



Guide to the Cronly family papers, 1806-1944

This collection guide was produced in **2010**.

This PDF version was created on **April 2, 2026**.

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

askRL@duke.edu

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

Table of Contents

Summary	3
Background	4
Arrangement	5
Administrative Information	5
Names and Subjects	6
Collection Inventory	6
Genealogy	6
Correspondence, 1816-1944 and undated	7
Legal Papers, 1806-1931 and undated	7
Financial Papers, 1806-1942 and undated	7
Clippings and Other Printed Materials	7
Writings	7
Letter Book, 1824-1826	7
Letterpress Books, 1868-1885	8
Account Books, 1837-1892	8
Bound Volumes	8
Photographs	9

Summary

Collection Title:

Cronly family papers, 1806-1944

Creator:

Cronly family; Cronly, Michael, 1826-1898; Cronly family; Cronly, Margaret McLaughlin, 1827-1911; Cronly, Michael, 1854-1930

Abstract:

The Cronly family included Michael Cronly, Sr., auctioneer and real estate broker of Wilmington, N.C. and his wife, Margaret McLaurin Cronly and their nine children. Collection comprises correspondence, financial and legal papers, writings, bound volumes, clippings and other print materials, and photographs of the Cronly family of Wilmington, N.C. Topics include auctioneering and real estate in Wilmington, N.C.; Wilmington social life and economic conditions; Civil War experiences; African American life and conditions during Reconstruction; the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railway Company; railroad bonds; earthquake of 1886; and the Democratic Party and politics in North Carolina. Includes information on the Beatty, Cronly, McLaurin and Murphy families of North Carolina, and descriptions of Charleston (S.C.), Atlantic City (N.J.), Denver (Colorado), Genova (Italy), and the Hudson Fulton Celebration in New York City (1909). Of note is a detailed account of the Wilmington, N.C. 1898 insurrection and race massacre carried out by white supremacists, written by a woman in the Cronly family, possibly Margaret Cronly; the account is accompanied by a 6-page typed transcript.

Extent:

28 Linear Feet (Approximately 1,962 items)

Language:

Material in English

Collection ID:

RL.00272

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1jg83>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Cronly Family papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Background

Scope and Content

Collection chiefly covers the 19th century and into the early 20th, and comprises correspondence, financial records, legal and other papers of the Cronly family of Wilmington, North Carolina. Subjects include auctions and auctioneering, Wilmington social life, Civil War experiences, African American life and conditions during Reconstruction, the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railway Company, railroad bonds issued in North Carolina during Reconstruction, an earthquake that struck the Carolinas in 1886, the Democratic Party and politics in North Carolina. Includes information on the Beatty, Cronly, McLaurin and Murphy families of North Carolina, and descriptions of Charleston (S.C.), Atlantic City (N.J.), Denver (Colorado), Genova (Italy), and the Hudson Fulton Celebration in New York City (1909).

Correspondents include Thomas Walter Bickett, Jr. (N.C. Governor); Harley Lyman Clarke (Chicago businessman); Stephen William Cole (N.C. planter and banker); Newton Martin Curtis (Union officer and U.S. Representative); William Darius Jamieson (U.S. Rep. and newspaper publisher); Herbert Putnam (8th Librarian of Congress); Don Carlos Seitz (NY City newspaper manager); William Nathan Harrell Smith (N.C. Congressman, lawyer, and judge); Waddy Thompson (S.C. politician and lawyer); and Platt Dickinson Walker (Wilmington lawyer and N.C. justice).

Collection contains numerous bound volumes, ledgers, account books, and photographs that have been given basic processing. One bound volume from the 1890s contains a detailed account of the Wilmington, N.C. insurrection and race massacre perpetrated by white supremacists in 1898; the account was apparently written a few days after the event by a woman, possibly Margaret Cronly, and is accompanied by a 6-page typed transcript.

Biographical/Historical

The Cronly family of Wilmington, N.C. included Michael Cronly (1826-1898), auctioneer, wife Margaret McLaurin Cronly, their son Michael (1854-1930), also an auctioneer, who seems to have been single, and their other eight children: Jane, Sally, Joseph, William, Robert, Douglass, Margaret, and Mary.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Arranged in the following series: Genealogy; Correspondence (1816-1944); Legal Papers (1806-1931); Financial Papers (1806-1942); Clippings and Other Printed Materials; Writings; Letter Book (1824-1826); Letterpress Books (1868-1885); Account Books (1837-1892); Bound Volumes; Photographs.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

askRL@duke.edu

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 copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Acquisition Information

The Cronly Family Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift and purchase between 1968-1969.

Processing Information

Collection has been given partial processing and description. Some items may be in original order and condition.

Processed by Rubenstein Library staff. Encoded by Kimberly Sims, June 2010.

Enhanced description by Paula Jeannet, March 2022.

Accession(s) described in this collection guide: 1968-1969.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Names and Subjects

- African Americans -- North Carolina -- Wilmington
- Auctioneers -- North Carolina
- Earthquakes -- Southern States
- Freed persons -- North Carolina
- Hudson-Fulton Celebration, 1909
- Railroads -- North Carolina
- Real estate agents -- North Carolina
- Real estate business -- North Carolina
- Reconstruction (U.S. history, 1865-1877) -- North Carolina
- Wilmington Massacre, Wilmington, N.C., 1898 -- Personal narratives
- North Carolina -- Politics and government -- 1865-1950
- North Carolina -- Race relations
- United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Personal narratives, Confederate
- Wilmington (N.C.) -- Social life and customs
- Wilmington (N.C.) -- Economic conditions -- 19th century
- Black-and-white photographs
- Letter books
- Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherford Railway Company
- Beatty family
- McLaurin family
- Murphy family
- Democratic Party (N.C.)

Collection Inventory

Genealogy

Genealogical information

Box 1

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Correspondence, 1816-1944 and undated

1816-1873	Box 1
1874-1897	Box 2
1898-1915	Box 3
1916-1944, undated	Box 4

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Legal Papers, 1806-1931 and undated

1806-1885	Box 4
1886-1931, undated	Box 5

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Financial Papers, 1806-1942 and undated

1806-1942, undated	Box 5
Tax Lists	Box 6

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Clippings and Other Printed Materials

Printed materials	Box 6
-------------------	-------

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Writings

Various writings	Box 7-8
------------------	---------

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Letter Book, 1824-1826

Letter book	Box 9
-------------	-------

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Letterpress Books, 1868-1885

1868-1878	Box 9
1879-1881 Aug. 23	Box 10
1881 Aug. 24-1883 Oct 18	Box 11
1883 Oct. 19-1885	Box 12
Unidentified letterpress books	Box 22

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Account Books, 1837-1892

1837-1879	Box 13
1870-1874	Box 14
1871-1884	Box 15
1873-1876	Box 16
1876-1879	Box 17
1878-1891	Box 18
1882-1891	Box 19
1886-1892	Box 20
1889-1892, Miscellaneous vols. (race riot account)	Box 21

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Bound Volumes

Scope and Contents note

Bound volumes relating chiefly to the business interests of the Cronly family. Volumes have not been individually identified or described. One "miscellaneous"

volume contains accounts from 1894, genealogical notes on a family from 1770 to the 1800s, and a detailed personal account of the Wilmington Massacre, 1898, an insurrection, coup, and massacre of African Americans carried out by white supremacists (box 21). The account is written in pencil by a woman, probably Margaret Cronly, and is accompanied by a 6-page typed transcript.

Unidentified bound volumes

Volume 1-28

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Photographs

Various photographs

Box 21

[Return to Table of Contents](#)