



# Guide to the Eliza Wright Murphy Papers, 1847-1927

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## Summary

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**Collection Title:**

Eliza Wright Murphy papers, 1847-1927

**Creator:**

Murphy, Eliza Wright

**Abstract:**

Teacher, from Atkinson, N.C. The papers of Eliza Wright Murphy consist of correspondence, poems, school essays, receipts, printed material, reports, and photographs. Most of these items are the personal papers of Eliza and her brothers: Edwin Edgar Murphy (1874-1914), John Gerald Murphy (b. 1872), Paul Percy Murphy (b. 1878), Isaac Wright Murphy, and C.C. Murphy, referred to as "Neil." Also includes material concerning the Arran-on-Black River Literary and Historical Society in Wilmington, N.C., including programs, minutes, memos, and reports, and the Presbyterian Mission Hospital in Kiangyin, China. The correspondence consists of several hundred letters to Eliza and her brothers from friends and relatives in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida. News about local events and the correspondent's personal life are the chief subjects discussed. Correspondents outside of the immediate family included members of the Vidal and Wright families.

**Extent:**

1.2 Linear Feet  
950 Items

**Physical Location:**

For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

**Language:**

English

**Language:**

Material in English

**Collection ID:**

RL.00922

**Permalink:**

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/murphyelizawright/>

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Eliza Wright Murphy 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 Eliza Wright Murphy span the years 1873 to 1927 and consist of correspondence, poems, school essays, receipts, printed material, reports, and photographs. Most of these items are the personal papers of Eliza and her brothers; about 30 items, however, concern the Arran-on-Black River Literary and Historical Society or the Presbyterian Church. The correspondence forms the bulk of the collection.

The correspondence consists of several hundred letters to Eliza (circa 60%), and, from the 1890s to 1927, to her brothers (circa 40%), from friends and relatives living in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and elsewhere; very few of the letters are addressed to Eliza's parents. News about local events and the correspondent's personal life are the chief subjects discussed. Correspondents outside of the immediate family include Eliza's uncle J.C. Wright and other relatives in Coharie, N.C.; John W. Vidal, Adolphe L. Vidal and other cousins in Gainesville, Fla.; and Elizabeth Janet Black, or "Bessie," also a cousin, who lived in Raleigh, Lumber Bridge, and elsewhere in North Carolina before finally settling in Ivanhoe. Bessie's letters include a limited discussion of her teaching career, and, after 1919, her work for the Arran-on-Black River Literary and Historical Society as its secretary.

Eliza and her brothers also wrote frequently to each other. From 1898 to 1901, there are letters from John, Edwin, and Paul while they attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Isaac while he attended Oak Ridge Institute in Oak Ridge, N.C., and, to a lesser extent, from Neil while a student at Massey Business College in Richmond, Va. These letters concern student life at their respective schools, Isaac's volunteer work for the Y.M.C.A., and the usual family matters such as inquiries as to one's health, church, and social activities. Although Eliza's brothers pursued several different careers, very few of their letters discuss their professional and business activities; instead, the focus of their letters is on family news and social activities.

The Writings series (14 items) consist of short poems and school essays (1 p.) written by Eliza during childhood and early adolescence. The Legal and Financial Papers (40 items) consist of receipts, and undated tax list for the Black River section of Pender Co., N.C., and an undated contract for the distillation of grain. The Miscellaneous Papers (25 items) include two grade reports, one each for Edwin Edgar Murphy and John G. Murphy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, concert programs, a mimeographed

copy entitled "Constitution, By-Laws, and Minutes of an Educational Association in Cleveland County organized about 1860," and three photographs (circa 1890s) of five women, one of whom may be Eliza.

The first category (15 items) in the Tropical Series concerns the Arran-on-Black River Literary and Historical Society. Incorporated in 1919, its chief purpose was to collect and publish materials documenting the heritage of Scottish emigrants from the island of Arran, off the west coast of Scotland, who settled in the Black River section of Eastern North Carolina. Included are programs, minutes, memos, and reports dating from 1919 to 1923. Letters concerning this society are located in the correspondence from 1919 onward.

The second category (12 items) concerns the Presbyterian Church, especially its foreign missions. Included is a manual of the First Presbyterian Church of Wilmington, N.C. (1904); newsletters from the Foreign Missions Executive Committee (1908-1910); and a handwritten report (1913) on the hospital fund campaign, submitted by Eliza Murphy to the Wilmington Presbytery, for the mission in Kiangyin, China.

This collection best documents a young woman growing up in North Carolina during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as her relationships with her brothers and the relations among the brothers themselves, separate from her. Other aspects documented include student life in college, teaching, a family's support of the Presbyterian Church, missionary activities in China, and the Arran-on-Black River Literary and Historical Society.

## **Biographical/Historical**

Elizabeth Wright Murphy, daughter of John Henry and Elizabeth Catherine Murphy, was born during the 1860s or 1870s in Atkinson, N.C., where she continued to live for most of her life. Eliza graduated from Salem Female Academy in Salem, N.C., in 1895, and soon thereafter moved to Miccosukee, Fla., to teach at an unidentified school. In 1899 Eliza moved back to Atkinson; it appears that her career as a teacher did not continue afterwards. Eliza never married.

Eliza had five brothers: Edwin Edgar (1874-1914), John Gerald (b. 1872), Paul Percy (b. 1878), Isaac Wright, and C.C. Murphy, referred to as "Neil."

Edwin Edgar Murphy, a merchant and farmer, was involved in a number of business enterprises and by 1905 was operating a general store in Atkinson, N.C. John Gerald Murphy, a physician, attended medical school at the University of Louisville and returned to North Carolina to practice medicine at Kenansville (1902-1907) and Wilmington (1908-?); he also served as president of the Arran-on-Black River Literary and Historical Society from 1920 to 1922. Paul Percy Murphy, a textile company executive, was employed by Wilmington Cotton Mills, Lowell Cotton Mills, Peerless Manufacturing Co., and other firms. Isaac Wright Murphy and Neil Murphy, both businessmen, eventually established a firm in

Greensboro, N.C., which sold stoves, heaters, and cooking utensils. All of the Murphys appear to have been devoted Presbyterians.

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Statement**

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### **Access Restrictions**

Collection is open for research.

Researchers must register and agree to copyright and privacy laws before using this collection.

All or portions of this collection may be housed off-site in Duke University's Library Service Center. The library may require up to 48 hours to retrieve these materials for research use.

Please contact Research Services staff before visiting the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library to use this collection.

### **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 Eliza Wright Murphy Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a purchase in 1955-1956.

## Processing Information

Processed by Rubenstein Library Staff, 1989

Encoded by Meghan Lyon, May 2011

Materials may not have been ordered and described beyond their original condition.

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## Names and Subjects

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- Florida -- Social life and customs
- South Carolina -- Social life and customs
- Wilmington (N.C.) -- Social life and customs
- Presbyterians -- North Carolina
- North Carolina -- Social life and customs
- Presbyterian Church -- Missions
- Women -- Correspondence
- Murphy family
- Kiangyin Hospital (Kiangyin, China)
- Arran-on-Black River Literary and Historical Society (Wilmington, N.C.)
- Murphy, Elizabeth Wright
- Murphy, Eliza Wright
- Murphy, Edwin Edgar, 1874-1914
- Murphy, C.C.
- Vidal family
- Murphy, Paul Percy, b. 1878
- Murphy, John Gerald, b. 1872
- Murphy, Isaac Wright
- Wright family

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## Collection Inventory

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### Papers, 1847-1927

Physical Description: 3 boxes

#### Correspondence

**Scope and Contents note**

Chiefly letters to Eliza and, from 1890s onward, to her brothers, from friends and relatives living in N.C., S.C., Fla., and elsewhere. News about local events and the correspondent's personal life are the chief subjects discussed. Eliza and her brothers also wrote frequently to each other. Arranged chronologically.

1873-1901	Box 1
1902-1905	Box 2
1906-1927 and undated	Box 3

**Writings, 1880**

Short poems and school essays	Box 3
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**Legal and financial papers, 1847-1912**

Undated tax list for Black River section of Pender Co., N.C.	Box 3
Undated contract for distillation of grain	Box 3
Receipts	Box 3

**Miscellaneous papers**

Grade reports, concert programs, printed material, and three photographs of five women	Box 3
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**Topical Series**

Arran-on-Black River Literary and Historical Society, 1919-1923	Box 3
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**Scope and Contents note**

Programs, minutes, memos, and reports documenting this organization's purpose.

Presbyterian Church, 1904-1913	Box 3
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**Scope and Contents note**

Mostly materials relating to foreign missions, especially the Kiangyin Mission Hospital in China.

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