



# **Guide to the Edna Aikin Baldwin papers, approximately 1900-1991**

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## Summary

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**Collection Title:**

Edna Aikin Baldwin papers, approximately 1900-1991

**Creator:**

Baldwin, Edna Aikin, 1900-1986

**Source:**

Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture

**Abstract:**

Papers and correspondence of Edna Aikin Baldwin (1900-1986), playwright, missionary to Burma (now Myanmar) in the 1920s-1930s, and co-founder of Lisle International.

**Extent:**

4.5 Linear Feet (3 Paige boxes, 1 oversize folder)

**Language:**

Materials in English.

**Collection ID:**

RL.13129

**Permalink:**

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1g468>

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Edna Aikin Baldwin papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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## Background

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**Scope and Content**

The papers of Edna Aikin Baldwin document her life with a particular emphasis on the 1930s. The first series contains personal papers, which include family records, clippings she saved, her high school yearbook, and her CVs and a short document of biographical information. Also included are writings by and from Burma (Myanmar) and the mission there, undated library call slips for titles of

vocational literature, a Kansas driver's license, and a late-life letter by husband DeWitt C. Baldwin Sr. to their friends. One folder contains the correspondence of her intimate friend Warren Healy that was not written to or by Edna. Of particular note for biographical information are the program from her memorial service and a booklet published by Lisle International consisting of compiled memories of those who knew her.

The second series consists of her writings. The Ba Thane subseries contains a script, performance programs and correspondence about her major play, which was performed by many troupes and institutions across the United States during the 1930s. "The Japanese Play," which was never performed or published, has a sub-series consisting of both handwritten and typed drafts, index card notes, and correspondence about the writing process. The final sub-series includes drafts and notes of miscellaneous writings and notes, a poster, a program, and clippings about the Community Christmas Pageant she wrote and directed.

The third series contains photographs, mostly of the Baldwin and Aikin family and friends, many unlabeled and undated. There is one folder of photographs from Burma (Myanmar), a few snapshots from Lisle, and some headshots of Warren Healy.

The bulk of the collection is found in the Correspondence series. Most are letters, but there are also a few postcards and telegrams as well as a mailing list. They originate from 1909 through the late 1950s, but the majority are from the 1930s. Those from 1930 through 1933 contain information about her life in Burma (Myanmar), while those from earlier and later years are more general. Correspondents include her husband, son, parents, various committees and boards of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and friends. The largest percentage are love letters between Edna and Warren Healy.

## **Biographical/Historical**

Edna Aikin Baldwin was a white educator, playwright, and missionary. She was born in 1900 in Illinois and graduated with honors from Northwestern University in 1921; later she earned a master's degree in religious education from the same institution. She married Dr. DeWitt C. Baldwin Sr. (1898-1993) in 1921. From 1923 to 1933, the couple, accompanied by their young son, served as educational missionaries in Burma (now Myanmar) with the Methodist Episcopal Church. While there, she wrote and directed a Christmas Pageant in Dalhousie Park in Rangoon (Yangon); newspapers at the time reported that it was attended by an estimated 12,000 people from 8 countries.

After returning to the United States, she lived in Ann Arbor, Michigan, lectured on college campuses, and wrote the play *Ba Thane* as well as an unpublished work she called "the Japanese play." From 1948 to 1968, she was active in organizations for international students and women at the University of Michigan. From 1953 to 1956, she was dean of women at Olivet College in

Michigan, and from 1968 to 1970, she was foreign students director and counselor at Iowa Wesleyan College.

In 1936, she and her husband co-founded Lisle Fellowship (now Lisle International), which organized international student exchange programs; she remained active with the organization until the end of her life. Under Lisle auspices she led 75 students on a trip to the Soviet Union in 1958. She died in Rockville, Maryland in 1986.

Sources: [Lisle International](#) site and the [Washington Post](#) archives accessed 2025 March 4.

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## Arrangement

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The collection is arranged in four series: Personal papers (1917-1991); Writings (1920s-1979) with sub-series for her two plays, Ba Thane and "The Japanese Play" as well as one for the Community Christmas Pageant and other writings; Photographs (1900s-1960s); and Correspondence (1909-1959). Files are arranged chronologically within each series.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

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URL: <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/>

### Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

## Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the Rubenstein Library's Citations, Permissions, and Copyright guide.

## Acquisition Information

The Edna Aikin Baldwin papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift in 2018.

## Processing Information

Processed by Ren Bickel, March 2025.

Accessions described in this collection guide: 2018-0031

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## Names and Subjects

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- Married people in missionary work
- Burma -- Description and travel
- Love letters
- Women dramatists, American
- Women in missionary work
- Women missionaries -- Burma -- Correspondence
- Methodist Episcopal Church. Board of Foreign Missions
- Black-and-white photographs
- Drama
- Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture
- Baldwin, Edna Aikin, 1900-1986
- Baldwin, DeWitt C.
- Lisle Fellowship, Inc.
- Healy, Warren

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## Collection Inventory

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### Personal papers, 1917-1991

**Scope and Contents**

The Personal Papers series includes Edna Aikin Baldwin's family records, clippings she saved, her high school yearbook, and her CVs and a short document of biographical information. Also included are writings by and from Burma (Myanmar) and the mission there, undated library call slips for titles of vocational literature, a Kansas driver's license, and a late-life letter by her husband to their friends. One folder contains the correspondence of her intimate friend Warren Healy that was not written to or by Edna. Of particular note for biographical information are the program from her memorial service and a booklet published by Lisle International consisting of compiled memories of those who knew her entitled "Aunt Edna: Fifty Years of Memories."

"The E" Yearbook, 1917 Box 1

Baldwin family records, 1921-1970s Box 1

Burma travel guides, 1923 Box 1

The Epworth Herald, 1926 June 30 Box 1

Clippings photocopies, 1920s-1930s Box 1

**Scope and Contents**

Photocopies were made of saved clippings and the original clippings discarded.

Clippings and clippings photocopies, 1920s-1930s Oversize-folder 1

Handwritten quotes and printed Christmas prayer, 1920s-1930s Box 1

Epworth Memorial Methodist Church Passion Week services program, 1931 Box 1

Burma reports in The Indian Witness, 1932 Box 1

"Glimpses of Pagodaland" pamphlet, 1932 Box 1

Grouped poem, clippings, and photographs, 1932 Box 1

Burma reports by others, 1932-1933 Box 1

Warren Healy's correspondence, 1932-1943 Box 1

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### Scope and Contents

Correspondence by and to Warren Healy that does not involve Edna Aikin Baldwin.

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Annotated copy of George Williams College bulletin, 1933	Box 1
Epworth Tidings periodical of Methodist English Church, Rangoon, Burma, 1939	Box 1
Vocational literature library call slips, 1930s-1960s	Box 1
CVs and biographies, 1941-1987	Box 1
Family names and dates, approximately 1949	Box 1
Kansas driver's license and lock of hair, 1951	Box 1
"From the Attic Window" letter by DeWitt C. Baldwin, 1985	Box 1
Celebration of Life program, 1987 January 18	Box 1
"Aunt Edna: 50 Years of Memories" booklet by Nancy Pearson Kinney, 1991	Box 1

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## Writings, 1920s-1979

### Scope and Contents

This series consists of Edna Aikin Baldwin's writings. The Ba Thane sub-series contains a script of the play and performance programs and correspondence about it. This was her major play, which was performed by many troupes and institutions across the United States during the 1930s. "The Japanese Play," which was never performed or published, has a sub-series consisting of both handwritten and typed drafts, index card notes, and correspondence about the writing process. The final sub-series includes drafts and notes of miscellaneous writings and notes, a poster, a program, and clippings about the Community Christmas Pageant she wrote and directed.

### Ba Thane, 1930-1933

Correspondence, 1930-1933	Box 1
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Script, 1931	Box 1
Performance programs, 1931-1932	Box 1
Correspondence about performances, 1932	Box 1

### **"The Japanese Play", 1930s**

Handwritten draft, 1930s	Box 1
Index card notes, 1930	Box 1
Photocopies of typed draft, 1930s	Box 1
Typed draft, 1930s	Box 1
Correspondence, 1936	Box 1

### **Community Christmas Pageant and other writings, 1920s-1979**

"Excerpt from letter written to Downer's Grove SS", 1920s-1930s	Box 1
"Church letter" notes, 1931	Box 1
Clippings about Community Christmas Pageant, 1932 December 27	Oversize-folder 1
Community Christmas Pageant notes, 1932	Box 1
Poster for Community Christmas Pageant, 1932 December 26	Oversize-folder 1
Program for Community Christmas Pageant, 1932 December 26	Box 1
Poetry, drafts, and notes, 1930s	Box 1
Drafts of reflections about past travels and internationalism, 1979	Box 1

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### **Photographs, 1900s-1960s**

#### **Scope and Contents**

This small series contains photographs, mostly of the Baldwin and Aikin family and friends, many unlabeled and undated. There is one folder of photographs

from Burma (Myanmar), a few snapshots from Lisle, and some headshots of Warren Healy.

Personal and family photographs, 1900s-1960s	Box 1
Burma, 1919-1937	Box 1
Family photographs from envelope, 1930	Box 1
Lisle, 1937	Box 1
Small wallet and contents, 1930s	Box 1
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Tiny wallet contained 2 photographs and handwritten note	
Warren Healy, 1930s-1960s	Box 1

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## **Correspondence, 1909-1959**

### **Scope and Contents**

The bulk of the collection is found in this Correspondence series. Most are letters, but there are also a few postcards and telegrams as well as a mailing list. They originate from 1909 through the late 1950s, but the majority are from the 1930s. Those from 1930 through 1933 contain information about her life in Burma (Myanmar), while those from earlier and later years are more general. Correspondents include her husband, son, parents, various committees and boards of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and friends. The largest percentage are love letters between Edna and Warren Healy.

Postcards, 1909-1911	Box 1
"Rejection letter for writing", 1911	Box 1
Correspondence, 1912-1916	Box 1
Correspondence, 1917-1918	Box 1
Correspondence, 1919	Box 1
Correspondence, 1920	Box 1
Correspondence, 1921	Box 1

**Physical Description:** 2 Files

Correspondence, 1922	Box 1
Correspondence, 1923	Box 1
Correspondence, 1924-1929	Box 1
Letters to DeWitt Baldwin, 1920s	Box 1
Undated correspondence, 1920s-1930s	Box 1
Correspondence, 1930	Box 1
Correspondence, 1931	Box 1
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 Files	
Letters from son Bud, 1931	Box 2
"Friends at home" letters, 1931-1932	Box 2
Correspondence, 1932	Box 2
<b>Physical Description:</b> 7 Files	
Methodist Episcopal Church Board of Foreign Missions correspondence, 1932-1933	Box 2
Telegrams, 1932-1939	Box 2
Correspondence, 1933	Box 2
<b>Physical Description:</b> 4 Files	
Correspondence, 1934	Box 2 Box 3
<b>Physical Description:</b> 5 Files	
Correspondence, 1935	Box 3
<b>Physical Description:</b> 4 Files	
Correspondence, 1936	Box 3
<b>Physical Description:</b> 4 Files	
Correspondence, 1937	Box 3
Correspondence, 1938	Box 3
Correspondence, 1939	Box 3

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Draft of telegraph, 1930s	Box 3
Mailing lists, 1930s	Box 3
Correspondence, 1940	Box 3
Correspondence, 1941	Box 3
Correspondence, 1942	Box 3
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 Files	
Correspondence, 1950s	Box 3

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