



# Preliminary Guide to the Irvin Family Papers, circa 1890s-2016

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## Summary

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**Collection Title:**

Irvin Family papers, circa 1890s-2016

**Source:**

John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture

**Creator:**

Irvin family

**Abstract:**

Collection consists largely of correspondence between historian Nell Irvin Painter and her parents (1969-2003), documenting various stages of their lives, travels, and Painter's scholarly career. Also includes writings by or about Nell Painter, including reviews of her work; materials, including photographs and tintypes (circa 1890s-1910s) of African Americans in Victoria, Texas, kept by Frank and Dona Irvin, relating to their early life near Houston, and documenting aspects of African American history in that area; copies and reviews of Dona Irvin's writings; documents related to Frank and Dona's education and careers; family photographs; videos; Frank Irvin's diary (2000-2003); legal papers; and other items. Acquired as part of the John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture.

**Extent:**

10.25 Linear Feet (23 boxes; 2 oversize folders)  
approximately 5150 Items

**Language:**

Materials in English

**Collection ID:**

RL.00619

**Permalink:**

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1x05j>

**Preferred Citation**

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

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## Background

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### Scope and Content

Collection consists largely of correspondence between historian Nell Irvin Painter and her parents (1969-2003), documenting various stages of their lives, travels, and Painter's scholarly career. Also includes writings by or about Nell Painter, including reviews of her work; copies and reviews of Dona Irvin's writings; documents related to Frank and Dona's education and careers; Frank Irvin's diary (2000-2003); legal papers; and other items.

Photographs also form an important part of the collection. Along with papers and records, Frank and Dona Irvin kept early photos and tintypes (circa 1890s-1910s) of African Americans in Victoria, Texas; together, these materials speak to their early life near Houston, and document aspects of African American history in that area. There are also family photographs from later decades (1930s-1980s).

For preservation purposes, original audiovisual media are closed to use; copies may be available on request.

Acquired as part of the John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture.

### Biographical/Historical

Dona Irvin (1917-2009) was the author of *The Unsung Heart of Black America*, *I Hope I Look That Good When I'm That Old*, and other works. Frank Irvin was a chemist and worked for many years for the Chemistry Department of the University of California at Berkeley. The Irvins are the parents of historian Nell Irvin Painter, whose papers are also in the Rubenstein Library.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive  
Duke University

Durham 27708

[askRL@duke.edu](mailto: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 Irvin Family Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift in 2003, 2015, 2016, and 2019.

### **Processing Information**

Processed by Stacey Clarke

Completed October 15, 2003

Encoded by Stacey Clarke, Elizabeth Arnold

Additions processed by Katrina Martin, 2015 and 2016, and Laurin Penland, 2019.

This collection has been given basic processing: materials may not have been ordered and described beyond their original condition.

Accessions described in this collection guide: 2003-0185, 2015-0035, 2015-0192, 2016-0112, 2019-0101.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Material

For more information, see the Nell Irvin Painter Papers, 1959-2002 and undated, in the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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## Names and Subjects

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- African American families
- African American families -- History -- 20th century
- African Americans -- Professional education
- African Americans -- History -- 19th century
- African Americans -- Texas -- History
- African Americans -- Employment
- African Americans -- Correspondence
- African Americans -- Photographs
- College teachers -- Correspondence
- Scholars -- Correspondence
- Victoria (Tex.) -- History
- Black-and-white photographs
- Color photographs
- Diaries
- Tintypes (photographs)
- Videocassettes
- John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture
- Irvin family
- Painter, Nell Irvin
- Irvin, Dona L., 1917-
- Irvin, Frank

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## Collection Inventory

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**Accession 2003-0185**

## Irvin Family

Awards	Box 1
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Frank's Plaques and Certificates.	
Correspondence, [1983-2001]	Box 1
Family Photographs	Box 2
Legal Papers	Box 2
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Real Estate and Title Documents, [1960-1988]	
Correspondence, [1977-1989]	Box 3
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Includes letters to Dona from Frank.	
Happily Ever After: Couples Talk About Lasting Love	Box 3
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Featuring interview with Frank and Dona Irvin.	
Dona's College Records	Box 3
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Includes records from Prairie View College, Houston College for Negroes (now Texas Southern), and UCB.	
Black Women Stirring the Waters, reviews and excerpts	Box 3
Correspondence, [1995-1996]	Box 4
<del>Books Written by Dona Irvin</del>	
Black Women Stirring the Waters	Box 4
The Unsung Heart of Black America: A Middleclass Church at Midcentury	Box 4

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I Hope I Look That Good When I'm That Old:  
An Older African-American Woman Speaks to  
All Women in All of America Box 4

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Newspaper Clippings, 1984-1993 Box 5

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Photos of Ewart and Charles E. McGruder Box 5

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Prairie View: A Study in Public Conscience Box 5

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**Scope and Contents note**

The narrative by George Ruble Woolfolk is the story of the only state-supported Negro college in Texas between 1878 and 1946.

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**Nell Irvin Painter**

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Correspondence, 1969-2003 Box 6-12

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes letters from Nell Irvin Painter to her parents.

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Articles and Reviews by and About Nell Irvin  
Painter, 1968-2001 Box 13

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes articles and publicity about Sojourner Truth, a Life, a Symbol

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Writing by Nell Irvin Painter 1970 Box 13

**Scope and Contents note**

"Jim Crow at Harvard, 1923"

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Commencement Programs  
Yale University 2003 Box 13

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Dartmouth College 1997 Box 13

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Wesleyan University 1996 Box 13

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Princeton University 1996 Box 13

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Videos

**Access Restrictions:**

Original audiovisual media closed to use. Listening or viewing copies may be available upon request. Please contact the Rubenstein Library before coming to use these materials.

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MacNeil/Lehrer News with Nell Irvin Painter  
1991 Mar. 13 Box 14

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C-SPAN Box 14

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**Scope and Contents note**

Nell Irvin Painter talks about her book *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*

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Book Notes from *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* 1996 Dec. 8 Box 14

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C-SPAN Organization of American Historians.  
"The Art of Writing" 2002 Mar. 13 Box 14

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Assorted Photographs Box 14

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**Scope and Contents note**

Includes photographs from Nell and Glenn's wedding and the OBU rally at Harvard.

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Assorted Photographs and Postcards Box 15

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**Scope and Contents note**

Includes Nell Irvin Painter's high school photographs, photographs from trip to Quebec City, 2001, and portraits and tintypes taken in Victoria, Texas, ca. 1890s-1900s.

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Nell's Home in North Carolina Box 15

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Family Photographs Box 16

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**Scope and Contents note**

Includes black-and-white photos, [1930s]-[1980s]

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Correspondence, 1995-2003 Box 16

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**Scope and Contents note**

Includes e-mail messages from Nell Irvin Painter to her parents.

High School Diploma and Graduation Ceremony, 1959	Box 17
Pelican Magazine UCB, 1959	Box 17
Harvard Union Commencement Program, 1974	Box 17
Correspondence, 1962	Box 17
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Includes Nell Irvin Painter's letters to her parents.	
Photographs	Box 18
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Includes pictures from Crossroads Africa summer in Nigeria.	
Legal Papers, 1945	Box 18
Documents Regarding Nell Irvin Painter's Education	
Education Abroad Program, Boreaux, France, 1962	Box 18
B.A. from UCB, 1964	Box 18
M.A. from UCLA, 1967	Box 18
CA Junior College Teaching Credential, Life. 1968	Box 18
Nell Irvin Painter curriculum vitae. 1984	Box 18

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### Accession 2015-0035

Frank Irvin's Diary, 2000-2003	Box 19
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### Books Written by Dona Irvin

Expenses for The Unsung Heart of Black America	
Book Reviews: The Unsung Heart of Black America	Box 19

Drafts	Box 19
Drafts - I Hope I Look That Good When I'm That Old	Box 19
Correspondence - I Hope I Look That Good When I'm That Old	Box 19
Correspondence	Box 19
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Largely correspondence between Nell Irvin Painter and her parents, ranging from the 1960s to 2000s. Includes email correspondence.	
Photographs	Box 19
Miscellaneous notes	Box 19
Biographical essay - Dona Irvin	Box 20
Events	Box 20
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Includes planning materials for Frank Irvin's 85th birthday party and materials from memorial services, including Dona Irvin's memorial service.	
Printed Material	Box 20
Awards	Box 20
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Includes Frank Irvin's Certificate of Appreciation for 25 years of service from the Univerisity of California.	
Medical Documents	Box 20
Legal and Financial documents	Box 20
<b>Scope and Contents</b>	
Includes photocopies of Frank and Dona Irvin's marriage certificate, tax records, and talent release forms.	
Photocopies - Research Material	Box 20

Clippings	Box 20
AV Materials	Box 20

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Original audiovisual media closed to use. Listening or viewing copies may be available on request. Please contact the Rubenstein Library before coming to use these materials.

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**Accession 2015-0192**

Correspondence, 2007-2009	Box 21
Frank and Dona Irvin's Wedding Anniversary Guest Book, 1997	Box 21
Correspondence received by Frank Irvin, 2009-2011	Box 21
<b>Physical Description:</b> 2 folders	
Dona Irvin correspondence and notes, 2007	Box 21
Dona Irvin obituary, 2009	Box 21
Family photographs, 1985, 1997, undated	Box 21 > Oversize-folder 1

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**Accession 2016-0112**

**Scope and Contents**

Addition (2016-0112) contains materials transferred from the Nell Irvin Painter papers. Contains family photographs primarily from the 1990s and a calendar in which Dona and Frank Irvin appeared.

Photograph of Frank and Dona Irvin at Dona's retirement party, 1982	Box 22
Portrait of Dona and Nell taken by Bill Gaskins, ca. 1999	Box 22
Family snapshots 1964-1999 and undated	Box 22

2002 calendar:Happily Ever After, pictures of everlasting love

Oversize-folder 2

**Scope and Contents**

Month of April features a portrait of Dona and Frank Irvin.

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**Accession 2019-0101**

Donna Irvin's memorial service, 2009	Box 23
General correspondence, 2011-2017	Box 23
McGruder family correspondence, 2016-2018	Box 23
Photographs, 1890s-2014	Box 23
Frank Irvin's memorial service, 2016	Box 23

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