



[Ruth Cutler and family papers.](#)

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Nov. 27. 1918

letter from Ruth Cutler



Mrs. H. H. Sargent

131 South St. Albans Street

St. Paul, Minnesota

U.S.A.

6646

November 28, 1918.

Dear Mary and Howard and Billy and Howdy and Lucy,

It's a little after ten, there in St. Paul, while it is almost 2 with us here, and we have had service this morning, and now lunch. Soon I am going up on deck again, as it is so wonderful out. I told the others I hated to miss any of it, but still I do want to let you know how much you are all in my thoughts to-day. I don't know exactly whether to think of you in St. Paul or in Swarthmore to-day, but at any rate I hope you and Howard could be together. Isn't it your thirteenth anniversary? I can't realize it at all.

I am so sorry not to be there with Father and Amelia, for I know how lonely it will be for them at best, but am grateful that they have yours and Will's families near. Elinor and her family I shall soon be thinking of as in West Newton - and how different there too from the Thanksgiving Days we have spent there in the past.

There is really nothing new to tell you that I haven't told the others already. I know my letters are fearfully tame, but life these days consists mainly in watching the ocean and glorying in it, and in listening to the homesick tales the Y men confide to you along with their photographs of wives and children. The only piece of news I have is that I put on a clean collar this morning. Quite an event on shipboard! I'm saving my clean shirt waist for Liverpool and London! And when I get to Paris - well??

Goodbye for now. Am going up to see the Lauretania pass - they've picked up a wire from it - or rather wireless.

Love to all, Ruth.

6509

LONDON, W.C.

5.15 PM

DEC 14 1887



Mrs. H. H. Sargent

131 South St. Albans St.,

St. Paul, Minn.,

U.S.A.

Letter from Ruth Cutler in London

Dec 11, 1918 -

returned by censor ? after RC's death?



**OPENED BY  
CENSOR.**



Thackeray Hotel, London,

Wed. DEC. 11, 1918.

Dearest Mary,

You are probably just coming down to breakfast, so my greetings to you and Billy are in pretty good season after all! I wish I had something besides my love to send you - but that may get through quicker and more surely than anything else. And I do send you both just loads of that as you know.

We are turned out of our rooms but are still camping in them waiting for the Red Cross van to come along and pick us and our luggage up and take us to the station. They seem to want us to be there in ample time and have allowed only an hour and three quarters!! Still, we might as well camp there as here, and perhaps I can get some of my English moeny changed back again into French.

As I wrote, we went to the Eagle Hut last night and worked hard from 10.30 till 1.15. I wish I could adequately describe it, but it is hopeless to try. The place was more like an Inside Inn than anything else I've seen since - everything labelled, instructions hollered through megaphones every so often, clatter and crash of dishes, and noise of entertainments going on in various alcove places. The air was thick with smoke and the smell of food, the floors were wet and slippery - and the place was packed with soldiers and sailors from everywhere, though our own sailors prevailed ten to one at least. We took off our coats and hats, put on a none too clean overall apron and fell to. My first job was to clear tables, and why I didn't slip and fall with those trays is still a mystery to me. Poor Ruth Skinner did and smashed a whole trayfull of dishes, but no one seemed to mind!! Then I went to the "swill job"!! (sweet name) where, as you can perhaps guess, we scraped plates; then to dish-washing until the regular old dame came. I didn't start out being too particular, as I was advised that haste was the chief requisite, but as time went on and the incoming dishes swamped me, I got even swifter, with what result you can imagine. When the regular one came - no nonsense for her. She literally poured the trays into the sink (and nothing seemed inclined to break), made a few motions under water with her dish cloth, and behold, the dishes were washed and put on the drain - where I slicked off the surplus water etc. with a very wet towel. Well it was like one of those nightmares you sometimes have when you try for an eternity to catch up with yourself and never can. The cafeteria closed at 12, so by 12.30 we were pretty well cleaned up, and I <sup>was</sup> put on the silver shift. It seemed absurd to apply silver polish and rub up those nickel forks and spoons when the washing was so sketchy - but it means that they are at least clean once a day - and those who are served when the thing

opens again at 3.30 have the best of it. Then at 1.15 we came back to the hotel and crawled into bed and stayed there until good and late this morning.

Then packing - and now - the Channel, whatever that may mean.

Love to you all, RC

RETURN TO  
H. H. SARGENT  
131 SO. ST. ALBANS ST.  
ST. PAUL, MINN.



360 Summit Ave.  
Miss Ruth Cullen

1916

~~care the American Red Cross~~

St. Paul

4 rue d'Elysie

Minnesota ~~Paris~~

U.S.A.

Wasson Hill.

~~France~~



letter returned from France  
after Ruth's death.

MCS' description of maids!

H. H. SARGENT

131 SO. ST. ALBANS ST.

ST. PAUL, MINN.

December 12, 1918.

Dear Dear Ruth,

I realized only lately that I  
am too late to get a letter to you in time  
for Xmas and I think you a fine sister.  
but what are you going to do about it!  
I hope at least that you know enough  
to take all the love and wishes we will  
be sending you way - far as I is - on  
the 25<sup>th</sup> - and a word more too without  
any thinking I - You will feel the love  
I'm sure and there is much going out  
to you all the time and we do wonder  
about you a lot & would go home to know  
just where you are & what you are doing.  
We'll think of you so especially on  
that day as we did on Thanksgiving Day

and know you will be hunting with all  
ours of last year and our last year with  
precious mother. Oh she was so darling  
nurturing the children & remember how  
bright and pretty her room was with all  
the flowers and the wreaths in the windows  
and I think she sat up when they came  
in - I just can't can't believe I that we  
are thankful she isn't lying there and  
going through it all this year. How  
did she do it so sweetly & bravely?

I have no news to write you, child.  
I am glad for I have done little since  
you left, it's been mostly a tale of woe  
poor ones and more, we are now on  
the kind since Thanksgiving - they have  
been awful, highly feverish what thought  
she would leave and be a better girl, next

H. H. SARGENT

131 SO. ST. ALBANS ST.

ST. PAUL, MINN.

day changed to house keeping  
for a guest, then cashier in two days and  
when she departed said she ought to have  
to Wis. her father said she needed work  
any way - she whistled & sang lustily all  
day. Maime was nervous & nervous, that  
the house would be down on her head  
and in waiting on the table was a scream.  
When told to put the cookies down in  
front of H. H. S. &c. she took one of your  
2 or 3 plate for him - she was flustered  
absolutely. When some one called on  
the telephone about her after her four  
days here. Billy was near & yelled  
loudly, "Rotter, Rotter" - This one  
bela is much better, but by no means  
perfect.

Billy still is not himself & is pretty

dis coming to have I drag or this way  
but one thing he doesn't seem to be worse  
and hope today has had a little less  
pain in his head & running. Will I  
guess they can tell the probable exactly?  
On stated things he had a very nice  
birthday yesterday with all ten presents &  
Kimber for dinner, he felt better than  
before - happy or lots for you have  
in his house which looks fine &  
will like himself. I think you are  
to give a share in a few days & I'll  
tell you more about it when I get it. But  
in some things I've wanted long. So thank  
you - the old typewriter & the new Bill  
just tells you & he's well, pretty well  
a small new metal watch from us -  
they are used to him & he's too  
happy at 360 for lunch & had a great time  
but I did seem to change just for a -  
such dear dear love & the world from many -



Dear Amelia —

When I said good-bye to  
Rebecca a week ago Saturday  
evening, I told her I was going  
to write to you immediately, but  
will you please believe me when I  
tell you that this is almost the  
first opportunity that I have had  
to catch my breath and sit down  
to write a whole letter since that  
time? We had a family of five  
for about a month, and then came

Thanks giving with several more,  
and while we loved having  
them, it did not give the chief cook  
and dish-washer very much  
leisure! Now, however, we are all  
alone, and I am having such a  
good time "catching up".

I know that you want to  
hear about Rufus so I'll tell you  
all I know. I went to New York the  
day before she sailed, Friday the  
22<sup>nd</sup>, and it seemed to me I had  
never seen her looking so well.  
A milk-shake-sandwich lunch  
at the Tivoli began our series of

bath, and then we hastened back to  
Red Cross Headquarters where she  
had to report at one o'clock. I found  
that I was to be privileged to do a little  
shopping for Rufus so I soon set off in  
search of a "flat leather purse", and I'm  
sure you will be relieved to hear that  
I found one sufficiently flat and  
sufficiently simple to be considered a  
worthy successor to the one she  
has been carrying! Her afternoon,  
from what I could gather, was a  
series of trials and tribulations with  
the British Consul and Abercrombie & Fitch!  
Whether the passport or the uniform  
tried Rufus' soul more I hardly know,  
but I'd venture a guess, wouldn't you?  
She and Prudy and Jack arrived at the  
University Club about six o'clock  
Friday night with the news that they  
probably could not sail Saturday!  
That element of uncertainty in no way  
dampened our spirits, however, for  
a jollier dinner party you never knew  
than we four had that night. Then Prudy  
had to go to her uncle's so Rufus fell to  
packing while Jack and I secured our bags.

You will have some idea of the magnitude of Rufus' packing problem when I tell you the incident of the cot bed! You see Rufus had only a single room so I thought for just one night I could have a cot put up in her room. When the man came in with the cot, however, the room was so brim full of everything under the sun that the addition of another bed was out of the question, so, to his disgust, he had to leave cot, mattress, and bedding out in the hall until

space could be made for it -  
about 1 a.m. ! Quess started,  
however, the packing went  
beautifully, and Rufus got  
everything into her trunk, even  
Margaret Lambie's uPalali (?),  
and soap, galore, chocolate,  
paper to writing, and other essentials  
- oh, I almost forgot the silk  
American flag - thrust upon  
her by the Uassar Ueik committee  
in Uess Uouf. So shortly after  
midnight the task was done and  
her baggage assembled - trunk,



suit-case, hold-all, Corona, and lastly her boxes of candy all tied together in one neat, large package! I only wish you could have seen her start off in her uniform - stri-corded grey cloth hat, dark grey whip-cord suit with two blue bars on each shoulder and well covered with steel buttons which looked much more like Iron Crosses than Red Crosses! The most redeeming feature of the uniform (you see now why we were impressed by its aesthetic value!) was a lovely bright blue four-in-hand tie which was most becoming to Rees. I said good-bye to her about 8.30 Saturday morning when she was on her way to meet Preedy at the British Consul's Office. If good luck was with Rees, and apparently several Red Cross officials were determined that it should be, they were to sail at two o'clock, and I judge they did!

Doubtless by this time you have heard of their arrival, and maybe every bit of my news also is old news. If it is,

please forgive me again for my  
tardiness in writing. I stupidly  
forgot to get Rufus' address so I  
am going to ask you to send it  
to me. How much time are you  
allowing for your Christmas  
letters? I trust you received  
the suit-case and the watch package  
in good condition. If there are  
any questions you would like  
to ask me about Rufus'  
getting away, you know how  
I would love to answer them.  
Maybe in giving you the details

I have left out some of the most important things that you would like to know.

Please give my greetings to all your family. I think of you and your father very, very often, and I can imagine how much you miss Rufus. This brings my love to you. As always —

Margaret Taber.

Long Hill

December 4, 1918.

A.R.C.HOSPITAL 101  
Neuilly, Paris  
Tuesday Dec. 18th

Mother dearest,

It is three days since I have written, again because of my innumerable room-mates, who have grown to 8 by this time. Three of them moved up to our floor because they were a little too near the real patients for their own comfort, but tonight are moving into the unused operating room and are considered very lucky by the rest of us as they have more room and a real light. It is almost to write here if it weren't for my Corona. The more we see of the rooms of the other people we know in Paris, the more grateful we are.

A great deal has happened in these three days. In the first place I know now pretty nearly what my work is to be. Rufus and I caught just the job we want, just by the miracle of being introduced to one of the Powers about 24 hours before we would otherwise have been summoned to the Presence when the job would probably have been gone. We are to be at Saveny, near St. Nazaire, where the rest of the Vassar Unit are running a Hospital Hut but we are to go as sear chers. That does not mean that we go out into No man's Land every evening with a Bug-light, as some have supposed but it means that we try to get the truth about casualties from the men in the hospitals. For instance if John Jones is reported missing and there is a man from his company in the hospital, we see him and try to learn any facts about J.J. Some of course can never be cleared up, but others can be settled as killed or prisoners and it means so much to his families. Our regular title is Home Communication Service worker and means much more than just the searching which was the old title. It is our business to report to headquarters about the men too ill to write home, often writing to their families for them if they want to dictate. It means looking up their delayed mail and delayed pay. And it also means writing to the families of those who die. More than that it means explaining to those who are permanently handicapped what is going to be done for them by the government at home in the way of vocational education. All the actual studying of the mans possibilities and needs is done when he gets home but it is up to us to start him thinking about it and looking forward to it hopefully. It means all sorts of cheering up you see that no one has time to do in a big hospital and I'm pleased because it comes the nearest to using some of the experience I have had and it seems to be work that is really needed. I have been reading some of the reports of these workers at headquarters today, and I can hardly wait to begin. We have to wait at least till next week for it takes at least that amount of time for the regular Red Tape. Tomorrow I am going out to some hospital near here for the day as a sort of an apprentice.

You have no idea the time it takes to settle just that little amount of business. Most of my days are spent trotting up and down the winding, marble stairs of the Hotel Regina (Headquarters) till I'm ready to drop without accomplishing anything.

Tuesday I actually got in touch with George Benedict. And we did have a beautiful time. He took me to a very stylish and delicious place called the "cafe des Ambassadeurs" on the Champs Elysees and we had almost satisfactory meal-- -- --

Another very bright spot was my call on Dr. Farrand, the head of the Rockefeller Commission for Tuberculosis to whom Uncle Mitchell gave me a letter. --- He was very cordial and also very reassuring when I told him about our uncertain welcome. He says there certainly is need for "a certain kind of worker" whatever that may mean, and that the job of Home Communication Service is a man-sized or rather woman-sized job in the fullest sense of the word and that the need is likely to continue for some time.

Thursday night.

At that point the rest of the family flocked in and by the time they had finished jabbering over all the doings of the day, it was time for bed, so I had to stop.

I have had my day of apprenticeship today and it has been very interesting, only it makes me more anxious to get settled where I can really put down my roots and see the same people every day and not just for once and then off; but it looks almost certain now that we cannot go to Saveny till after Xmas, so I am planning to give as much



time as I can to the hospital, where I worked today. You know you don't mind being away from home at Xmas if you have piles to do and people need you very much and have begun to count on you personally. It was such a new experience today that I'm not adjusted yet but hope tomorrow will help.

I was sent out from headquarters in a Red Cross camionette with three very wise and experienced Hospital Hut workers who made me feel thoroughly helpless by the way in which they talked so casually of the things they had to do, they seemed to have been so ready with just the right answer in all the situations they found themselves in, as for instance what to say to the boy who had just learned that he had lost his leg, and to have no end of resources for cheering the homesick and to know naturally <sup>which</sup> boys wanted cheering and which to be let alone, all the things I would be so stupid at.

Fortunately I was started in on something easier, the casualty searching. I was given the latest monthly list of the missing, apron and paper and put into a ward of fairly convalescent men. It was what is called a tent ward and is a pretty desolate place, canvas walls and roof with little isinglass windows and concrete floor and so pretty damp and cold. The men were all "up" cases and either lying on their beds or walking round. It was my business to chat with each one find out what was his regiment and company, look in the "missing list" to see if any of his comrades were there and if so if he could give me any news. One has to cross examine a bit to be sure he has the right person in mind and yet one has to be careful not to ask leading questions that might suggest the answer to his imagination. The men are always ready to talk and nearly the whole ward clusters around you before you have hardly begun. It is such a satisfaction to get hold of a real bit of truth, such as the exact time when a man was last seen, and in the cases marked "K Det D/B" which means "reported killed, get details of death and burial", you know every little scrap of detail will mean so much to the boy's family, particularly in case he was killed if it was "instantly" or if there is some mark on his grave to identify it. I managed to get news of 6 or 7 which my instructor seemed to think a very fruitful morning's work. We had lunch at the hospital at the Red Cross table, which is in the big dining hall where all the patients and staff eat.

The hospital is in a large convent and the meals are served in the refectory, a huge room with high walls of undecorated plaster with little windows at the top. The floor is stone and we ate off marble tables without tablecloths or napkins. The food was about as coarse as the china which was very coarse indeed but every body seemed in such a hurry to get back to very important work that it didn't make much difference.

There were plans for a dance tonight for the enlisted men which I would have been glad to attend, but it would have meant my not getting home out here till after midnight and we have been requested not to come in late.

I came home quite early this afternoon after typing the results of my morning's work (I hope to make a great hit with my CO by doing all mine on the Corona)

I planned to do a lot of errands before coming out here for dinner, but alas! found it a holiday because the King of Italy is here! Honestly this place is getting so king-y that ordinary mortals can hardly manage to do their ~~every~~ day work. Every where you go you find yourself held up by crowds waiting to see some one of "les grands" go by. First it was Wilson and now it is the King of Italy and they say some other king comes soon.

I haven't yet been able to get at my trunk and still no letters. I couldn't stand it if I didn't know that you have written and I must hear soon. Today I heard of boys who hadn't had any news for 6 months. There is nothing like Hospital Hut work for making your own troubles look pretty small.

Elinor Prudden