



Robert E. Dillon Papers

1943-1985

2 boxes (1 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 635

Collection overview

A working class native of Ware, Mass., Robert E. Dillon was a student at Massachusetts State College when he was drafted into the Army in 1943. After his induction at Fort Devens, Mass., and training for the Quartermaster Corps in Virginia and California, Dillon was assigned to duty as a mechanic and driver with the First Service Command. Stationed at Rest Camps number 5 and 6 in Khanspur, India (now Pakistan), Dillon's company maintained the trucks and other vehicles used to carry supplies over the Himalayas to Chinese Nationalist forces. After he left the service in February 1946, having earned promotion to T/5, Dillon concluded his studies at UMass Amherst on the GI Bill and earned a doctorate in Marketing from Ohio State. He taught at the University of Cincinnati for many years until his death in 1985.

The Dillon Papers consist of 178 letters written by Dillon to his family during his service in World War II, along with several written to him and an assortment of documents and ephemera. Beginning with basic training, the letters provide an essentially comprehensive account of Dillon's military experience and interesting insight into a relatively quiet, but sparsely documented theater of war.

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Background on Robert E. Dillon

The youngest of seven children born to Henry (1877-1935) and Mary E. Dillon (1877-1968), born on August 25, 1922, Robert Edward Dillon was raised in the mill town of Ware, Massachusetts. Ambitious and capable as a student, he attended Massachusetts State College for two years before being inducted into the military in 1943.

Following basic training at Camp Lee, Virginia, Dillon was accepted into Officers Training School and sent across country to Pittsburg, California, to prepare for the Quartermaster Corps. Once arriving there, however, he discovered that all the OTS was overenrolled and after being required to re-interview for a berth, he was

rejected and ordered to train to become a mechanic. Frustrated with his changing fate, Dillon was never enthusiastic about spending time around cars and trucks, and despite all his training, he never considered himself a very good mechanic. Perhaps not coincidentally, he never advanced beyond the rank of corporal in the military.

Dillon was shipped overseas in January 1944, and after a brief period in North Africa, was ordered to the Punjab Region of what was then British India. Stationed for at least some of his time in service at Service Company #6 in Khanspur, now in Pakistan, he worked to repair and service trucks transporting supplies over the Himalayas to support operations by Nationalist forces in China.



Robert E. Dillon, ca.1944

With the war's end, Dillon left behind his mechanical training and used some of his savings and the GI Bill to complete his undergraduate education at the University of Massachusetts. He went on to earn a doctorate in marketing from the School of Business at Ohio State University, later serving on faculty at the University of Cincinnati until 1985, when he succumbed to lung cancer.

Scope of collection

The Dillon collection contains 178 letters (12 in V-mail format), 4 postcards, 4 telegrams, 4 photographs, and many miscellaneous souvenirs from Dillon's time in India during the Second World War. The letters can be grouped into three periods documenting Dillon's experience in the war:

March to December 1943, when Dillon was in training in the United States
late December 1943 to May 1945, while Dillon was in India. These letters are heavily censored and consist mainly of reassurances that he is doing well

May 1945 to February 1946. These letters are less heavily censored and describe some of Dillon's experiences in India as well as his anticipation of returning home.

Almost all of the letters are written by Dillon and addressed to his family and friends, although a few are from his older brother, Henry, who was also in the army serving in the European theater. Dillon kept a number of small souvenirs from his time in the service, offering a sometimes colorful sense of his experience, including a V-E Day menu from a meal served in the Punjab, a train ticket from India, ration cards, newspaper clippings, and military orders.

Most of the correspondence from Dillon to his family consists of small talk, inquiries about life at home, requests for money or supplies, and apologies for not writing more often -- even though he writes several times a week. Perhaps out of self-censorship, there is very little information regarding Dillon's specific duties while at camp, although he mentions how army life is a lot of sitting around and can get monotonous. Dillon's more enthusiastic letters are those describing new places he visits and the touring around he does with occasional freedom. It is clear that he had not strayed far from Ware as a child, because even the west coast

of California is fascinating to him. In letters to his mother, Min, he sends home pressed flowers and sand glued to paper as evidence that he has been across the country.

Inventory

Correspondence	1943-1946	0.5 lin. feet
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1943 Mar	Box 1: 1
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1943 Apr-May	Box 1: 2
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1943 June-July	Box 1: 3
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1943 Aug-Sept	Box 1: 4
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1943 Oct	Box 1: 5
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1943 Nov 3-19	Box 1: 6
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1943 Nov 22-29	Box 1: 7
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1943 Dec	Box 1: 8
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1944 Jan-Feb	Box 1: 9
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1944 Mar	Box 1: 10
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1944 Apr	Box 1: 11
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1944 May	Box 1: 12
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1944 June-July	Box 1: 13
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1944 Aug	Box 1: 14
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1944 Nov	Box 1: 15
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1944 Dec	Box 1: 16
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1944 Sept-Oct	Box 1: 17
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 Jan	Box 1: 18
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 Feb	Box 1: 19
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 Mar	Box 1: 20
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 Apr	Box 1: 21
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 May	Box 1: 22
<i>Contents:</i> Includes menu for VE Day dinner, served at US Army Rest Camp #6, Khanspur, India.		
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 June	Box 1: 23
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 July	Box 1: 24
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 Aug	Box 1: 25
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 Sept	Box 1: 26
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 Oct-Nov	Box 1: 27
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1945 Dec	Box 1: 28
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1946 Jan	Box 1: 29
Dillon, Robert E. Letters	1946 Feb	Box 1: 30
Identification Cards	1942-1946	Box 1: 31
Immunization Register	1943-1970	Box 1: 32
Label: Cigar	1943-1946	Box 1: 33
Label: Tax Free	1943-1946	Box 1: 34
Newspaper Clippings	1943-1945	Box 1: 35
Photographs	1940-1985	Box 1: 36
Ration Cards	1944-1945	Box 1: 37
Ticket: Railway from Howrah to Baidyabati	1945	Box 1: 38
Ticket: Weight machine	1945 Jan 24	Box 1: 39
U.S. Army Headquarters Military Orders	1943-1946	Box 1: 40

Realia	1943-1946	0.5 lin. feet
Buttons: U.S. Army button with eagle emblem	ca.1945	1 item

Buttons: "U.S." Army lapel insignia for Class A uniform	ca.1945	1 item	Box 2
Buttons: U.S. Army Quartermaster lapel pin (eagle over crossed sword and key)	ca.1945	1 item	Box 2
Dogtags	1943	3 items	Box 2
Medals: World War II Army Good Conduct Medal (with service ribbon)	ca.1945	2 items	Box 2
Medals: World War II Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal (with 2 service ribbons)	ca.1945	3 items	Box 2
Medal: World War II Victory Medal (with 2 service ribbons)	ca.1945	3 items	Box 2
Uniform patches: China-Burma-India Theater uniform patch	ca.1943	2 items	Box 2
Uniform patches: Discharge Insignia	ca.1945	1 item	Box 2
Uniform patches: hand-made name patch in English and Chinese	ca.1943	1 item	Box 2
Uniform patches: Service Patch (single stripe for three years' service)	ca.1945	1 item	Box 2
Uniform patches: Service Patch (four stripes for each six months' service overseas)	ca.1945	1 item	Box 2
Uniform patches: Supply of Services uniform patch	ca.1943	2 items	Box 2

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Edward O'Day, Sept. 2009 (2009-188).

Processing Information

Processed by Sarah Goldstein, Oct. 2009.

Language:

English

Acknowledgments

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Search terms

Subjects

- California--Description and travel.
- Pakistan--Description and travel.
- University of Massachusetts Amherst--Alumni.
- World War, 1939-1945.

Contributors

- Dillon, Robert E. **[main entry]**
- Dillon, Robert E.

Genres and formats

- Letters (Correspondence).
- Menus.
- Photographs.

Link to similar SCUA collections

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