

Emily Newell Blair Papers, 1785-1972



*Guide to the Scholarly Resources
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Note to Researchers

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Introduction

Emily Newell Blair, (1877-1951) was a suffragist, feminist, Democratic party official, and writer. Born in Joplin, Missouri, the oldest daughter of James Patton and Ann Cynthia Gray Newell, she was educated at the Woman's College of Baltimore (later Goucher College) and the University of Missouri but never graduated for economic reasons. In 1900 she married native Missourian Harry Wallace Blair, a graduate of the Columbia Law School (now George Washington University). During the early days of their marriage, Harry established a law practice in Carthage, Missouri, while Emily tended house, reared their two children Harriet and Newell, volunteered in civic work, and campaigned with her husband for local politicians. In 1909, at her husband's urging, she sold her first story, "Letters of a Contented Housewife," to *Cosmopolitan* and established herself as a writer, hiring household help with the money she earned to free herself for further writing.

During the last decade of the woman suffrage campaign, Blair joined the Missouri Equal Suffrage Association and became the first editor of the *Missouri Woman*, a monthly suffrage magazine endorsed by the Parent-Teacher Association and Federation of Women's Clubs. While her husband served in World War I as a YMCA secretary with the 308th Infantry, Emily rose to national prominence as a feminist through her appointment as vice chair of the Missouri Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense. There she secured a position on the council's Woman's Committee headed by Anna Howard Shaw. Working in the press department under Ida Tarbell and Hannah Patterson, Blair produced the "Official History of the Woman's Committee, Council of National Defense" (1920), which detailed women's wartime activities and methods of organization while emphasizing their potential

for political power and the government roles possible with the achievement of woman suffrage. It was this attitude on Blair's part that led her to reject the League of Women Voters (which she had helped found) on the grounds that nonpartisanship was an ineffective use of voting power.

Returning to Missouri with her husband, who had reestablished his law practice in Joplin, Emily joined the Democratic party with the intention of working for political power for women from within the system. She was quickly elected to represent Missouri on the National Committee and was then chosen national vice chair with the responsibility of organizing women voters and women's activities. Over the next ten years she rose to first vice president, organized over two thousand Democratic Women's Clubs, helped found the Women's National Democratic Club, established regional training programs for women party workers, and prepared a variety of publications, including a history of the party. Much of this work necessitated travel away from home, and Emily corresponded frequently with her family, particularly with her daughter Harriet who attended Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, in the 1920s.

During the 1930s, Blair focused her energy on her writing and on her 1935 appointment to the Consumer's Advisory Board under the National Industrial Act. In 1937 she wrote her autobiography, *Bridging Two Eras* (published in 1999). Emily accepted her last public appointment in 1942, serving as chief of the women's interest section of the war department's public relations bureau. Two years later she was incapacitated by a stroke and died in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1951.

In addition to a legacy of feminism and political involvement, Emily Newell Blair also left a rich heritage of pioneer ancestry through the McDowell family of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. Colonel Alexander

McDowell was a Revolutionary War hero born in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, in 1760. The seventh child of William and Mary Maxwell McDowell of Pennsylvania, he was also the grandson of William McDowell, who was born in Scotland (ca. 1680), migrated to Northern Ireland during the persecutions, and emigrated to America (ca. 1715). Alexander married Philadelphian Sarah Parker in 1795, moving about one year later to French Creek at Franklin in Venango County, Pennsylvania. From that time until Alexander's death in 1816, they kept in close touch with the family members that they had left in the eastern part of the state, particularly Alexander's brothers. Sarah remained in Franklin until her death in 1865.

The *Emily Newell Blair Papers, 1785-1972* consist of personal, professional, and family correspondence, published and unpublished writings about and by Blair, as well as diaries, speeches, personal and family memorabilia, and clippings. Family materials primarily include papers of Blair's husband, Harry Wallace Blair; her daughter, Harriet Blair; her parents, James Patton and Anna Gray Newell and her McDowell family ancestors of Pennsylvania, (ca. 1785-1852).

The collection is arranged by document type, then by family member, then chronologically within four series. **Series I, Correspondence**, is divided into three subseries: Emily Newell Correspondence, Emily Newell Blair Correspondence, and Family Correspondence. **Series II, Writings**, is divided into seven subseries, which consist of writings about Emily Newell Blair and writings by Emily Newell Blair, including personal writings and diaries, speeches, published articles, typescripts of nonfiction, typescripts of fiction, and typescripts of her autobiography. **Series III, Memorabilia**, is divided into personal and family materials. **Series IV, Clippings**, is arranged alphabetically by subject, and then chronologically.

This collection is particularly valuable for research in the history of women and the family during the early twentieth century. It provides materials that reveal intersections in women's roles in their public and private spheres. The issues of feminism and women's suffrage are prominent, not only in Emily Newell Blair's public experience as an author and a woman in politics, but also in her private roles as wife and mother. In addition, these papers trace the emergence of women as politicians within the Democratic party and the creation of women's clubs and committees for educating them and serving their needs as voters.

The McDowell family materials chronicle pioneer life on the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania frontier from the perspective of a Scots-Irish American family. This correspondence illustrates not only the wilderness experience but also relationships between family members separated by migration.

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Series I: Correspondence

Subseries I: Emily Newell Correspondence

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- 1 Emily Newell correspondence, 1890-
September 1894, especially sibling materials
- 2 —, October 1894-1895
- 3 —, 1896-1899
- 4 —, 1900

Subseries II: Emily Newell Blair Correspondence

- 5 Emily Newell Blair correspondence, 1901-
July 1903
- 6 —, September-December 1903
- 7 —, January-March 22, 1904
- 8 —, March 25-April 1904, especially from
Harry W. Blair
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Harry Blair

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- 10 —, September 1904-1905, especially from Harry Blair
- 11 —, 1906-January 1909, especially from Harry Blair
- 12 —, February-May 1909, especially from Harry Blair and Effie Blair Wall
- 13 —, June-August 1909
- 14 —, September 1909-1910
- 15 —, 1912-1914, 1916, 1919-1920, and 1922-1925, especially concerning Alexander McDowell ancestry and other genealogical correspondence
- 16 —, 1926-1927, especially concerning the Women's National Democratic Club
- 17 —, 1928-1931, especially concerning the Democratic National Convention
- 18 —, 1932-1933, especially concerning the 1932 presidential election and the Democratic National Campaign Committee

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- 19 —, 1934-1935
- 20 —, January-March 4, 1935, primarily congratulatory letters for appointment to Consumer Advisory Board
- 21 —, March 5-December 1935, primarily congratulatory letters
- 22 —, 1936-1951
- 23 —, with Harriet Blair, 1920-1929
- 24 —, with Harriet Blair, ca. 1920s
- 25 —, with Cordell Hull, 1922-1933 and undated
- 26 —, with Francis Parkinson Keyes (Mrs. Henry Wilder), 1925-1932 and undated
- 27 —, with Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, 1924-1938 and undated.
- 28 —, undated
- 29 —, undated
- 30 —, undated

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31 —, undated

32 —, undated

Subseries III: Family Correspondence

- 33 Family correspondence, consisting of
correspondence from Alexander McDowell to
various individuals, 1799-1815
correspondence to Alexander McDowell from John
Banks (brother-in-law?), 1797-1805
correspondence to Alexander McDowell from James
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- 34 —, consisting of
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McDowell (brother), 1798-1812
correspondence to Alexander McDowell from John
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- 35 —, consisting of
correspondence to Alexander McDowell from Nancy
McDowell (sister-in-law), 1802
correspondence to Alexander McDowell from Nathan
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McDowell (brother), 1800-1813
correspondence to Alexander McDowell from Thomas
McDowell (brother), 1800-1814

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- 36 —, consisting of
correspondence to Alexander McDowell from Rich
Palmer (brother-in-law?), 1800-1811
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- 37 —, consisting of
correspondence to Alexander McDowell from various
correspondents, 1799-1815
correspondence to John McDowell from various
correspondents, 1811-1836
correspondence to Sally McDowell, 1812-1814
- 38 —, consisting of correspondence to Sarah
McDowell, 1816-1852
- 39 —, consisting of correspondence to Thomas
McDowell, 1826-1854
- 40 —, James Patton Newell, 1862-1898
- 41 —, relating to the European trip of Anna Gray
Newell, Ella Newell and Julia Porter, 1906-1907
and undated.
- 42 —, Harry Blair, 1894, 1903-1909
- 43 —, Harry Blair, 1916-1926, and ca. 1920s,
especially with his children

Folder**No.**

- 44 —, Harry Blair, ca. 1918, and World War I scrapbook, containing correspondence
- 45 —, 1934-1958 and undated, including 1936 and 1937 correspondence with Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 1936 letter concerning Blair's resignation as Assistant Attorney General, and 1946 and 1950 correspondence with Harry S. Truman
- 46 —, Harriet Blair, 1907-1909, 1924 and 1950
- 47 —, various family members, 1858, 1927, 1944, 1949 and undated

Series II: Writings**Subseries I: Writings about Emily Newell Blair**

- 48 Biographical sketches and articles. undated

Subseries II: Personal Writings by Emily Newell Blair

- 49 Emily Newell Blair's reminiscence of her interview with Woodrow Wilson, undated
- 50 Diary of Emily Newell Blair, 1903
- 51 —, 1922

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Subseries III: Speeches by Emily Newell Blair

- 52 "Advance of Democratic Women," undated
"The Advertiser's Opportunity," Chicago, 12 June 1935
Business and Professional Clubs, Saratoga Springs,
New York, 25-26 May 1935
"The Campaign," March 1928
"Child and the Home," Swampscott, Mass.,
27 June 1935
"Consumer's Advisory Board," League of Women
Voters, Washington Convention, 29 May 1935
- 53 "Consumer Opportunities," Richmond, Virginia,
2 April 1935
"The Consumer's Stake in the New NRA," Radio
speech, 18 June 1935
"Creating Home Backgrounds"
- 54 "Guns of United States Army," drafts and notes,
undated
- 55 "Housing," F.H.A. Radio speech,
20 March 1935
"Housing Standards," ca. 1935
"Merchandising from the Point of View of the
Consumer," Chicago, 12 June 1935
"Moral Rearmament, As It Is Working Out Abroad,"
Crescent Hill Women's Club, Louisville,
Kentucky, 10 February 1939

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- 56 Statement before the Senate Finance Committee
Hearing on the National Recovery
Administration, March and April 1935
“Tariff,” World Peace Foundation, 15 May 1935
“What Women May Do with the Ballot,” Women’s
Luncheon Club, 28 August 1922
- 57 Miscellaneous speeches, undated

Subseries IV: Published Articles by Emily Newell Blair

- 58 “Americans We Like: Florence E. Allen,” *The
Nation*, 7 December 1927
“Another Job for the Supersalesman,” *The
Independent*, 10 March 1928
“Are Women a Failure in Politics?” *Harpers
Magazine*, October 1925
“Are Women Counting in Politics?” *Saturday
Evening Post*, 18 July 1925
“At the End of the Rainbow,” *The Household
Magazine*, June 1928
“Because in War You Never Know What
You Are Fighting For,”
Why Wars Must Cease, 1935
“Boring from within: An Answer to ‘The
Lady and the Tiger,’ ” *The Woman
Citizen*, July 1927
“The Congress and the Country,” *The
Woman Citizen*, September 1926

Folder

No.

- 58 "The College Woman on the Farm," *The Country Gentleman*, July 1927
"Democratic Women March On," Women's Division, Democratic National Committee, 1945
- 59 "Driving Through," *The Country Gentleman*, January 1928
"Faith That Conquers Where Reason Fails," *Forum and Century*, November 1938
"How Honest is the Oxford Group?" *Liberty*, August 1938
"How Magazines Are Raising the Standards of Living," *The Magazine Advertiser*, July 1927
"How to Get into Politics," *Democratic Digest*, November 1937
"I Prepare to Face Fifty," *Harpers Magazine*, September 1926
"The Job of a National Committee Woman," *Woman's Democratic News*, October 1927
"Letters of a Contented Housewife," *Cosmopolitan*, ca. 1909
"Living Beyond Our Means," *Garard Review*, 1927
"Looking Forward," *The Bulletin*, Women's National Democratic Club, June 1928
- 60 "The Magnificent Adventure: Marriage," *Red Book*, January 1928

Folder

No.

- 60 "Many Roads Lead Women into Politics," *New York Times Magazine*, October 1928
- "Margotry," *Forum*, February 1928
- "May Day," *Century*, May 1928
- "May the Best Man Win," *Good Housekeeping*, 1928
- "Meat without Manners," *Forum*, March 1928
- "Men in Politics as a Woman Sees Them,"
Harpers Magazine, May 1926
- "The Mob," *Liberty*, 14 September 1935
- "Neither Wet nor Dry: How the Non-Combatants
Feel about It," *Century*, October 1928
- "A New Role for the Donkey: In Which He Might
Win Leadership and Gain Power,"
Century, May 1928
- "No Answer—Dusty or Otherwise," *Forum*,
December 1927
- "The Novel with a Purpose," *Creative Reading*,
1927
- "Now Feminism Leads Back to the Home,"
New York Times Magazine, 7 December 1930
- "Opportunity Rouses the Democrats," *Review of
Reviews*, December 1930
- Organization Primer, Democratic National
Committee, undated
- "The Oxford Group Challenges America," *Good
Housekeeping*, October 1936
- "A Plan of Action," *Lecture Recorder*, April 1936
- "Platforms for Women," *The Green Book*, undated
- "Political Platforms," *The Outlook*, 14 March 1928

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- 60 "The Professional Point of View," *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1927
- "Realistic Detail in the Novel," *Creative Reading*, May 1928
- "Southwest Missouri Women Organize for War Work," *The Missouri Woman*, February 1918
- "This Business of Wifehood," *Harpers Magazine*, April 1926
- "The United States Council of National Defense," reprinted from *Current History Magazine*, May 1919
- 61 "What Is Non-Partisanship?" *The Woman Citizen*, 7 March 1925
- "What Shall We Do with It?" *The Green Book Magazine*, undated
- "Where the Money Comes From," *The Green Book Magazine*, undated
- "Why Clubs for Women?" *Forum*, March 1927
- "Why I Prefer to Live in a Small Town," *Bookman*, January 1928
- "Why I Sent My Children Away to School," *Harpers Magazine*, undated
- "Why New Deal Washington Fascinates Women," *Liberty*, 8 December 1934
- "Why We Live Beyond Our Means," *Forum*, June 1927
- "Wives in Politics," *Forum*, October 1927
- "Woman Planks in the Platform," *The Green Book Magazine*, undated

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- 61 Woman's Committee, United States Council of National Defense, Interpretative Report, April 1917-Feb. 1919, Washington Printing Office, 1920
 "Women Are Organized on Nationwide Scale,"
Democratic Digest, undated
 Book reviews in *Good Housekeeping*

**Subseries V: Typescripts of
 Nonfiction by Emily Newell Blair**

- 62 Typescripts of nonfiction, undated, consisting of
 "Are We Scrapping Hospitality?"
 "Buying for a Family"
 "Capitalizing the Home"
 Capper story
 "Cinderella Goes to Washington"
 Consumer news article
 "The Cost"
 "Dilemma of the Pacifist"
 "Every Tourist an Ambassador"
 "The First Person Story"
- 63 —, undated, consisting of
 "Let's Think It Through"
 "Letters to My Daughter"
 "My Most Unforgettable Character"
 "My Spartan Mother"
 "A New Idea in Education"
 "The Old Complex and the New Compound"

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- 63 "An Open Letter to Pacifists"
"An Opportunity for Young Writers"
- 64 —, undated, consisting of
"Paying Election Debts"
"Poor Mr. Hoover"
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"Remarkable Alexandria"
"Those Who Hate Housework"
"The Tower of Babble"
"Voters' Challenge to the Democratic Party"
"What's the Matter with Smalltown?"
"When Is Child Labor Not Child Labor?"
"Why Country Women Should Go into Politics"
"Why I Like Old Houses"
"A Woman's Version of a Prize Fight"
"Women, Old Age, and Dress"

**Subseries VI: Typescripts
of Fiction by Emily Newell Blair**

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69 Typescripts of fiction, untitled and undated
- 70-
71 —, undated
- 72-
73 —, undated

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74 —, including “The Public Letter Writer,” undated

75-

77 —, undated

**Subseries VII: Typescripts of Autobiographies by
Emily Newell Blair**

78 Autobiography, Book 1, 1877-1904

79 —, Book II, 1904-1937

80-

97 —, draft typescripts, undated. (These materials have been maintained as received and consist primarily of preliminary materials for the preparation of Blair’s autobiography.)

Series III: Memorabilia

Subseries I: Emily Newell Blair Memorabilia

98 Bills and receipts, 1890s-1920s and Democratic Party materials, 1922

99 Democratic Party materials, 1922-1940 and undated

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- 100 Genealogy files, including Daughters of the American Revolution application materials, correspondence and notes, 1878-1917 and undated
- 101 Genealogy files, including correspondence and notes, 1892 sketch of the Reverend Blackleach Burritt, and materials on the Stratford families, 1892-1912 and undated
- 102 —, notes, undated
- 103 —, notes, undated
- 104 —, undated
- 105 Invitations, 1922-1940 and undated
- 106 *The Meddybemps Letters* by Stephen A. D. Smith, autographed by the author, ca. 1904
- 107 Miscellaneous, including recipes, passport, itineraries, lists, and reprints of Elizabeth Cady Stanton addresses, 1892-1949 and undated
- 108 Programs, 1915-1951 and undated

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No.****Subseries II: Family Memorabilia**

- 109 Harriet Blair materials, 1903-1926
Harry Blair biography, 1964 and undated
World War I materials, 1918-1919 and undated
- 110 —, World War I printed materials, 1919.
- 111 Emily Blair Forsythe file, 1938-1948 and undated
McDowell family materials, including deeds,
contracts and miscellaneous items, 1785-1853
and undated
- 112 Miscellaneous family materials, including a diary,
1937-1949
- 113 James Patton and Anna Gray Newell papers,
1863-1899 and undated
- 114 Roosevelt materials, 1934-1945 and undated
Society of the Vines file, 1895
Harry Truman materials, 1945 and 1949

Series IV: Clippings

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and undated
- 137 —, Democratic Convention, 1924

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- 138 —, issues, including politics and women,
1920s-1940s and undated
- 139-
- 140 —, Missouri issues, 1920s-1940s and undated
- 141 Family, Harry Blair, 1903
- 142 —, Harry Blair, 1919-1950s and undated
Emily Blair Forsythe Warren, 1928-1972
Miscellaneous, undated
- 143 Clippingsbook, Emily Newell Blair, 1914-1915,
includes some writings
- 144 —
- 145 Family legal documents, 1805
- 146 Family certificates, including
1796 appointment of Alexander McDowell as
Justice of the Peace
1920 certificate of Emily Newell Blair for National
American Women's Suffrage Association
signed by Carrie Chapman Catt
James P. Newell's 1862 commission to first
lieutenant of the 30th Regiment of the
State of Iowa
1932 poster, "Al Smith for President"
Genealogy chart for McDowell ancestry, undated

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147 Harry Wallace Blair World War I materials,
including *L'Ambulance*, 1917, and *The Sphere*, 1918

Over-

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Turner families, undated

Subscription list to Franklin School, 1813

Land warrants, 1811-1813