

# Guide to the Compton Family Papers, 1908-1928

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## Overview of the Collection

**Repository:**

Special Collections & Archives  
McIntyre Library  
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire  
P.O. Box 4004  
105 Garfield Ave.  
Eau Claire, WI 54702 – 4004  
(715) 836-2739  
<https://library.uwec.edu/archives/>

**Reference Code:** USGZE UHC325**Accession Number:** 09-009**Collection Number:** UHC325**Creators:** Compton Family (Tomah, Wis.)**Title:** Compton Family Papers**Dates:** 1908-1928**Quantity:** 3.0 linear foot (9 archives boxes)**Location of Collection:** A9/1b**Languages:** Collection materials are in English.

**Summary:** The collection is comprised primarily of correspondence from Donald “Don” E. Compton, Charles “Chuck” Compton, and Ruth Compton to their parents L. M. (Lindley M.) and Elva Compton (Tomah, Wis.) L.M. Compton was the first superintendent of the Tomah Indian Industrial School in Tomah, Wis. The largest part of the collection consists of letters from Don to his parents. There is also World War I era correspondence from Don who was a Lieutenant Junior in the U.S. Navy. These personal writings discuss social and cultural life and family dynamics in the early 1900’s.

## Biographical / Historical Note

L.M. (Lindley M.) Compton was the first superintendent of the Tomah Indian Industrial School in Tomah, Wis.

He was born in the late 1800's and died circa 1928. He was married to Elva Compton, and they had three children: Donald "Don" E. Compton, Charles "Chuck" Compton, and Ruth Compton. It appears that the family owned property in Indiana and Louisiana, but their primary residence in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century was Tomah, Wis.

Donald "Don" E. Compton was the elder son of L.M and Elva Compton. He attended school at the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) in Indiana in 1915. He later joined the U.S. Navy in 1917. While in the U.S. Navy he went from Ensign to Lieutenant Junior and served in Europe during World War I. After his service in the U.S. Navy he returned to Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin—Madison. Don worked at the YMCA in Indiana for some time and may have been an architect. In 1927, Don marries Mary Sale and made residency in Indiana.

Charles "Chuck" Compton (b. 1906- d. 1986) was the second child to L.M. and Elva Compton. In 1923, Chuck attended school at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. In his letters, he shares his experience traveling and working as a welder in the upper Midwest: Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. Chuck would marry Ethel Griesbach and have two daughters, Marilyn and Joyce Compton.

Ruth Compton (b. 1908) is the youngest and only daughter to L.M. and Elva Compton. In the early 1920, Ruth studied and worked at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. She married William Harold Harvey and lived in Indiana.

## Content Description

The Compton Family Paper collection is divided into five series: Donald "Don" E. Compton Letters, Charles "Chuck" Compton Letters, Ruth Compton Letters, Mr. L.M. (Lindley M.) Compton and Mrs. Elva Compton Letters, and Miscellaneous Materials. The collection consists primarily of incoming correspondence from Don, Chuck, and Ruth their parents L.M. and Elva Compton. The largest part of the collection is incoming letters from Don to his parents. In addition, there are war letters from Don, a Lieutenant Junior (Liet. Jg.) in the U.S. Navy, during World War I. All personal writings from this collection document the social and cultural life and the family dynamics in the early Twentieth Century. Miscellaneous items contain a photo album of the Tomah Indian Industrial School (Tomah, Wis.) and personal business objects.

## Administrative Information

**Acquisition Information:** Donated to the University Archives by Terry and Marilyn Sullivan and Joyce Compton Sturz in August 1993. The collection was found in the basement of Ethel Compton's home. Ethel, the mother of

the donors, was married to Charles Compton, second son of L. M. Compton.

**Access Restrictions:** Collection is open to the public.

**Use Restrictions:** Researchers are responsible for using in accordance with 17 U.S.C. Copyright owned by the University of Wisconsin--Eau Claire.

**Preferred Citation:** Compton Family Papers, 1908-1928. UHC325 Special Collections & Archives. McIntyre Library. University of Wisconsin--Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wis.

**Processing Note:** Processed by Mai Youa Lee, December 2008.

**Arrangement:** By series, correspondence arranged by authors.

## Subjects

### Personal Names:

Compton Family (Tomah, Wis.)  
Compton, Donald E.  
Compton, Charles  
Compton, Ruth  
Compton, L.M. (Lindley M.)  
Compton, Elva

### Corporate Names:

University of Wisconsin—Madison—Students  
Tomah Indian Industrial School (Tomah, Wis.)

**Subject Terms:** World War, 1914-1918-- Personal narratives, American

### Geographical Terms:

Wisconsin—Social life and customs—20<sup>th</sup> Century  
Illinois—Social life and customs—20<sup>th</sup> Century  
Indiana—Social life and customs—20<sup>th</sup> Century  
Michigan—Social life and customs—20<sup>th</sup> Century

## Detailed List of Contents

### Series 1: Donald "Don" E. Compton Letters

This first series contains primarily incoming correspondence from Don to his parents living in Tomah, Wis. Of the five series, this is the largest series. Don's letters discuss his social life, education, U.S. naval training at Great Lakes in Chicago, Illinois going on duty as a Naval officer, working, and family life. In addition to some of the letters Don wrote, he included pictures and postcards.

**Dates:** 1914-1927

**Extent:** 2.0 linear feet (5 archives boxes)

Container	Contents	Dates
Box/Folder 1/1	Correspondence to parents	1914
Box/Folder 1/2	Correspondence to parents	1915
Box/Folder 1/3	Correspondence to parents	1916
Box/Folder 1/4	Correspondence to Don	1916
Box/Folder 1/5	Correspondence to parents	1917
Box/Folder 2/1	War correspondence to parents, picture	January- February 1918
Box/Folder 2/2	War correspondence to parents	March-May 1918
Box/Folder 2/3	War correspondence to parents	June- July 1918
Box/Folder 2/4	War correspondence to	August-October 1918

	parents	
Box/Folder 2/5	War correspondence to parents, picture	November-December 1918
Box/Folder 2/6	Correspondence to Don	1918
Box/Folder 3/1	War correspondence to parents	January-February 1919
Box/Folder 3/2	War correspondence to parents	March-May 1919
Box/Folder 3/3	War correspondence to parents	June-July 1919
Box/Folder 3/4	War correspondence to parents	August- September 1919
Box/Folder 3/5	War correspondence to parents	October- December 1919
Box/Folder 4/1	Correspondence to parents	1920
Box/Folder 4/2	Correspondence to parents	1921
Box/Folder 4/3	Correspondence to parents	1922
Box/Folder 5/1	Correspondence to parents	1923
Box/Folder 5/2	Correspondence to parents	1924
Box/Folder 5/3	Correspondence to parents	Undated
Box/Folder 5/4	Postcards and pictures	1917-1923

**Series 2:** Charles "Chuck" Compton Letters

This second series has correspondence from Chuck to his parents living in Tomah, Wis. Nearly all of Chuck's letters are incoming correspondence that describes his social life, education, his work as a welder, and travels in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

**Dates:** 1917-1928

**Extent:** 0.4 linear feet (1 archival box)

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Box/Folder 6/1	Correspondence to parents	1923
Box/Folder 6/2	Correspondence to parents	1925
Box/Folder 6/3	Correspondence to parents	1926
Box/Folder 6/4	Correspondence to parents	1927
Box/Folder 6/5	Correspondence to parents	1928
Box/Folder 6/6	Correspondence to parents	Undated
Box/Folder 6/7	Correspondence to Chuck	1917-1918

### **Series 3:** Ruth Compton Letters

This third series has primarily incoming correspondence from Ruth to her parents living in Tomah, Wis. Her letters illustrate her social life, academic lifestyle while a student at UW-Madison, and working.

**Dates:** 1926-1928

**Extent:** 0.2 linear feet (1 archival box)

Container	Contents	Dates
Box/Folder 7/1	Correspondence to parents	1926
Box/Folder 7/2	Correspondence to parents	1927
Box/Folder 7/3	Correspondence to parents	1928
Box/Folder 7/4	Correspondence to Ruth	Undated

**Series 4: Mr. L.M. (Lindley M.) Compton and Mrs. Elva Compton Letters**

This series contains correspondence to and from Mr. L.M. Compton and Mrs. Elva Compton. It includes fragmentary and routine business messages, as well as family letters expressing concerns for Mrs. Elva Compton's health.

**Dates:** 1914- 1928

**Extent:** 0.2 linear feet (1 archival box)

Container	Contents	Dates
Box/Folder 8/1	Correspondence to L.M. Compton	1914-1922
Box/Folder 8/2	Correspondence composed by L.M. Compton	1916-1927
Box/Folder 8/3	Correspondence to Mrs. Elva Compton when ill.	April 1917
Box/Folder 8/4	Correspondence to Mrs. Elva Compton	1915-1928

**Series 5: Miscellaneous Materials**

This last series includes an undated photo album with pictures from the Tomah Indian Industrial School, a leather business card holder, property records, and ephemeral financial records.

**Dates:** 1908-1928

**Extent:** 0.2 linear feet (1 archival box)

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Box/Folder 9/1	Photo album and leather business card holder	Undated
Box/Folder 9/2	Property Records	1908-1922
Box/Folder 9/3	Financial Records	Undated

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