

May Wilkins moved to Fort Collins with her husband, newspaper editor Don Wilkins in 1937.

The Wilkins spent their lives here, staying for nearly 30 years in the Kensington Apartments before building a house on South College in the mid-1960s.

May became an active member of the Fort Collins China Doll Club with a collection of over one hundred dolls. When May passed away in 1999 this collection was split between the doll club and the Fort Collins Museum.

**Poor of Me, Good of Dog:  
May Wilkins (1902-1999)**



Handwritten address on a piece of paper: "Mrs. May Wilkins, 90 [unclear] Courier, Fort Collins, Colorado".



Handwritten note in blue ink: "Poor of me".

Handwritten note in blue ink: "Good of dog".

Handwritten letter in cursive: "I would suggest for the [unclear] staff a can of corn, a can of [unclear] of pineapple - slice a can of tomato fruit for salad. If I'm back you are in an item. You spread that [unclear] flavor. Same at it."



Handwritten letter in cursive: "steak last night. I will bring a few things back such as a can of pumpkin and things I can't buy here. Bought a bottle of flavoring Wednesday - called Chocovan - chocolate flavor and vanilla. I will make some for frosting on cake. much more Don. My letter of [unclear] a big fish. No weather anything. Had a card from mother. She said she wrote you a letter."

Handwritten notes in cursive: "Keep your chin up deeling, Take care yourself! All my love, May. Best from Mom. Car seems to be working all right now. Hope it lasts! I'm at the emergency at the house."

Along with her doll collection the Museum received a huge variety of things gathered from May's home: newspaper clippings, over 500 letters, clothing, photographs and more.

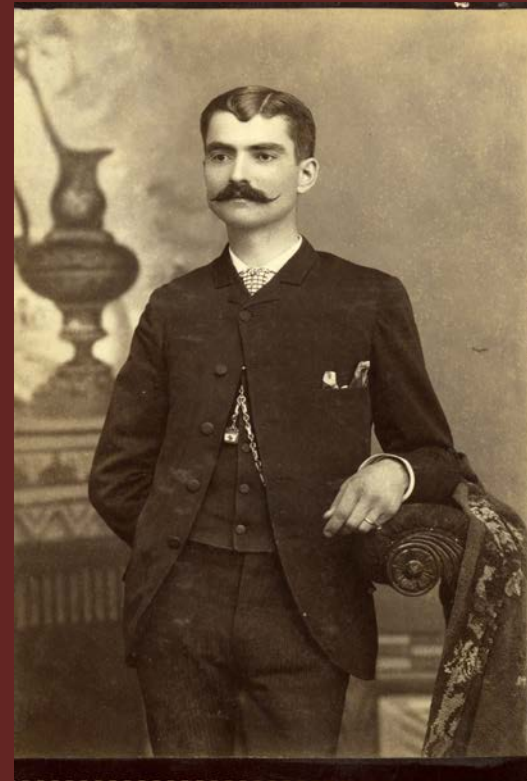
Everything in this slide show about May's life was revealed by this collection.



May started life as Anna May Darlene Dolies on June 2, 1902 in Washington County, Iowa. Her parents were Anna Theresa and Frank Dolies. Anna had a portion of her family's farm and Frank worked in a variety of businesses – including secondhand buggy sales.



Anna May  
Darlene Dolies  
June 2, 1902



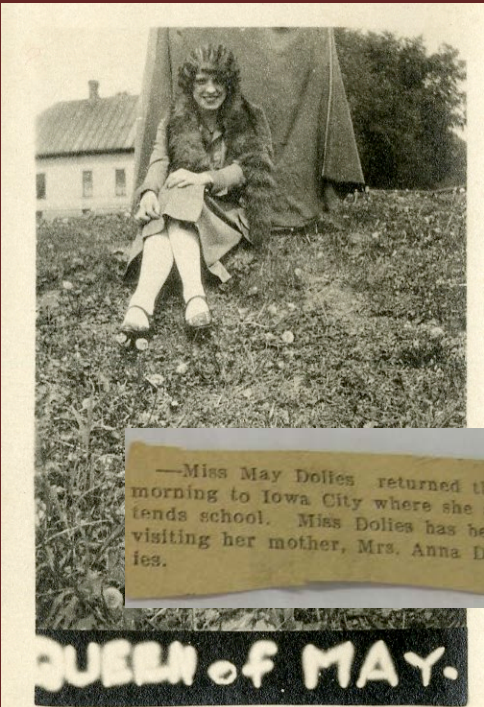
May was the youngest of three children and the only girl. Her parents divorced sometime during her childhood, and her father moved away.



May left home to attend high school in Iowa City, graduating in 1921, one day after her 19th birthday.

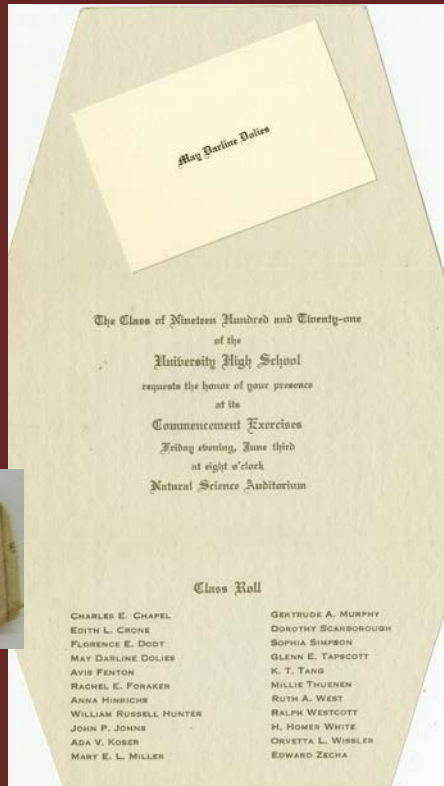
While there May established herself as a talented musician; she played the piano and the saxophone with a band that traveled the area and performed on radio programs.

University High School  
Iowa City, Iowa  
Graduation 1921



—Miss May Dolies returned this morning to Iowa City where she attends school. Miss Dolies has been visiting her mother, Mrs. Anna Dolies.

QUEEN of MAY.



May Dolies Dolies

The Class of Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-one  
of the  
University High School  
requests the honor of your presence  
at its  
Commencement Exercises  
Friday evening, June third  
at eight o'clock  
Natural Science Auditorium

Class Roll

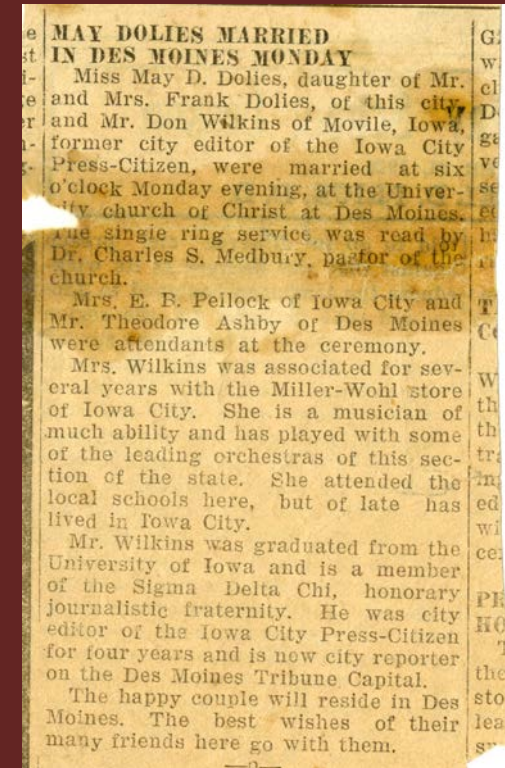
- |                        |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| CHARLES E. CHAPEL      | GERTRUDE A. MURPHY  |
| EDITH L. CRONE         | DOROTHY SCARBOROUGH |
| FLORENCE E. DODT       | SOPHIA SIMPSON      |
| MAY DARLINE DOLIES     | GLENN E. TAPSCOTT   |
| AVIS FENTON            | K. T. TANG          |
| RACHEL E. FORAKER      | MILLIE THUENEN      |
| ANNA HINNICHE          | RUTH A. WEST        |
| WILLIAM RUSSELL HUNTER | RALPH WESTCOTT      |
| JOHN P. JOHNS          | H. HOMER WHITE      |
| ADA V. KOBER           | ONETTA L. WISLER    |
| MARY E. L. MILLER      | EDWARD ZECHA        |



—Mrs. Anna Dolies went to Iowa City to attend the graduation of her daughter May. She will remain there a week.

May's marriage to Donald Wilkins on November 18, 1929 in Des Moines, Iowa is noted in a newspaper clipping she saved though, puzzlingly, not in a single photograph. The only other wedding mementos in the May Wilkins collection are May's wedding handkerchief and a pair of Kewpie doll cake toppers.

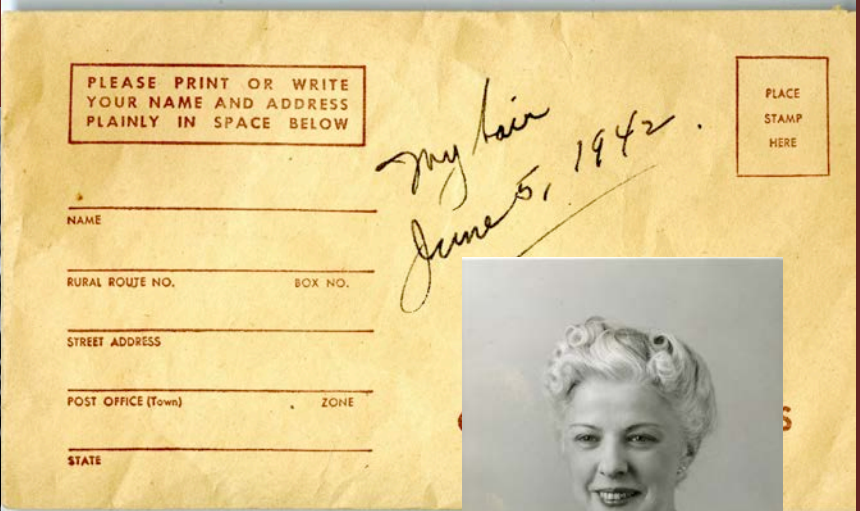
Don and May Wilkins  
November 18, 1929  
Des Moines, IA



Soon after they were married a newspaper job for Don took the Wilkins to Merville, Iowa, where May apparently developed her needle working talents: her sweep of the competition in multiple quilting, embroidery, and knitting categories at a local fair was celebrated in an article in the Sioux City Tribune in the summer of 1934.



In a defining moment sometime between this needlework victory and the Wilkins' move to Fort Collins May became a blond. Throughout the rest of her life, May's bright cap of hair helped define her vivacious personality.





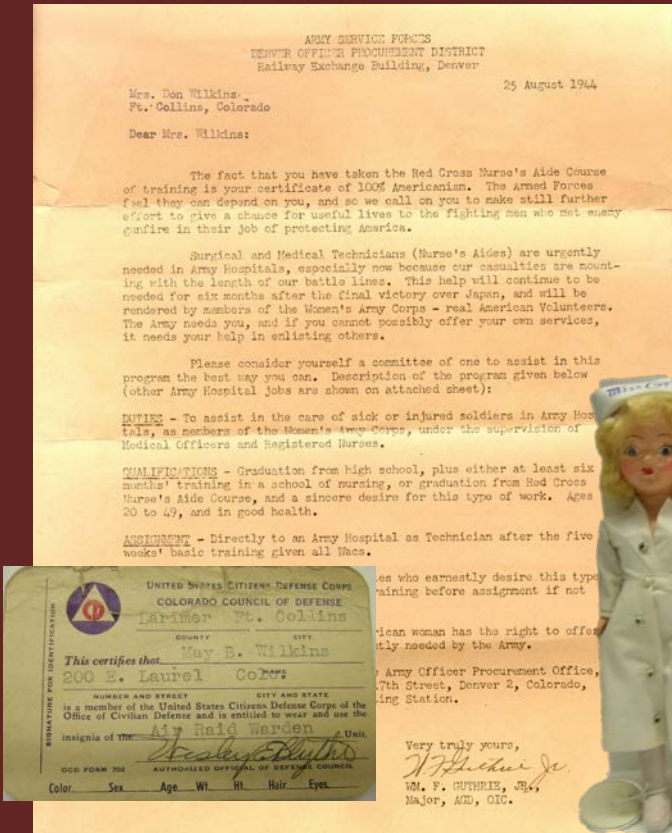
In 1944 May joined the more than 200,000 American women who became Red Cross Volunteer Nurse's Aides during World War II. In letters to her mother and to Don May agonizes over her decision to become a nurse's aide.

In a letter dated March 25, 1944, May wrote to her mother:

"I haven't made up my mind about taking nurse's aid. The uniforms are 3.00 dollars each—have to have two. I have to buy them. I think it would be nice to have the experience but with all the time and no pay—I sometimes think I should get a job part time that I could make a few cents.

The nurses aids—have to work hard. I would be relieving a nurse for other things. Give baths and make beds, take temperatures, feed people and the like. I guess I could stand it—somehow I had thought I would like the knowledge of training."

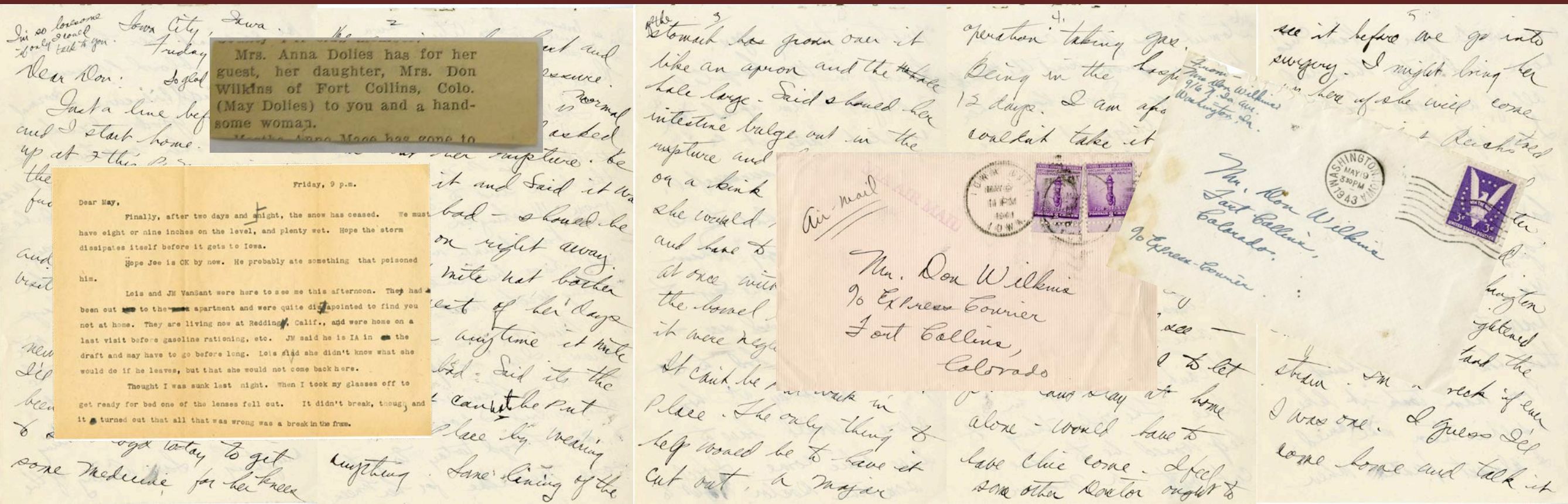
I wish I could talk to you mother and get your advice about taking nurses aid. They are so short of nurses here—I thought I would be doing my bit for the war and get the practical experience besides."



From the spring of 1941 until her mother's death May Wilkins spent two months each spring and each fall helping her mother with the family farm in Iowa. During these months apart she and Don exchanged letters almost daily. Though these letters rarely discuss World War II directly, they are full of references to the strong impact the war has on daily life.

1944, June 23, Don to May:

"The office of defense transportation today made an order to authorize railroads to cancel reservations and force passengers to yield space to wounded men whenever necessary. The army is flying the wounded back from Europe and they get priority over everyone on the way to the hospitals. It probably won't be long until the government will require all of us to change underwear Tuesdays and Thursdays, at the rate orders go out nowadays."



One of the war's most direct impacts on the people at home was the rationing and shortages of many of the things people used every day. Food prices were monitored by the Office of Price Administration (OPA) and about one third of civilian food items were rationed. Don and May's letters hint at the ingenuity and humor these circumstances could provoke.

1944, Nov 22, Don to May:

"Tilton had some butter hidden under the counter and Fred and I each got a quarter of a pound. Just like the old prohibition days. You have to be in the know to get the goods. I was in Hutchinson's pharmacy this afternoon to get some Mercurochrome and while Mrs. Hutch was wrapping it up Carl handed me a small package. When I got it open later it was two packages of cigarets [sic]. I guess as long as my friends take care of me I will be all right."

May 19, 1943 - Wednesday  
Dear Don:

Wish I could see you. This is another rainy gloomy day. There hasn't been a sun shining day for weeks. Just rains all the time. Started in last night again and has been at it all morning. The S.P.A. - still dark and cloudy but the rain has stopped for a little bit. We can't even go to the farm unless I want to have the car a mess from the clay and gravel. Nelson, Grandpa and I went to get it all cleaned. Got the so dirty going there when the roads were all slush. Had a birthday party for I. Got a cute birthday card from Stella. Thought it was nice of her to remember me and me. Had a card from Beccia too. Mom got me a lovely slip and pair of cute pants. I don't feel any sicker than last year.

The old cold hang on. I could say it is a lot better as it has gone to my head now - nose runs on one side. I'm coughing a lot too. Not had enough to see the kids.

watch it carefully. Nothing can improve this down camp weather.

The poor farmers can't plant corn either. It is a fresh experience. Mom bought tomato and cabbage plants yesterday. It never will dry up so can't plant them. Have a few small garden things to plant yet.

All we do is sit in the kitchen and moan about the weather. Had to get a half ton of coal to be delivered tomorrow. Cough & be doing some war work. Well, I'll and have good intentions.

This sitting won't keep me reduced. afraid I'm gaining again in spite of coughing all day long. Need to do more yard work. Did dig some sandalwood yesterday too. Luvving.

Wish Collins' bad weather had needed me. I'd give anything to see the sun.

Glad you are getting along all right and staying well. Too bad I have to be gone so long. Just the same I don't mind to eat on Sundays. I would suggest for the canned stuff a can of corn, peas or beets - string beans or whatever you find - a can of tomato paste - small can of it for salads. another fruit - some all cans of my kind of fruit juice. If I'm back I can get it. Whenever you are in stores you could take home item or two. You could get yourself cheese spread that comes in a little tin. Some of it is 15¢ - some more. If you see macaroni allow a package. (no points on them) I'll need catnip too, when I get it is rationed and the points high. Don't spend all your money getting food. You could buy something each time you go in the store. If you use your meat coupons - could get salmon or such with them. Mom and I had a good



If you care about buying a few things to see your points you could get a can of tuna the 27¢ kind and some Spam or something like that.

steak last night. I will bring a few things back such as a can of pumpkin and things I can't buy here. Bought a bottle of flavouring yesterday - called Chacovan - part chocolate flavor and vanilla. Caught to be small for frosting on your chocolate cake.

Not much news Don. My letters are very poor. Don't tell you mine caught a big fish. No weather to do anything. Had a card from your mother. She said she wrote you a letter.

Keep your chin up Deeling. Take care yourself!  
All my love,  
May.  
Best from Mom.  
Car seems to be working all right now. Hope it lasts!

Am at the emergency stage now.

During World War II the federal government encouraged Americans to grow food in "Victory Gardens" and preserve their home-grown vegetables. May's mother maintained a large garden which provided plenty of work for her and May and a bounty of food to can and sell.

1942, October 27, May to Don:

"Mom canned her kraut this a.m. to bring with us. I'll have nearly a bushel of white spuds –half bushel of sweet spuds she raised, bushel walnuts, apples, cabbage –few turnips and carrots. We'll have couple dozen eggs too and other things. Where we will put it all I don't know. I'll be glad to have the stuff –it will help a lot. Al will grind me a quart of horseradish too. He hasn't even a teaspoon of sugar. So we're taking couple cups to him"

|                                  |    |                     |                   |
|----------------------------------|----|---------------------|-------------------|
| Quarts                           | 3  | Relish              |                   |
| " "                              | 12 | Spiced Crabs        | }                 |
| " "                              | 13 | in syrup Crabs      |                   |
| " "                              | 4  | Spiced Beets        |                   |
| " "                              | 7  | tomato chilla sauce | M                 |
| " "                              | 11 | tomatoes            | M                 |
| " "                              | 12 | Grape Juice         | A                 |
| Fruit left over from other years |    |                     |                   |
| Quarts                           | 15 | tomatoes            |                   |
| " "                              | 4  | Peaches             |                   |
| " "                              | 9  | Gooseberries        |                   |
| " "                              | 5  | Strawberry Jam      |                   |
| " "                              | 11 | Gooseberry Jam      |                   |
| " "                              | 3  | Plums               |                   |
| " "                              | 60 | Seeded cherries     |                   |
| " "                              | 3  | Relish              |                   |
| " "                              | 7  | Raspberry Jam       |                   |
| " "                              | 8  | Crabs               |                   |
| " "                              | 5  | apple sauce         | Quarts total 1.92 |



31, Glasses Plum Jell  
 15, " " Crab Jell  
 82 " " Currants Jell, 1/28 glasses of Jell  
 6, Pints spiced onions

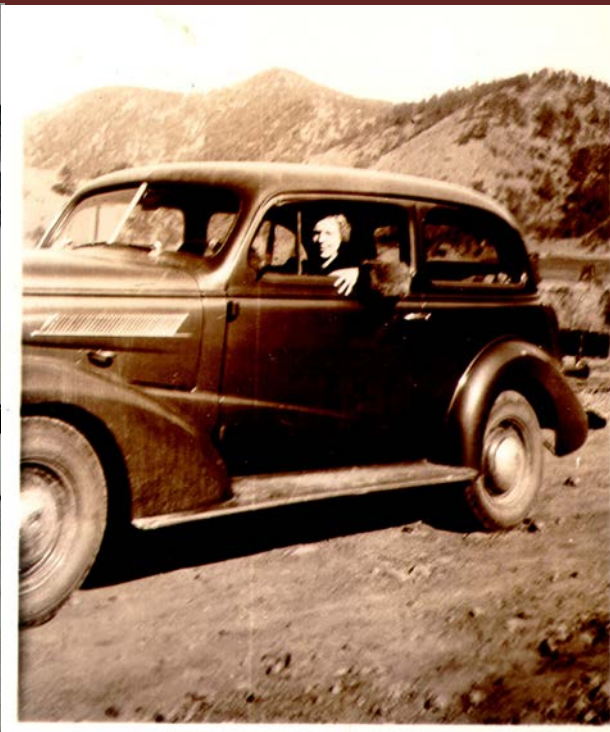
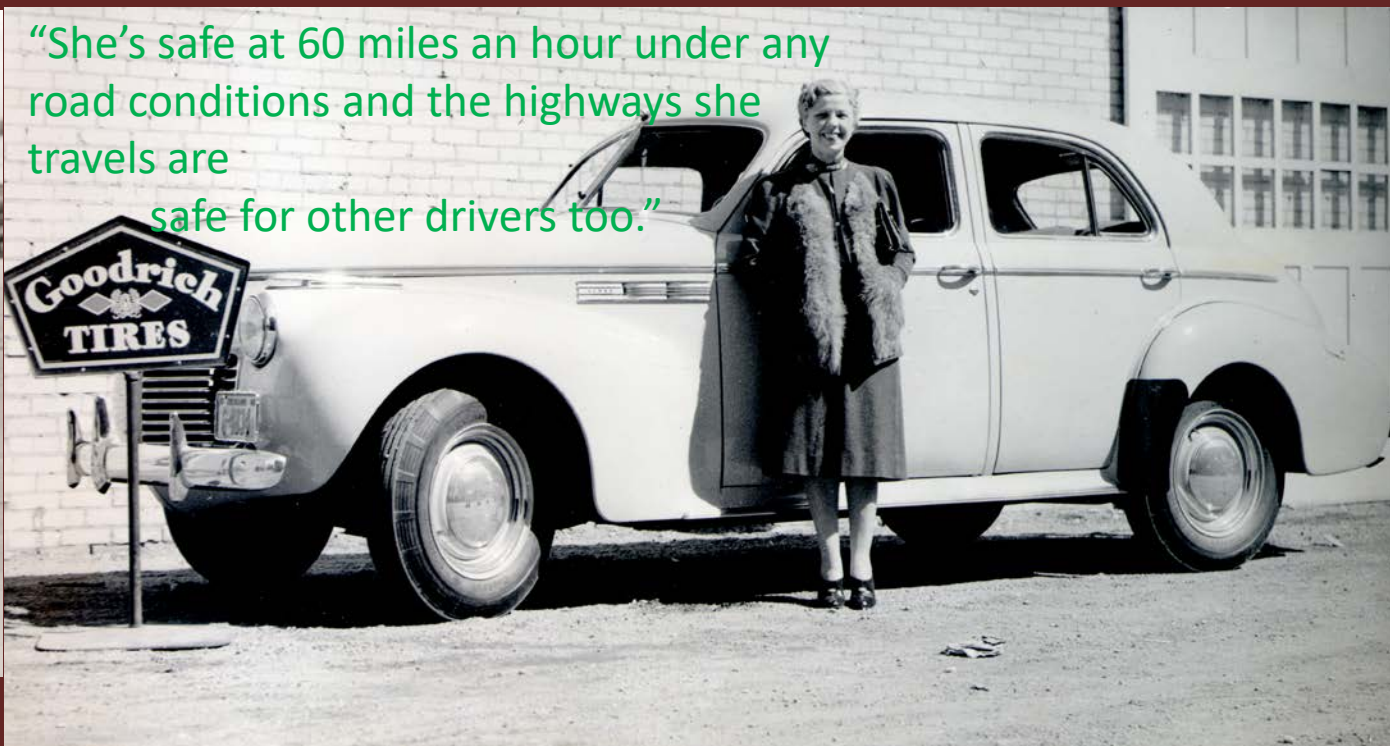
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I think I am well supplied for the winter with fruit.



Handwritten notes on a piece of lined paper, partially obscured by the photograph. The text is mostly illegible due to blurring and overlap.

Car travel helped set the tempo of the Wilkins' lives for several years, as May drove herself from Fort Collins to her mother's home and back twice a year. Her solitary car travel seems to have increased May's reputation for worldly independence.



The many things May Wilkins saved reflect the affection and humor in her marriage to Don.

1942, Oct. 25 , Don to May

“You will have to accept the fact that we are all going down hill, not only the older folks at home, but you and I. I can certainly tell that I am not the man I used to be and I resent it, but I don’t know what to do about it. I don’t think even eating a lot of lettuce would help.”

1943, April 30, May to Don:

“Wish I was with you tonite. I couldn’t ever live without you for long my dear Donald. Wonder if all wives love their husbands so! Wonder what you will be doing tonite. Probably not a great deal without the car. Well, be a good boy and take it easy. Keep your spirits high like you own the world.”



The documents and objects in the May Wilkins collection allow us glimpses into Don and May's experiences: as a couple, as Americans experiencing World War II, as local community members for over 60 years.



May titled this photo  
"May Wilkins & Family"



The Wilkins' involvement in their Fort Collins community continues today through this collection and in the form of the Don and May Wilkins Charitable Trust. Don and May created the Charitable Trust (1999) to provide support for cultural, charitable, historic, and educational purposes in and around our town.

