

**Mary Boyle O'Reilly Papers**  
**1870s-1937 (bulk 1913-1917)**

**MS.2003.045**



**Archives and Manuscripts Department**

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## Table of Contents

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<u>Summary Information</u> .....	3
<u>Administrative Information</u> .....	4
<u>Biographical note</u> .....	5
<u>Scope and Contents note</u> .....	7
<u>Arrangement note</u> .....	7
<u>Collection Inventory</u> .....	8
<u>Series I: Correspondence</u> .....	8
<u>Series II: Family photographs</u> .....	8
<u>Series III: Poetry</u> .....	8
<u>Series IV: Travels</u> .....	8
<u>Series V: Typescripts</u> .....	9

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## Summary Information

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<b>Library Unit</b>	Archives and Manuscripts Department
<b>Creator - Author</b>	O'Reilly, Mary Boyle, 1873-1939
<b>Title</b>	Mary Boyle O'Reilly papers
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	Bulk, 1913-1917
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1870-1937
<b>Extent</b>	0.5 Linear feet (2 boxes)
<b>Location note</b>	Level 2, aisle 17, bay 6, shelf 1
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	The Mary Boyle O'Reilly papers document her work as a journalist and political activist, particularly during World War I. They include O'Reilly's correspondence from Europe during the war, her typescripts, a small series of individually typed or handwritten poems, many with inscriptions from O'Reilly's friends, and family photographs.

### Preferred Citation note

Identification of item, Box number, Folder number, Mary Boyle O'Reilly papers, MS.2003.045, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Information**

Processed by Lynn Moulton, 2016 February. This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit.

### **Restrictions on access**

Collection contains some original materials too fragile to handle. Access copies have been provided for most, but the correspondence series is closed pending conservation. Box 1 contains open materials. Box 2 contains fragile materials and is closed.

### **Provenance**

Because the current accessioning system was not used until January 1986, it is not possible to know exactly the dates of acquisition of materials received before that time.

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## Biographical note

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Mary Boyle O'Reilly was born on May 18, 1873 in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Her father, John Boyle O'Reilly, was a noted poet and Irish nationalist, and her mother, Mary Smiley (Murphy) O'Reilly, was a journalist. O'Reilly attended public school in Charlestown, and, later, the Sacred Heart Convent in Providence, Rhode Island.

In 1901, she opened the Guild of Saint Elizabeth, a settlement house, in Boston's South End with three other women and became heavily involved in the charitable life of the city of Boston. She served in various capacities with the Boston Public Library, The Women's Educational Union, The Tuberculosis Society, and The State Conference of Charities. She was appointed as a member of the Massachusetts Prison Commission in 1906, by Governor Guild, and proposed many reforms to the way that Massachusetts prisons were run. Her interest in housing reform led her to investigate and expose the abuses in New England's "baby farms," or homes fostering children in exchange for payment. On resigning from the Prison Commission in 1911, O'Reilly became a trustee of the Children's Institutions in Boston, and a popular writer and lecturer on topics in social work and sociology, with work published in *Harper's Magazine* and *The Boston Globe*. Her investigative reporting included an exposé of the working conditions of children in the canning industry in New York state.

In 1913, O'Reilly accepted a position as foreign correspondent for the Newspaper Enterprise Association, and was placed in charge of the London office. As war threatened in Europe, she travelled undercover to report from the continent. She was the first American journalist in Belgium and witnessed the burning of Louvain. She was subsequently held prisoner by the Germans. After her release, she remained in Europe and was present in Paris during the Battle of the Marne, and at Calais during the Battle of Loos. She returned to Belgium to work with refugees and also spent a number of months of 1915 in Warsaw doing relief work as people fled Poland.

O'Reilly returned to the United States in 1917, and went on a speaking tour of the country on the topic of her war experience. She settled back in the Boston area, campaigned with her uncle, John R. Murphy, on his unsuccessful mayoral campaign, built a small stone cottage in Auburndale as a tribute to her father, and continued writing until her death from a heart attack at the age of 66, on October 22, 1939.

### Sources

Philpott, A.J. "Rich Life Devoted to Aiding Afflicted." *Daily Boston Globe*, October 22, 1939.

O'Reilly, Mary Boyle. "Albert of Belgium, 'Citizen-Monarch,' Will be Last King in Europe, Said Another King to Mary Boyle O'Reilly." *Boston Daily Globe*, October 5, 1919.

"Mary Boyle O'Reilly Dead, Daughter of Irish Patriot." *Daily Boston Globe*, October 22, 1939.

"Mary B. O'Reilly, Writer, 66, Is Dead." *The New York Times*, October 22, 1939.

“O’Reilly, Mary Boyle, 1873 – 1939.” Finding Aid at the Boston Public Library Archival and Manuscript Finding Aid Database, Boston, Massachusetts.

“Woman Tells of Life Back of the Front.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 17, 1918.

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## Scope and Contents note

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The Mary Boyle O'Reilly papers document her work as a journalist and political activist, particularly during World War I. They include O'Reilly's correspondence from Europe during the war, the bulk of which relates to her journalistic work. A large portion is addressed to "the Chief," Sam T. Hughes, editor in chief at Newspaper Enterprise Associates of America, a syndicate that supplied content to newspapers across the United States. These letters frequently include portions of her articles. The collection also includes O'Reilly's typescripts. The bulk of these are short writings on her experiences during the war. There are indications that some may have been written at the time but others retrospectively; while most works are dated between 1914 and 1917, some contain the annotations "memories" or "verify date." Her writings also include a 1909 article on the 1834 Ursuline convent burning in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and a few longer pieces on politics in Europe, dating from the 1930s. A small series of individually typed or handwritten poems, many with inscriptions from O'Reilly's friends, and childhood photographs of her father, sisters, and birth home round out the collection. Materials include typescripts, photographs (including cabinet cards and photomechanical prints), correspondence, and a postcard.

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## Arrangement note

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Arranged into five series: Series I: Correspondence, Series II: Family photographs, Series III: Poetry, Series IV: Travels, and Series V: Typescripts.

# Collection Inventory

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## Series I: Correspondence, 1914-1921

### Restrictions on access

Series is closed pending conservation of fragile materials.

1914-1917, 1921	Box 2	Folder 1-6
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## Series II: Family photographs, 1870s-1890s

1870s-1890s	Box 1	Folder 1
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## Series III: Poetry, 1914-1918

Burr, Amelia Josephine, "Triste Noel" and "The Great Victory", 1914, 1918	Box 1	Folder 2
Casement, Roger, "Lost Youth", 1916	Box 1	Folder 3
Pearse, Padraic, "Ideal", 1916	Box 1	Folder 4
Smith, Joseph, "To A. Shuman", 1917 December 29	Box 1	Folder 5
Unattributed, "July 1916" and "Soldier Songs", 1916	Box 1	Folder 5

## Series IV: Travels, 1913, 1915

Middle East trip postcard and photograph, 1913	Box 1	Folder 7
French travel permits, 1915	Box 1	Folder 8

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## Series V: Typescripts, 1909-1937

### Subseries A: By O'Reilly, 1909-1937

"Burning of the Convent", 1909 August 9

Box 1

Folder 9

Investigation into the meat canneries, press releases, circa 1912

Box 1

Folder 10

Box 2

Folder 7

#### Restrictions on access

Box 2, folder 7 is closed permanently.

War writings, 1914-1917

Box 1

Folder 11-13

Box 2

Folder 8-11

#### Restrictions on access

Box 2, folders 8-11 are closed permanently.

"Will Germany Remain Republican?", after 1919

Box 1

Folder 14

Propaganda during World War I, circa 1934

Box 1

Folder 15

Box 2

Folder 12

#### Restrictions on access

Box 2, folder 12 is closed permanently.

"Two Edwards and Their Ancestry", 1937

Box 1

Folder 16

Box 2

Folder 13

#### Restrictions on access

Box 2, folder 13 is closed permanently.

**Subseries B: By Others, after 1918**

"Where are the Romanoffs?" by Ivan Ore, after 1918

Box 1

Folder 17