Descriptive Summary
Title: Bernice and Bertha Downing Collection of World War I Letters
Dates: 1917-1919
Collection Number: 1979-855
Creator/Collector:
Extent: 5 folders (.25 linear feet)
Repository: History San Jose Research Library
San Jose, California 95112
Abstract: Letters from World War I servicemen to Santa Clara Journal owners and editors Bernice C. Downing and twin sister Bertha G. Downing
Language of Material: English
Access
The collection is available to the public for research by appointment with the Curator of Research Library & Archives
Publication Rights
Contact the Curator of Research Library & Archives for reproduction and publication information
Preferred Citation
Bernice and Bertha Downing Collection of World War I Letters. History San Jose Research Library
Acquisition Information
The donor of these letters is unknown. They are part of the original San Jose Historical Museum collection.
Biography/Administrative History
Bernice C. Downing (d. 1940) and her twin sister Bertha G. Downing (d. 1925) are noted as being the first women in California to own, edit, and publish their own newspaper, the Santa Clara Journal, which they inherited from their father Nathan Hall Downing. Under their direction, the paper developed into a thriving semi-weekly newspaper. Bernice was appointed Santa Clara postmaster by President Warren Harding, and was also editor of the California Postmaster.
Scope and Content of Collection
The collection contains handwritten and typed letters from servicemen, and possibly Red Cross volunteers, sent to twin sisters Bernice and Bertha Downing, who owned and operated the Santa Clara Journal. Letters were sent between 1917-1919, from both the U.S. and overseas, and are casual and familiar in nature, conveying personal news and operational news from the front.