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## Edmunds and Willis Family Papers (MSS 549)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives  
 Department of Library Special Collections  
 Western Kentucky University  
 Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 549 EDMUNDS & Willis Family Papers**

4 boxes. 32 folders. 826 items. 1832-1968. Originals.

SC2015.82.1

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Francis Morgan “Frank” Willis was born on 12 August 1839 to George B. (1785-1848) and Eliza J. (Thompson) Willis (1807-1890). They lived on a large farm near the Salem Church, in the Cave City area of Barren County, Kentucky. Family lore indicates that Francis later changed his name to Frank and added the middle name Morgan, as he admired Civil War general John Hunt Morgan. The Willises were a very musical family, playing a wide array of instruments, and Frank M. Willis held singing schools and enjoyed an enviable reputation as a singer, as did his brother John Settle Willis. George and Eliza had 16 children. Frank married Laura Wilson Edmunds on 21 February 1878 at the home of his in-laws Charles Penn and Elizabeth T. (Eubank) Edmunds. The Willises had six daughters that lived to adulthood and two children (a boy and a girl) that died as small children. Frank maintained a farm near Beckton, Barren County, for many years. Frank died on 13 October 1913 and his wife Laura on 12 March 1929. They are both buried in the Beech Grove Baptist Church cemetery in Barren County.

**COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection consists almost exclusively of correspondence of the Edmunds and Willis families of Barren County, Kentucky. The majority of the collection contains the correspondence of the immediate family of Francis Morgan “Frank” Willis (1839-1913) and Laura Wilson (Edmunds) Willis (1857-1929), which includes their daughters: Annie Elizabeth (Willis) Edmunds (1889-1972), Minnie Lee (Willis) Duvall (1879-1900), Katherine Allen “Kate” (Willis) Edmunds (1884-1948), Mayme Scott (Willis) Lewis (1890-1913), Hattie Maude (Willis) Amos (1883-1958), and Jessie Francis (Willis) Hildreth (1895-1984). Because of the overwhelmingly female audience of this correspondence, it chiefly includes information about family matters, health, sewing and other handwork, fashion, housekeeping, maternal relations and consolation. The one interesting exception to this typical feminine correspondence is found in several letters written by Laura’s sister, Virginia Edmunds, of San Jose, California. She mentions topics such as meditation and yoga and holistic health. The Willis family enjoyed and played music of all types, so that topic is addressed frequently. Frank, on occasion, leads singing schools, and several of the daughters play musical instruments and later teach private lessons. Occasional mentions are made of church and social events. Frank Willis does write his daughters on

occasion. In these letters he discusses farming and provides paternal advice. Although the daughters do move frequently in search of jobs and following their husbands, Laura Willis—the mother—spends almost her entire life in Barren County, Kentucky.

Most of the Edmunds family correspondence, outside of Laura Edmunds Willis, is found in Box 1, Folder 2. It is chiefly letters written to William Edmunds in Glasgow, Kentucky and letters written by Lizzie Edmunds to family members in Louisville. Folder 2 also includes a number of letters written by Elizabeth George “Lizzie” Willis to her brother Frank M. Willis.

### ***SHELF LIST***

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>Correspondence</b>	<b>1832-1920</b>	<b>258 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	Correspondence	1832-1888	39 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	1892-1898	49 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	1900-1909	44 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	1910-1913	37 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	1914	26 items
Folder 7	Correspondence	1915-1917	16 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	1918	12 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	1919	15 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	1920	19 items
<b>BOX 2</b>	<b>Correspondence</b>	<b>1921- 1925</b>	<b>147 items</b>
Folder 1	Correspondence	Jan.-Apr. 1921	19 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	May-Aug. 1921	21 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	Sept.-Dec. 1921	15 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	1922	21 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	1923	44 items

Folder 6	Correspondence	1924	16 items
Folder 7	Correspondence	1925	11 items
<b>BOX 3</b>	<b>Correspondence</b>	<b>1926-1952</b>	<b>217 items</b>
Folder 1	Correspondence	1926	27 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	1927	18 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	1928	19 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	1929	10 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	1930-1934	27 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	1935-1939	26 items
Folder 7	Correspondence	1940-1941	22 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	1942-1943	10 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	1944	17 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	1945	14 items
Folder 11	Correspondence	1946-1949	15 items
Folder 12	Correspondence	1951-1952	12 items
<b>BOX 4</b>	<b>Correspondence</b>	<b>1953-1968</b>	<b>204 items</b>
Folder 1	Correspondence	1953	37 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	1954	25 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	1955	26 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	1956	14 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	1957	15 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	1958	8 items

Folder 7	Correspondence	1959	18 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	1961-1968	6 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	n.d.	21 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	n.d.	21 items
Folder 11	Correspondence	n.d.	10 items
Folder 12	Song lyrics or poems	n.d.	3 items

### ***BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD***

MSS EDMUNDS & Willis Family Papers 1832-1968  
549

Almost exclusively correspondence of the Edmunds and Willis families of Barren County, Kentucky. The Willis family correspondence (the bulk of the collection) is almost exclusively amongst females, so housekeeping, sewing, fashion, family matters are discussed frequently. Frank Willis, the family patriarch, does discuss farming with his daughters. Many of the letters are addressed to his wife, Laura (Edmunds) Willis, and a majority of those are from her daughters.

4 boxes. 32 folders. 826 items. Originals.  
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### ***SUBJECT ANALYTICS***

Accidents, Automobiles – Mentioned, 1925 B2,F7  
 Accidents, Automobiles – Mentioned, 1961 B4,F8  
 Accidents, Buggy – Mentioned, 1921 B2,F3  
 Accidents, Lawn mowers – Mentioned, 1945 B3,F10  
 Allen, J. C. B3,F3  
 Allen, Louisa B1,F2  
 Allen, Mary B3,F12  
 Allen, Nathan Perry B1,F2  
 Amos, Earline B3,F7  
 Amos, Frances Anita B4,F1  
 Amos, Hattie Maude (Willis), 1881-1958 – Correspondence B1,F4-6,F9,10; B2,F1-3;  
 F1-3,5-9,F12; B4,F1-5  
 Amos, Nellie B1,F7  
 Amos, Nelson B3,F7  
 Amos, Violet B4,F2-6

Automobiles – Drawings, 1949 B3,F11  
 Automobiles – Kaiser – Comments about, 1952 B3,F12  
 Bank robberies – Oakland, 1929 B3,F4  
 Barnhill, Mary E. B1,F2  
 Barrick, Edna B3,F1  
 Barrick, Mable B1,F10  
 Barrick, Paul B4,F10  
 Barrick, Stella A. B4,F2  
 Barton, L. F. B2,F1,7; B3,F1-3; B4,F10  
 Barton, Musie B3,F6  
 Bees B1,F2  
 Biltmore Industries – Asheville, North Carolina – Relating to, 1941 B3,F7  
 Birthday cards B3,F12; B4,F1,3  
 Blakeman, Ora B1,F7; B3,F1; B4,F1,2  
 Boardinghouses – Comments about, 1946 B3,F11  
 Boats and boating, 1925 B2,F7  
 Boles, Ella B4,F10  
 Butler, Daisy – Correspondence B1,F3  
 Capitol Theatre – Bowling Green – Mentioned, 1929 B3,F4  
 Carter, Callie B2,F4,7  
 Carter family B2,F4  
 Carter, W. D. B4,F6-7  
 Centennial celebrations – Oregon, 1959 B4,F7  
 Chapman, Lonnie B. – Correspondence B1,F4  
 Chapman, Lula B3,F5  
 Children – Death, 1863 – Comments about B1,F2  
 Children's letters, 1916 B1,F7  
 Christmas, 1916 – Comments about B1,F7  
 Christmas cards B3,F9,11  
 Claus, Santa – Illustration, 1912 B1,F5  
 Coberly, Thelma B3,F6; F4,F11  
 Coley, Mary Othie B1,F10  
 Collins, Floyd, 1887-1925 – Mentioned B2,F7  
 Consolation B1,F2; B3,F1,3,4,11; B4,F10-11  
 Cook, Faye B4,F6-7  
 Cooke, S. P. (Mrs.) F4,F10  
 Courtship B1,F2-4,F8-9; B3,F9-11; B4,F9-11  
 Cullman, Alabama – Social life and customs B2,F2-3  
 Daughtry, Samuel S. B1,F6  
 Daughtry, Sannie B2,F1  
 DeMombrom, Mary Pansy, 1885-1963 B1,F10  
 Diet therapy B1,F8; B3,F5; B4,F3  
 Diphtheria – Mentioned B1,F10  
 Divorce – Comments about, 1935 B3,F610  
 Duke, Bettie B1,F2  
 Duncan, W. M. B1,F2

Duvall, Garnet Willis, 1900-1954 – Correspondence B1,F10; B3,F2-3  
 Duvall, George – Letter to B1,F3  
 Duvall, Minnie Lee (Willis), 1879-1900 – Correspondence B1,F3  
 Duvall, Ollie B. (Pare), b. 1897 B3,F8-9  
 Duvall, Travis M., 1936-2016 B3,F9; B3,F11  
 Dysfunctional families B3,F3  
 Easter cards B3,F9-10  
 Edmunds, Annie Elizabeth (Willis), 1889-1972 – Correspondence B3,F12; B4,F1-7  
 Edmunds, B. R. B1,F3  
 Edmunds, Charlie B4,F1  
 Edmunds, Dorothy B3,F6  
 Edmunds, E. A. – Letters to B1,F2  
 Edmunds, Elizabeth T. (Eubank), 1811-1881 B1,F2  
 Edmunds, Eva E. – Letters to B1,F2  
 Edmunds, Faye B3,F8; B4,F3,10  
 Edmunds, James Buford, 1883-1966 B3,F5-6; B4,F7  
 Edmunds, James Christopher, 1830-1908 – Letters to B1,F2; B3,F12  
 Edmunds, Julia B3,F1,4  
 Edmunds, Katherine “Kate” B2,F7; B3,F2,4-7; B4,F10  
 Edmunds, Laura Wilson, 1857-1929 – Relating to, 1867 B1,F2  
 Edmunds, Laurie B3,F6  
 Edmunds, Lewis M. B1,F4; B3,F12  
 Edmunds, Martha Ann B3,F6,7; B4,F6,7  
 Edmunds, Musie B3,F5,7  
 Edmunds, R. R., Jr. B4,F1  
 Edmunds, Virginia – Death of, 1917 B1,F7  
 Edmunds, William, 1776-1863 – Correspondence B1,F2; B2,F7  
 Edwards, Jarusha Henrietta (Denson), 1893-1978 B2,F2-3,7; B3,F6  
 Edwards, Julia B4,F10  
 Edwards, Lewis D. “Bud, 1895-1959 B2,F2-3  
 Exposition – San Diego, California B1,F7  
 Farms and farming – Comments about B1,F2,6,10; B4,F9  
 Fashion – Comments about B1,F2,6; B2,F1; B3,F5,7  
 Flowers, Maude B2,F3  
 Folk medicine B4,F9  
 Funeral rites and customs B3,F7  
 Funerals – Expenses – Smith’s Grove B3,F4  
 Gee, George T. B1,F5  
 Handwork – Relating to B1,F5; B3,F5  
 Hatcher, Lizzie B1,F3  
 Hildreth, Frances B3,F12; B4,F1,2  
 Hildreth, Hugh B3,F5,7,8; B3,F12  
 Hildreth, James Leonard B3,F1  
 Hildreth, Jessie Francis (Willis), 1895-1984 – Correspondence B1,F4,6,10; B3,F1-5,8;  
 B4,F1-3,6,10  
 Hildreth, Lou (Gee) – Letter to B1,F5

Hill, J. Murray, Sr., 1891-1961 B2,F3  
 Hinant, G. A. B1,F2  
 Hitler, Adolf, 1889-1945 – Drawing B3,F9  
 Hodgkin's Disease – Comments about, 1911 B1,F5  
 Holman, Mat – Letter to B1,F7  
 Holman, Pearl B3,F6  
 Holman, Terry Barrick B3,F9-11; B4,F11  
 Horses – Drawing B3,F5  
 Huber, Mary B1,F4  
 Hutchinson, Bessie B3,F5  
 Influenza – Relating to, 1917 B1,F7-8  
 Invitations – Commencement – Central High School – Memphis, Tennessee B4,F1  
 Invitations – Commencement – Glasgow High School, 1926 B3,F1  
 Invitations – Event B2,F2  
 Jameson, Nell B3,F6  
 Jennings, Dudley B1,F9,10; B3,F1  
 Jennings, Elizabeth "Lizzie" B1,F3  
 Jennings, Lutie B1,F10; B2,F1,3; B3,F1-3; B4,F10  
 Jones, Pearl B1,F10  
 Kennedy, John Fitzgerald, 1917-1963 – Mentioned, 1961 B4,F8  
 Kentucky Bee-Keepers' Association – Relating to B1,F2  
 King, F. E. B4,F10  
 Lambert Field – St. Louis, Missouri – Relating to B3,F8  
 Letterheads – Belle Meade Butter – Nashville B2,F5  
 Letterheads – Hildreth & Son – Smiths Grove B3,F2  
 Letterheads – J. N. Haner & Co. – Louisville B1,F3  
 Letterheads – L. L. Willis & Company – Bowling Green B1,F8  
 Letterheads – Kentucky State Society – San Diego, CA. B1,F6  
 Letterheads – Progressive Tailoring Parlors – Bowling Green B1,F6  
 Lewis, Frankie Elizabeth, 1913-1973 – Correspondence B2,F7; B3,F1,4,6,8,9  
 Lewis, Helen B3,F6  
 Lewis, John B4,F6  
 Lewis, Joseph H. B1,F8  
 Lewis, Mayme Scott (Willis), 1890-1913 – Death of, 1913 B4,F10  
 Lewis, Mayme Scott (Willis), 1890-1913 – Letters to B1,F2,4,5; B4,F9,11  
 Lewis, Richard B3,F6  
 Lewis, Ruby B2,F1; B3,F2  
 Littell, Fred B4,F3  
 Littell, Julia B4,F3  
 Marriage – Comments about B4,F11  
 McClanahan, Sarah B3,F5  
 McCoy, S. C. B3,F3,5  
 McIntire, Edna B1,F7; B3,F6,7  
 Medical care, 1934 B3,F5  
 Medical care – Cost of, 1934 B3,F5  
 Milligan, Grace B3,F7; B4,F1



Miscarriage, 1954 B4,F2  
 Moss, Mary L. B1,F2  
 Music and musicians B1,F10; B4,F9,12  
 Newman, Clara B2,F2  
 Oregon – Travel and description B4,F10  
 Owens, Cara B3,F1  
 Patriotic music B3,F9  
 Pedigo, Henry B1,F8,9  
 Perry, Kate B1,F9  
 Poetry B1,F2,5; B3,F9; B4,F12  
 Prescriptions and remedies B4,F9  
 Prices, 1910 B1,F5  
 Radio programs, 1934 B3,F5  
 Receipts, 1929 B3,F4  
 Redford, Anna – Letter to B3,F1  
 Redford, Virgie B1,F3  
 Report cards, 1867 B1,F2  
 Report cards, 1953 B4,F1  
 Revivals B4,F9  
 Rhodes, Aurelia B1,F3  
 Riggs, Melissa A. B1,F7  
 Robberies, Bank – Oakland, 1929 B3,F4  
 Rose, Robert H. B1,F2  
 Seminole Indians – Relating to B4,F2  
 Sewing – Relating to B1,F5-7; B4,F10  
 Shockley, Addine B3,F7  
 Simpson, Martha Ann B3,F12; B4,F3,7  
 Simpson, Richard B3,F12; B4,F7  
 Singing schools – Comments about, 1912 B1,F5  
 Stinnett, Katharine B1,F4  
 Strawberries – Harvesting – Warren County B4,F9  
 Strawberry Festival – Cullman, Alabama – Program, 1948 B3,F10  
 Sturdivant, Rupert B4,F10  
 Surgery, 1945 B3,F10  
 Surgery – Gall bladder, 1959 B4,F6  
 Surgery – Kidneys, 1927 B3,F2  
 Teachers and teaching B2,F7; B4,F9  
 Thorpe, Laura B4,F1  
 Thompson, F.K. B1,F2  
 Tipton, Rosa B1,F7-9; B3,F2  
 Von Hagen, Elizabeth B3,F7  
 Waggoner, L. S. B1,F6  
 Weather B4,F9  
 Weather – Nashville – Comments about, 1910 B1,F5  
 White, Elizabeth (Jennings) “Lizabeth”; “Lizzie”; “Liddie” B1,F4,8-10; B3,F2,3,5-8,12;  
 B4,F1-4,6,7

White, James B1,F7  
 White, Laura Elizabeth B1,F7  
 Whooping cough – Mentioned B2,F1  
 Willis, Annie – Correspondence B1,F4-10; B2,F1-7; B3,F1-12; B4,F1,9-11  
 Willis, Elizabeth George “Lizzie,” 1844-1903 B1,F2  
 Willis, Francis Morgan “Frank,” 1839-1913 – Correspondence B1,F2-5; B2,F7; B4,F9,11  
 Willis, George D. B1,F5  
 Willis, Hattie Maude, 1881-1958 – Correspondence B1,F3; B4,F9-10  
 Willis, Janie B1,F6  
 Willis, Jessie Francis – Correspondence B1,F4,6,10; B2,F1; B3,F1-58; B4,F1,2,9  
 Willis, Katherine Allen “Katie,” 1884-1948 B1,F4,6; B4,F9,10  
 Willis, Laura Wilson (Edmunds), 1857-1929 – Correspondence B1,F3-10; B2,F1-7; B3,F1-4;  
 B4,F9-11  
 Willis, Laura Wilson (Edmunds), 1857-1929 – Death of B3,F4  
 Willis, Lizzie B1,F3  
 Willis, Minnie Lee, 1879-1900 – Correspondence B1,F3; B4,F9,10  
 Willis, Nell B3,F1,4  
 Willis, Symon B1,F2  
 Wilson, Bessie B1,F4; B2,F7; B3,F6  
 Womanless Wedding (drama) – Program, 1921 B2,F3  
 World War I, 1914-1917 – Comments about B1,F7-9  
 World War II, 1939-1945 – Civil defense – Mentioned B3,F7  
 World War II, 1939-1945 – Basic training B3,F8  
 World War II, 1939-1945 – War work – Mentioned, 1943 B3,F8

### ***SEE and SEE ALSO***

Amos, Hattie Maude (Willis), 1881-1958  
 See also:  
 Willis, Hattie Maude, 1881-1958

Duvall, Minnie Lee (Willis), 1879-1900  
 See also:  
 Willis, Minnie Lee, 1879-1900

Edmunds, Annie L. (Willis)  
 See also:  
 Willis, Annie

Hildreth, Jessie Francis (Willis)  
 See also:  
 Willis, Jessie Francis

Jeffrey 07/13/2016