

# **Florence Davis papers**

**Ms. Coll. 887**

**Finding aid prepared by Kelin Baldrige (cataloged by Nancy Shawcross).**

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Last updated on October 31, 2016.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2016 October 27

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
<b>Creator</b>	Davis, Florence, 1909-
<b>Title</b>	Florence Davis papers
<b>Call number</b>	Ms. Coll. 887
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1935-1946
<b>Extent</b>	0.4 linear feet (1 box)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	Florence Davis (born 1909) was the wife of Russell Deaner (1905-1935) and Worth L. Davis and the mother of Forrest (1928-2001). These papers document her life, largely through correspondence with her family and friends and through the educational papers of her son.

**Cite as:**

Florence Davis papers, 1935-1946, Ms. Coll. 887, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

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## Biography/History

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Florence Davis was born Florence Z. Laidacker in 1909, the daughter of Martin Luther and Virginia Williams Laidacker. She was raised in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania with her siblings Earl, Wilbur, Delae, Clinton, and Neva. On January 19, 1925, Florence married Russell Deaner in Hagerstown, Maryland. Their son, Forrest, was born on July 3, 1928, in Nescopeck, Pennsylvania. On March 13, 1935, at the age of 29, Russell died of complications (acute myocarditis) after contracting scarlet fever. Florence married Worth L. Davis in 1939.

Because of Florence's widow status, Forrest was admitted to Girard College, a boarding school for poor, orphaned or fatherless boys. Forrest was admitted in 1937, as a third grader, and graduated in 1946. Following his graduation, he entered California State Polytechnic College as an Ornamental Horticulture major, and in 1950, transferred to the College's Agricultural Journalism Program, from which he graduated in 1953. He worked as an advertising salesman for the *Santa Maria Times* daily newspaper. He went on to found the Solano County native plant society chapter, the Willis Linn Jepson Chapter. Forrest married Norma in 1950 and after his death in 2001, she founded the Forrest Deaner Native Plant Botanic Garden, which is one of the leading collections of native plants in California.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection contains material documenting Florence Davis' life, largely through correspondence with her family and friends and through the educational papers of her son Forrest Deaner. The collection is arranged in three series: I. Girard College correspondence, II. Girard College report cards, and III. Personal and family correspondence. The Girard College correspondence includes both official letters and "circulars" from Girard College administration and personal letters from Forrest Deaner to his mother. Over the years, Forrest's letters evolve from homesick notes to letters with news about friends and school life. The official letters from the administrators of Girard College include information relating to school functions, holiday dates and travel information, and health and safety notices. The Girard College report cards for Forrest date from 1937 to 1946 detail both his academic achievements and his conduct within the households in which he resided during his time there. The final series in this collection contains personal and family correspondence of Florence Davis. There are a few letters addressed to Forrest and her second husband, Worth L. Davis, but, by and large, these letters were sent to Florence. The letters include discussions of family and friends as well as business information. One photograph is present in the collection, found in an envelope that anonymously identifies the subject as Forrest Deaner, alongside a short biographical note about Deaner. Researchers will find letters to Florence from her mother (Virginia Williams Laidacker), sister (Neva), and son; all of which indicate a close family. Letters from Forrest fondly mention fishing with his stepfather, "Worth."

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## Administrative Information

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

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### **Access Restrictions**

This collection is open for research use.

### **Use Restrictions**

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### **Source of Acquisition**

Sold by Mrs. Hudson's Fine Books and Paper (Chelsea, N. Y.), 2012.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **CORPORATE NAME(S)**

- Girard College.

### **FORM/GENRE(S)**

- Correspondence
- School records

### **GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)**

- Philadelphia (Pa.)

### **PERSONAL NAME(S)**

- Deaner, Forrest

**SUBJECT(S)**

- Education
- Families
- Report cards

## Collection Inventory

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### **I. GIRARD COLLEGE CORRESPONDENCE (INCLUDES OFFICIAL LETTERS AND PERSONAL LETTERS FROM FORREST TO HIS MOTHER FLORENCE), 1936-1942.**

	Box	Folder
1936-1937.	1	1
1938 January-September.	1	2
1938 September-December.	1	3
1939 January-March.	1	4
1939 April-September.	1	5
1939 October-December.	1	6
1940 January-March.	1	7
1940 April-August.	1	8
1940 September-December.	1	9
1941 January-September.	1	10
1941 October-December.	1	11
1942.	1	12

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## II. GIRARD COLLEGE REPORT CARDS FOR FORREST DEANER, 1936-1946.

	Box	Folder
1936-1938.	1	13
1939-1940.	1	14
1941-1942.	1	15
1943-1944.	1	16
1945-1946.	1	17

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## III. PERSONAL AND FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE.

	Box	Folder
H. Glad Hemingsway letters to and/or copying Florence, 1939.	1	18
Ida, letters to Florence, 1938-1939.	1	19
"Mother" (Virginia Williams Laidacker), letters to Florence, 1935-1937.	1	20
Neva (sister), letters to Florence, 1935-1940.	1	21
Putnam family (Janice and Albert), letters to Florence, 1940-1941.	1	22
Friends and family, letters to Florence, 1935-1941.	1	23
Forrest Deaner, letters to Florence, undated.	1	26
Forrest Deaner, letters to and from family and friends, 1937-1941.	1	24

Worth Davis, letters to, regarding employment and payment of dues to the Fraternal Order of Eagles, 1939.	1	25
Envelopes, 1939-1946.	1	
Unidentified letters (possibly one from sister Delae) and newspaper clippings regarding weddings and funeral, 1938-1939, undated.	1	28