, he transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on June 22, 1917. On July 3, 1917, Morris was commissioned as a First Lieutenant. He remained at Fort Leavenworth until August 27, 1917, when he was ordered to report to Hoboken, New Jersey for embarkation. He sailed on the SS *St. Paul* from Hoboken for Europe, arriving on September 25, 1917, at Liverpool, England. Soon after, he arrived at Le Havre, France, for duty. His duties included designing water systems for camps, hospitals, and training centers. In early December 1917, he was reassigned to work as a construction engineer. He was designated camp engineer and camp commander of Beau Desert Hospital. His duties consisted of building twenty 1000-bed units and auxiliary buildings. Beau Desert Hospital also saw the construction of 15 miles of railroad, a saw mill, a planing mill, and a concrete block factory. Construction of these facilities began on January 1, 1918. By June 1, 1918, the first two units were occupied. In August, Miller took a ten-day leave, traveling to Monte Carlo and Nice. Soon after his return, he was sent to Base Hospital No. 6 in Bordeaux due to illness. On September 1, 1918, he was designated construction engineer on the railroad water supply in Mussidan, Coutras, and Libourne, France. His duties included building water tanks and installing pumps at different railroad stations. He sailed back to the United States on December 24, 1918, and arrived on January 3, 1919. Miller was discharged at Camp Dodge, Iowa, on February 3, 1919, as a First Lieutenant.

Morris returned to Minnesota following his service. He married Pearl Oberg in May 1922. They had one daughter, Mary Elizabeth Morris, born on February 18, 1924. Pearl died on May 22, 1934. Morris remained in Minnesota for the rest of his life. William Sylvanus Morris died on September 6, 1947.

## Scope and Content

The William Sylvanus Morris collection documents Morris' United States Army service during World War I. The collection includes correspondence, diaries, photographs and an optical disc containing transcripts of manuscript material.

The optical disc in the collection contains electronic transcriptions of Morris' correspondence and diary. The bulk of the material consists of correspondence sent by Morris to his mother. Topics covered include inquiries about family back home in Washington, D.C.; tailor-made uniform in Washington, D.C. due to limited sizes; receiving gifts and letters from family; weather conditions; receiving commission as First Lieutenant at Fort Leavenworth; disappointment of not getting promoted to captain due to raising age limit; having dinner at the Y.M.C.A. in Southampton, England, on day of arrival; lack of money for Christmas gifts to send home; frequently going to operas in France; celebrating a birthday; a lot of discussion

about his uncle, Jefferson Randolph Kean, known as Uncle Rannie, who was also serving during World War I; uncle being promoted to general and duties throughout his service; death of his brother-in-law, Capt. Allen Melancthon Sumner, Jr., in action; living in a French chateau with a wealthy French family and being the only officer in town; French treated him very kindly; improvement speaking French; water supply work and gaining a lot of experience; and waiting to be shipped back to the U.S. at camp outside of Bordeaux, France.

The collection also includes Morris' record of assignments throughout military service during World War I. Photographs contain images of Morris and servicemen at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and at an engineer base in France; handling rifles; tug of war matches; marching; riding horses; playing instruments; archery range; and digging ditches.

## Description of Series

Container

Series

Series I: Manuscripts

Series II: Photographs

Series III: Computer File

# Container List

Container	Contents
<b>Series I: Manuscripts</b>	
<b>BOX-FOLDER</b> MSS2847/1-3	Correspondence, 1917-1919  3 folders MS01: Letters from Morris to his mother Pattie, dated 10/07/1918 to 12/16/1918. Topics covered include: Inquiring about family back home in Washington, D.C.; tailor-made uniform in Washington, D.C. due to limited sizes; receiving gifts and letters from family; weather conditions; receiving commission as First Lieutenant at Fort Leavenworth; disappointment of not getting promoted to captain due to raising age limit; having dinner at the Y.M.C.A. in Southampton, England, on day of arrival; lack of money for Christmas gifts to send home; frequently going to operas in France; celebrating a birthday; his uncle, Jefferson Randolph Kean, known as Uncle Rannie, who was also serving during World War I; uncle being promoted to general and duties throughout his service; living in a French chateau with a wealthy French family and being the only officer in town; French treated him very kindly; improvement speaking French; water supply work and gaining a lot of experience; and waiting to be shipped back to the U.S. at camp right outside of Bordeaux, France.
<b>BOX-FOLDER</b> OVZ354/1	Correspondence, 1917-1919 1 folder MS01 continued
<b>BOX-FOLDER</b> MSS2847/4	Correspondence, September 17, 1918 1 folder MS02: Letter from Morris' uncle, Jefferson Randolph Kean, to veteran's mother, Pattie Kean Morris, dated 09/17/1918. Letter includes Kean on inspection trip and sightseeing on special train with commanding general throughout France; and status of Morris in the military.
<b>BOX-FOLDER</b> MSS2847/5	Diaries and journals, 1917-1919 1 folder MS03: Morris' record of assignments throughout military service during World War I.
<b>Series II: Photographs</b>	
<b>BOX-FOLDER</b> MSS2847/6	Original photographic prints, 1917-1919 1 folder PH01-PH42: Photographs include: Morris and servicemen at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and at an engineer base in France; handling rifles; tug of war matches; marching; riding horses; playing instruments; bow and arrow range; and digging ditches.
<b>BOX-FOLDER</b> MSS2847/7	Duplicates, 1917-1919 1 folder PH43-PH44: Duplicate prints of PH07.
<b>Series III: Computer File</b>	
<b>BOX</b> CDDVD485	Electronic File of Manuscript, September 16, 2016 1 CD <b>ID:</b> AFC2001/001/105979 CF01

### Series III: Computer File

#### Container

#### Contents

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CF01: Contains transcribed correspondence (MS01-MS02) and diary (MS03) in MS Word format.