

Collection #
M 0402
OM 0326

**NICHOLAS W. (NICHOLAS WILLIAM) HATFIELD
PAPERS, 1942–1946; 2016**

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript box, 2 oversize folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1942–1946; 2016

PROVENANCE: Nicholas J. Hatfield, Indianapolis, IN; 11 May 1995, July 2016

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: See card catalog for numerous references to World War II; Nicholas William Hatfield Papers M 1044

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1995.0481; 2016.0200

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nicholas William Hatfield (ca. 1910–1981) was a lifelong resident of Indianapolis. He graduated from Shortridge High School and Butler University, and from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia in 1935, and interned at City Hospital in Indianapolis. He then had offices at 2032 North Rural Street and in the Odd Fellows Building.

During World War II, Dr. Hatfield entered the Medical Corps in July 1942. From July to December he served at Camp Carson in Colorado Springs, Colorado. During the first nine months of 1943 he was on the staff of Bushnell Hospital in Brigham, Utah. After three months at a staging area in California, he was sent to the Southwest Pacific in December 1943. There he served for three months in Australia and then for six months in Melanesia. In June 1944 he was wounded at Biak Island, northwest of New Guinea, in action for which he was later awarded a Purple Heart and a Silver Star. He recuperated for several months at a hospital on New Guinea. In mid-1945 he was at Manila in the Philippines. Having entered the service as a first lieutenant, he was promoted to captain in mid-1943 and to major in mid-1945. He returned home via Japan and was released from service in February 1946.

After the war, Dr. Hatfield continued as a general practitioner in Brightwood, and was on the staff of Methodist and Community Hospitals. From 1965 until his retirement in 1975 he worked as a reviewing physician in the disability department of the Social Security Administration.

Sources:

Collection materials.

Indianapolis Star, obituary, 21 December 1981.

Journal of the Indiana State Medical Association, Vol. 75 No. 3, May 1982, 222.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection, filling one small manuscript box and two oversize folders, contains correspondence, maps, and news clippings from the period 1942-1946.

The correspondence describes the World War II career of Dr. Nicholas W. Hatfield. Most of the letters are written by him to his wife and family. During his early stateside service there are several letters from his wife, Vivian. In early 1945 there is a series of letters to Hatfield from his mother, who wrote to him several times weekly during his entire service, always addressing him as "My precious boy."

Within the bounds of military censorship, Hatfield gives considerable detailed information. His letters and his wife's give a good picture of what a wife with small children went through to live near her husband in wartime. Hatfield gives colorful descriptions of a series of incompetent commanders at the hospital in Utah, and of the tedious hurry-up-and-wait of getting an overseas assignment. He gives a clinical description of his wound and treatment (5-4-1945), and a humorous discourse on the insect population of Melanesia (3-26-1944). He came from a religious family; his mother did not hesitate to lecture him on the evils of alcohol; but he found well-meant morale-boosting letters from church members a burden to answer, and he told an army chaplain to stop praying for guidance and get into action now. He was fond of tobacco in all its forms and had the interesting theory that it calmed his patients to see him chewing tobacco.

The three maps included in the collection depict the coast of Biak, the Sentani Lake region of New Guinea, and the World War II Pacific Ocean Theater. The news clippings contain an article about Hatfield's 1943 leave and a list of World War II doctors from Indianapolis and Marion County.

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"Hitt's 'Up-To-The-Minute' War Atlas," n.d.	Box 1, Folder 16
Maps, 1944	OM 0326, Folder 1
News clippings, 1943–46	OM 0326, Folder 2