



Guide to the Willis Edward Byrd Family Papers, 1864-1994

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Summary

Collection Title:

Willis Edward Byrd family papers, 1864-1994

Abstract:

Dr. Willis Edward Byrd was a chemistry professor at Lincoln University. The collection consists of an African American family's papers from the early to mid-twentieth century, including correspondence and transcripts from Byrd's education at Talladega College and University of Iowa; some printed materials and writings collected by his parents, Edward D. and Annie L. Jones Byrd, documenting their connections with the Mulberry Rover Missionary Baptist Association, the Better Homes in America organization, and the American Missionary Association; letters to Byrd during his military service in World War II; letters and his employment contract as a chemistry professor at Lincoln University; photographs of Byrd and other family members, some identified, from the early 1900s; and other letters and educational ephemera, including printed materials from Spelman College and Morehouse College. Acquired as part of the John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture.

Extent:

2.0 Linear Feet

Language:

Materials in English.

Collection ID:

RL.11901

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1ff0s>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Willis E. Byrd Family Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

Collection consists of assorted printed materials, photographs, and some letters and correspondence relating to the education and employment of Willis Edward Byrd and other members of the Byrd and Jones family, including his parents, siblings, aunts, and uncles.

Byrd's attendance and graduation from Talladega College, and his hiring as a chemistry professor at Lincoln University, represent the bulk of his personal papers. There are some photographs of him, including one in army uniform during World War II, and there are some letters to him from his father that discuss his army service and his father's hopes that he will stay focused on his "life's work," presumably meaning his education. Byrd's series also contains correspondence with prospective employers and transcripts from Talladega, Iowa, and Illinois.

Also included in the collection are materials collected or produced by other members of the Jones and Byrd family. Assorted printed materials collected by parents Edward D. Byrd and Annie L. Jones Byrd reflect their community and church activities in Georgia. The collection also contains family photographs of Byrd's parents' generation, including images of his mother, aunts, and uncles. Correspondence and handwritten drafts and reports from Annie L. Jones Byrd document her communications with Better Homes in America regarding the state of housing and education for African Americans in their community, as well as record her and her sister's search for employment as teachers in the mid-1910s. There are also printed materials from Spelman College and Morehouse College, acquired by Willis Edward Byrd's sibling Sarah L. Byrd King and her husband, Arteria King.

The original acquisition also contains a poll tax and property tax receipt from the early 20th century for Henry Adams, in Brazoria County, Texas; as well as a 19th century tax receipt for "Robert Ballentine's heirs." The connection or relationship these individuals have to the Byrd and Jones family is unclear.

Biographical/Historical

Willis Edward Byrd (1922-2015) was son to Edward D. Byrd and Annie L. Jones Byrd. He grew up in Athens, Georgia, and attended Talladega College. He served in the army during World War II, and was stationed in Italy. After the war, Byrd completed his studies at Talladega and later earned a Ph.D. in physical chemistry from the University of Iowa.

In 1949, Byrd joined the faculty at Lincoln University in St. Louis, Missouri, where he taught chemistry (as well as serving as administrator in various capacities) until he retired in 1988.

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Arrangement

Collection is arranged into series: Willis Edward Byrd's materials (which are foldered chronologically), and Byrd Family materials (which are foldered by name).

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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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 Willis E. Byrd Family Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a purchase from Swann Auction Galleries in 2021.

Processing Information

Processed by Meghan Lyon, May 2021

Accessions described in this collection guide: 2021-0035

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Collection Inventory

Willis Edward Byrd materials, 1930s-1950

Photographs of Byrd, 1930s-1940s Box 1

Scope and Contents

Snapshots and formal portraits of Willis Edward Byrd in Army uniform (signed to his sister, Rome, 1945) and in graduation robes. Includes snapshot of Talladega College sign.

Talladega College correspondence, tuition receipts, and transcripts, 1941-1946 Box 1

Talladega College programs and printed materials, 1941-1942 Box 1

Correspondence to Willis E. Byrd from his father, Edward D. Byrd, 1943 Box 1

Iowa State and Illinois universities admissions, transcripts, 1946 Box 1

Lincoln University employment: correspondence, contract, American Chemical Society admission letter, 1949-1950 Box 1

Improved Order Samaritans fraternal society's "Moving Picture Show" advertisement, 1930s Box 2

Lincoln Clarion student newspaper announcing Byrd's hire, 1949 October 26	Box 2
Correspondence from Benjamin E. Mays re: employment at Morehouse, 1949	Box 1
Correspondence from Texas State University re: employment, 1949	Box 1

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Jones and Byrd family materials, 1864-1989

Family photographs, approximately 1900s-1994	Box 2
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Scope and Contents

Contains assorted photographs of the family; some are captioned. Portrait with Edward Byrd, Isaac Byrd, Sarah Jones, Anne Byrd, Mary Jones. Class portrait of Spelman College women (unsure which family member is present). Poloroid Snapshot of unidentified woman with Cabbage Patch doll, 1994. Photograph postcard of marimba band, Atlacatl, approximately 1940.

Edward D. Byrd printed materials, receipts, 1911-1954	Box 1
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Annie Jones Byrd correspondence, notes, photograph, 1931-1950s	Box 1
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Annie Jones Byrd: American Missionary Association reports and correspondence, 1930-1931	Box 1
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Annie Jones Byrd: Better Homes in America correspondence, program announcement, 1931-1932	Box 1
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Mary Elizabeth Jones correspondence re: employment, and funeral program, 1914-1915, 1989	Box 1
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Scope and Contents

Correspondence with the Nashville Institute and Board of Missions for Freedmen. Also contains a photocopy of Jones' funeral program with her obituary, 1989.

Isaac Jones Byrd photographs, 1912 Box 2

Scope and Contents

Portrait of Isaac Jones, dated 1912; portrait of "Isaac Byrd and wife," undated. U.S. Census records indicate Isaac Jones was married to Hattie Lee Jones.

Sarah Louvenia Byrd King: Spelman College materials, 1939-1943 Box 1

Arteria King: Morehouse College materials, 1941-1942 Box 1

Henry Adams: Poll tax receipt and property tax receipt, Brazoria County, Texas, 1895, 1907 Box 1

"Robert Ballentine's Heirs" land tax receipt, Monroe County (unknown state), 1864 April 16 Box 1

Interdenominational Christian Conference for Negro Women, Clark College, Atlanta panoramic photograph, 1948 Box 2

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