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## News from the Swenson Center

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# News from the Swenson Center

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## Collection Feature

### – The Anna Persson Cave family papers, 1897-2006

BY LISA HUNTSHA

Here's a sneak peak at a recently processed collection at the Swenson Center, the Anna Persson Cave family papers, 1897-2006.

Anna Eleonora Persson was one of nine children born to Carl Gustaf Persson and Severina Olsdotter in Holm (Hall.), Sweden, on December 9, 1887. Anna immigrated in 1907 from Halmstad to Bloomington, Illinois, to join her sister who had already immigrated. She took the journey across the Atlantic by herself at the age of 20. She details the experience in a letter to her family, including the kind travelers she met along the way, her shock at the poverty in London, and awe at the buildings in Chicago.

Later, Sigrid Persson joined her sisters in Bloomington. Sigrid quickly left to move to New York City and she took Anna with her. Anna began working as a maid in the big city and when her employer moved to Vermont, she went too. In the summer of 1913 in Brattleboro, Vermont, Anna met Frederick (Fred) Cave, an Englishman and a gardener.

Their courtship developed through letter writing, with Anna in Brattleboro and Fred in Boston. Fred wrote kind words until they could be united in person: "I must say how very, very happy I am in your love, (it still seems too good to be true) and I hope, Anna, we shall (neither of us) never do anything unworthy of our love, but that our trust in each others'

faithfulness may become stronger and stronger." "Dear, do try and be happy...but of course memory does cause us pain at times, in fact it is 'sweet pain' still I do not like the thoughts of your being sorrowful in any way, so please keen up."

Their courtship transitioned into their marriage in Boston on February 28, 1914. After they married, they settled in Canton, Massachusetts, and had two children: Eleanor Cave, born on April 25, 1918, and Eric Cave, born September 24, 1919.

Their letter writing continued as the young family traveled across the ocean again to visit relatives in both England and Sweden. In December 1919, the family went to England to meet grandmother Cave. In March, however, Fred returned to Canton to help with the spring planting. Anna and the children went on to Sweden to visit her family. They stayed until August of 1920.

Upon their return to Canton, they found that Frederick had terminal cancer and the doctors had given him one year to live. It was true; he died on December 19, 1921. Anna Persson Cave was 34, a young widow in care of two children.

To support her family, Anna took in sewing and mending for clients. Her workmanship was exceptional and her skills supported the Cave family. The collection includes pieces of mending that she would send out to potential clients to secure busi-



*Anna Persson Cave.*

ness. It features three different types of repairs, which are nearly imperceptible.

Anna's daughter, Eleanor, carried on the correspondence with the family after her mother's death and compiled genealogical information, all of which is included in this collection.

To see more, search our online digital database on p. 30.

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