

Collection #
M 0391,
OM 0262

BEULAH B. GRAY PAPERS, 1813–1962

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Processed by

Betty Alberty
Paul Brockman, Supervisor
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	8 manuscript boxes, 1 oversize folder, 6 folders of photographs, 4 negatives. 1 oversize graphic
COLLECTION DATES:	1819–1963
PROVENANCE:	Ralph D. Gray, Indianapolis, Indiana, May 1980

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1980.0503

NOTES: Originally processed by Paul Brockman and Carolyn Autry.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Beulah B. (Brazleton) Gray (1882–1964) was a local historian, newspaper editor/owner, and genealogist in Pike County, Indiana.

Mrs. Gray was born in Petersburg, Indiana, the daughter of Rosalvo and Laura (Capehart) Brazelton. She graduated from Petersburg High School in 1900 and taught school in Cato, Indiana, from 1901–1902. In 1903 she married Edward Montgomery Gray (circa 1880–1932), and they had four children.

Early in life Mrs. Gray began writing letters prolifically and developing her great interest in history and genealogy which she maintained throughout her life. In 1920 she joined the staff of the *Otwell Star* as a reporter. She served as editor of the paper from 1929–1945, and purchased the paper about 1930. She also wrote a column about the history and the residents of Pike County. During this same period, she began a regular and continuing correspondence with Senator Homer E. Capehart.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, she saw a need to stay in touch with those going off to war. She began by writing and requesting their unit insignia. Some of these men and women became regular correspondents, writing from all theaters of the war, including enemy prison camps. She never failed to reply to the soldiers' letters, and always with encouragement and affection. During the war she opened a correspondence with an English woman named Elsie Whitehurst Lighthorn, whose parents owned an inn in Norwich, Cheshire, England. Over a period of years, a deep friendship developed between the two women that lasted well beyond the end of the war.

In addition to her newspaper work, Mrs. Gray wrote many historical articles and pamphlets, and was a frequent speaker on historical topics. She also wrote many church pageants and short plays for special celebrations. Her greatest accomplishment was *The Saga of Three Churches: A History of Presbyterianism in Petersburg, 1821–1953*.

In 1945 Mrs. Gray sold the *Star* to Donald M. Montgomery of the Petersburg *Press*, and in November of the following year, the *Star* was absorbed by the *Press*. After her retirement from the newspaper business, Mrs. Gray became the housemother for the student nurses' residence at Welborn Baptist Hospital in Evansville. She remained there until ill health forced her retirement in 1950. She then returned to Petersburg where she lived with her daughter until her death in 1964.

Sources: Information in collection.

Thompson, Donald Eugene. *Indiana Authors and Their Books, 1917–1966: A Continuation of Indiana Authors and Their Books, 1816–1916, and Containing Additional Names from the Earlier Period*. Crawfordsville, Ind.: Wabash College, 1974. p. 241 (Z1281 .B31 1974).

Pumroy, Eric. *A Guide to Manuscript Collections Indiana Historical Society and Indiana State Library*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society. (Z 1281 .P5 1986).

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The largest part of the correspondence is concerned primarily with Mrs. Gray's genealogical work, but letters from friends both locally and worldwide are also included. The non-genealogical letters mainly contain family news, events, and items of mutual interest to writer and Mrs. Gray. Genealogical inquiries in addition to the Gray and Brazelton families include extensive material relating to the Hargrave, DeBruler, Chappell, Niblack, Capehart, Chambers, Davisson, Kelso, and Foster families.

There are also some scattered letters from various ancestors of the Grays and the Brazeltons from 1835–1864, and a lengthy Christmas letter written by Beulah Gray in 1927 in which she describes Billy Sunday's appearance at Lawrenceburgh, Indiana.

The military correspondence includes stateside as well as overseas mail. A large percentage of this material is from Elsie Whitehurst Lightburn from 1944–1949 and provides extensive accounts of wartime England during the blitz, the first V-2 bombings, and daily life with its shortages, rationing, and coping with the presence of thousands of foreigners. As her letters were not subject to military censorship, her accounts of daily life and the war are fuller than those of U.S. soldiers. Mrs. Gray also received letters from soldiers and other military personnel who were allowed to write only about the weather or personal feelings.

The papers also include legal documents, tax receipts, and land indentures (1819–1919); religious history and its related correspondence; the manuscript and press releases for *The Saga of Three Churches*; and articles, essays, programs, and pageants written by Mrs. Gray. Among the other items in the collection are three copy books (1833, 1840, and ca. 1912), a music book (1895), assorted clippings relating individuals within the collection, and genealogical articles.

Visual material in the collection includes postcards from Elsie Whitehurst Lightburn and American soldiers, and photographs of the Gray, Brazelton, and Capehart families. Also included is a hand-painted Christmas card sent to Gray by an American soldier.

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Marian Gray Anderson, 1941–62	Box 1, Folder 4
Ralph D. Gray	Box 1, Folder 5
Grandchildren Correspondence	Box 1, Folder 6
Rex and Josephine Brazelton Correspondence	Box 1, Folder 7

Correspondence, 1894–1943	Box 1, Folder 8
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Laura C. Brazelton, Items and Obituaries	Box 1, Folder 10
Special Greetings	Box 1, Folder 11
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Family Photographs, ca. 1880s–1950s	Visual Collections: Photographs, Folder 1
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William Harris and William Hawley Correspondence, 1955–57	Box 2, Folder 1
John Foster Dulles Correspondence, 1955–57	Box 2, Folder 2
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World War II Correspondence, Joe Harris, 1942–44, 1947	Box 2, Folder 9
World War II Correspondence, European Theater, 1944–45	Box 2, Folder 10
World War II Correspondence, Europe, Africa, Allied Nurses Corps	Box 2, Folder 11

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World War II Correspondence, 1944–49 (2 of 2)	Box 3, Folder 1
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Series 2: Genealogy, Pike County Families

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Pike County Families (8 of 8)	Box 3, Folder 9

Series 3: Historical Material and Writings

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Press Clippings, <i>Saga of Three Churches</i>	Box 4, Folder 1
Correspondence, <i>Saga of Three Churches</i>	Box 4, Folder 2
“Mothers of the Bible”	Box 4, Folder 3
William Owen Harris	Box 4, Folder 4
History of Presbyterian Churches, Petersburg, Indiana	Box 4, Folder 5
Correspondence, Newsletters, Clippings	Box 4, Folder 6
Local History/Biographies—Petersburg, Indiana	Box 4, Folder 7

Beulah Gray, "Petersburg"	Box 4, Folder 8
Beulah Gray, "Early History of Pike County"	Box 4, Folder 9
Pike County History	Box 4, Folder 10
Legal Documents and Tax Receipts, 1831–59	Box 4, Folder 11
Land Grants and Indentures, 1819–72, 1900–19	Box 5, Folder 1
Muster Roll, 58 th Indiana Regiment, Co. "I," 1862–65	OM 0262
Petersburg, Indiana, ca. 1880	Visual Collections: Photographs, OVA
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Series 4: Articles, Essays, and Programs by Beulah Gray

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://157.91.92.2/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0391).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.