

**French-Clarke Family Papers**  
(Mss. 3494)

Inventory

Compiled by

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2001

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections  
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library  
Louisiana State University Libraries  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Revised 2009

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**SUMMARY**

<b>Size.</b>	1.3 linear feet, 16 mss. volumes
<b>Geographic locations.</b>	Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Ohio
<b>Inclusive dates.</b>	1809-1961
<b>Bulk dates.</b>	1830-1920
<b>Languages.</b>	English, French.
<b>Summary.</b>	Correspondence, legal and financial papers, printed items, writings, and genealogical materials of members of the French and Clarke families.
<b>Access.</b>	No restrictions.
<b>Copyright.</b>	Physical rights are retained by the LSU Libraries. Copyright of the original materials is retained by descendants of the creators of the materials in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
<b>Citation.</b>	French-Clarke Family Papers, Mss. 3494, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
<b>Stack location.</b>	Range 1:32-35, OS:F, 98:F

**BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE**

Cornelius R. French was born in Newark, New Jersey, January 26, 1786. In 1809, he married the daughter of English immigrants, Esther Browne, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Browne had been born in Bristol, England in 1794 and moved with her parents to America at the age of two in 1796. In 1798, the Browne family settled in Cincinnati, Ohio. Dr. and Mrs. French settled in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where Cornelius practiced medicine. It is not sure where he received his medical degree but he attended classes University of Pennsylvania studying medicine in 1805. There is evidence of his practicing medicine in Baton Rouge as early as 1815, when he was the surgeon for the United States Army in Baton Rouge. He did not receive, however, his medical license in Louisiana until 1820. In all, the couple had eleven children, including two sons that died in infancy and one stillborn son. Dr. French was a respected member of the community and member of the vestry at St. James Episcopal Church. The collection also contains items relating to his granddaughter, Julia Edwards Clarke, and her husband, William Brett Clarke. The Louisiana State School employed both Mr. And Mrs. Clarke for the Blind in the latter half of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century. Married in 1909, the couple lived in Baton Rouge. Dr. Clarke was himself blind and was a respected music teacher at the school.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

Largely composed of correspondence between members of the French family. Correspondence between extended family as well; letters to Esther French from her brother Samuel in Ohio, letters between the French siblings as well as letters to Julia Clarke from relatives on her father's side, pertaining to the Edwards genealogy. Legal documents: bills of sale for slaves, land documents, wills of the French and Clarke families. Personal financial records, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings of current events: the opening of the state capital. Ledgers pertaining to Dr. and Mrs. Clarke's employment at the Louisiana State School for the Blind. Scrapbook pertaining to different aspects of LSU and campus life in the early twentieth century.

**LIST OF SERIES**

- I. Correspondence, 1809-1944  
Subseries 1. Clarke family, 1855-1944  
Subseries 2. French family, 1809-1862
- II. Genealogical materials, 1834-1927
- III. Legal and financial papers, 1820-1949
- IV. Printed items, 1802-1961
- V. Writings, 1802-1949, undated
- VI. Manuscript volumes, 1849-1930
- VII. Newspapers, 1878-1940
- VIII. Artifacts, 1897, undated

## **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

### **I. Correspondence,**

#### **Subseries 1. Clarke Family, 1855-1944**

Correspondence of Mr. William B. and Mrs. Julia Edwards Clarke that includes letters from a variety of sources. Letters from the children of Mr. and Mrs. Clarke describing their vacations; congratulatory letters to Mr. Clarke regarding his work at the Louisiana School for the Blind. Letters of condolences to Mrs. Clarke upon the death of Mr. Clarke. Letters of Mrs. Clarke from her paternal cousins discussing the genealogy of the Edwards family as well as some discussion regarding the church parish of her cousin Evan Edwards in St. Petersburg, Florida. Letter from the Sheriff in Oberlin, Louisiana regarding land of the Thomas Alexander Heirs (maternal cousins of Mrs. Clarke). Also a postcard entirely in Braille, and two letters from Mr. Clarke to Mrs. Clarke.

Letters from Mrs. Clarke's father, Thomas Edwards, in Vidalia, Louisiana, to her mother, Eliza French Edwards, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Mr. Edwards relays the news from Vidalia (in Concordia Parish) and Natchez, Mississippi. Talks of a murder in Vidalia, the "fever" in Natchez, and the history of the bible. Letters here include condolences to Eliza after the death of Thomas.

#### **Subseries 2. French Family, 1809-1862, undated**

Primarily letters from Esther French's brother, Samuel Browne, in Ohio. Letters discuss daily business, visits from friends and neighbors, family gossip. Browne writes to Esther upon hearing of Baton Rouge burning. There is some discussion regarding a duel fought in Baton Rouge between brother-in-laws Captain John Neilson and Captain Foelhill. Esther and her brother Samuel discuss the death of their brother William in 1860, and the marriage of Esther's son, William French. Also included is a letter from a family friend to Eliza French regarding the death of Eliza's brother Charles from yellow fever and condolences regarding his death. A letter to C.R. French from his sister questioning why she has not received a letter in so long.

### **II. Genealogical materials, 1834-1927**

Birth, marriage, and death records for the French family are among the genealogical materials. Lists of genealogy for the Browne family (Mrs. C.R. French's family), Edwards family as well as much information on the birth and marriage records of Dr. and Mrs. French's children. Items include

correspondence to Mrs. Julia Edwards Clarke from her cousins on the Edwards side regarding the Edwards genealogy.

### III. Legal and financial papers, 1820-1949

Legal documents contained in the collection included documents pertaining to the sale of land in Louisiana and land Esther French inherited from her relatives in Ohio. There are also a number of wills as well as documents pertaining to the legal guardianship of the children of William French after his death as well as an appraisal of his estate. A number of bills of sale for slaves are included. The collection also contains a marriage certificate for H.B. White and Julia French, receipt for law services, and papers dealing with the estate of Thomas Alexander. Other items are contracts made between Dr. French and the United States Army to retain Dr. French's services for a given year. The collection includes a number of these contracts because a new one was signed each year. Dr. French's medical license in Louisiana is included here. The collection also includes an oath of allegiance to the United States signed by Humphrey White after the Civil War.

Financial documents include a list from Dr. French's medical practice of services he renders and the cost for each of these services. Other financial items include a number of tax receipts, tax forms, and cancelled checks belonging to the Clarke family from the 1920s-1940s. Also included is the financial report for the Woman's Auxiliary.

### IV. Printed Items, 1802-1961

There are a variety of different items within this series. Many members of the family collected newspaper clippings from a variety of papers. A number of these clippings pertained to current events, such as the line of accession to the throne of England or the Death of the King of Sweden. There are also clippings referring to the death of Dr. French and the demolition of the French residence on the corner of Lafayette and Convention Streets in Baton Rouge. The majority of the clippings were poetry from different newspapers and periodicals. This series contains a number of road maps, mainly of Louisiana, but one or two are maps of Alabama. A number of printed booklets are included as well, such as *Laws of the State of Louisiana Relative to the Penitentiary* (in both English and French), *Telephone Almanac*, Key to Braille signs, a copy of the *British and Foreign Blind Association*, a book of hymnals from the Kiwanis club, a souvenir booklet about the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, *A Tourist Guide to Louisiana*, and *The Spirit of the Missions*, reporting on the forty-eighth triennial General Convention of the Church. Various flyers from the nineteenth century advertising services or products are included in the collection. A number of copies of the *New Jersey Sabbath School Journal* are in the collection as well.

as a number of miscellaneous items, such as an invitation for the Pelican Hook and Ladder Ball and program for vocal concert benefiting the female orphan asylum.

Further items include memorabilia from St. James Episcopal Church in Baton Rouge including two newsletters of St. James Messenger, a book of hymns, and a program for a mass said in memory of W.B. Clarke, as well as a book published in observance of the centennial of St. James Church. Finally, a collection of items from the Louisiana School of the Blind such as an annual report of the Blind School, programs for recitals put on by the School for the Blind, typed lessons, grade reports, and invitations for recitals and graduations. Items in contained in the oversize folders include Civil War pictures from a magazine, whole pages of newspapers (but not the whole issues), pictures from newspapers and magazines.

#### **V. Writings, 1802-1949, undated**

Among the items included here are a handwritten sermon by Albert Shotwelle, a writing on the Revolutionary War by Dr. C. French, prayers and religious verses, and typed school reports. A list of books belonging to the Clarkes'.

#### **VI. Manuscript Volumes, 1849-1930**

This series consist mainly of scrapbooks kept by various members of the French and Clarke families. A ledger belonging to the Clarkes' includes handwritten sheet music, addresses of friends, names and addresses of students from the blind school and how they became blind, as well as a list of pupils, class reports and supply requests (manuscript volume #1). The Scrapbook of Harvey S. Henning revolves around campus life at Louisiana State University, items from his time in the army corps of engineers, and engineering plans for the waterworks system in Jefferson Parish (manuscript volume #2). The scrapbook of Julia Edwards containing clippings of poems and pictures from newspapers and magazines (manuscript volume #3). A scrapbook belong to the Clarkes' contains a variety of loose newspaper clippings The scrapbook of Julia Edwards containing clippings of poems and pictures from newspapers and magazines (manuscript volume #4). Another scrapbook belonging to the Clarkes' includes a variety of prints cut from magazines The scrapbook of Julia Edwards containing clippings of poems and pictures from newspapers and magazines (manuscript volume #5). A memo book belonging to the Clarkes' that appears to be a travel log- gives distances between cities (manuscript volume #6). A scrapbook belonging to the Clarkes' contains the names and addresses of friends along with their religious affiliations. Also contains information of their pupils at the Louisiana School for the Blind (manuscript volume #7). A ledger belonging to Mrs. Clarke regarding financial matters (manuscript volume #8). Ledger belonging to the Clarke's containing information of recitals and programs performed by the



school of the blind (manuscript volume #9). Scrapbook of Cornelia French (manuscript volume #10), including newspaper clippings (mainly poems and short stories) also prints and pictures from magazines. Memo book of Julia Edwards (manuscript volume #11) that was originally an autograph book signed by friends and relatives with meaningful quotes. Scrapbook of Ms. H. French compiled of recipes and home remedies (manuscript volume #12). An address book belonging to the Clarkes' (manuscript volume #13). A journal of C.F. Alexander's regarding the study of music (manuscript volume #14). Journal of Charles French (manuscript volume #15) containing clippings from newspapers regarding history, home remedies, and poetry. Handwritten poems as well as letters are included. Scrapbook of Julia French (White) that includes handwritten verses, poems, and quotes, clippings from newspapers and magazines regarding a variety of subjects, including the Civil War (manuscript volume #16).

#### **VII. Newspapers, 1878-1940**

Collection of specific issues of newspapers including daily and weeklies from Baton Rouge as well as a other papers form across the country. Some of the national papers were commemorating the centennial of George Washington's inauguration. Newspapers included are *Memphis Daily Appeal*, *The Memphis Weekly Appeal*, *The Daily Advocate*, *The Weekly Advocate*, *Ladies Illustrated Magazine*, *The Weekly Tenth*, *Confederate Reunion*, and *The Weekly Bulletin*. National papers included *Chicago Daily News* and *The Mail and Express*.

#### **VIII. Artifacts, 1897, undated**

Two Masonic aprons, a newspaper-clipping holder and a needlepoint design.

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## CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
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		2-5	Subseries 2. French Family, 1809-1862, undated
		6	<b>Series II. Genealogical Materials</b> (1824-1927, undated)
		7-9	<b>Series III. Legal and Financial Papers</b> (1820-1949, undated)
1:32	2	7-9	(1820-1949, undated)
OS:F	--	1-2	(1832-1857)
		10	<b>Series IV. Printed Items</b> Newspaper clippings (undated)
1:32	2	11	Miscellaneous printed pamphlets, booklets, etc. (1812-1935, undated)
		12	Maps (1915-1961, undated)
		13	Postcards, drawings, etc. (1829-1925)
1:32	3	14	St. James Episcopal Church Memorabilia (1888-1944, undated)
		15	Miscellaneous items (undated)
		16	Tour Guide, Hymnal (1921-1932)
		17	Telephone Almanac, <i>Laws of the State of Louisiana Relative to the Penitentiary</i> (1834-1925, undated)
		18	Miscellaneous newspaper and magazine clippings, mainly pictures (1805-1923)
		19	Louisiana School for the Blind (1877-1927)
OS:F	--	3-4	(1854-1911, undated)
1:33	4	--	<i>The British and Foreign Blind Association</i> (1902)
		20	<b>Series V. Writings</b> (1802-1948)
1:32	3	20	(1802-1948)
		--	<b>Series VI. Manuscript Volumes</b>
1:33	5	--	Vol. 1, Clarke Ledger 1910
	6	--	Vol. 2, Scrapbook of Harvey S. Henning (1920-1930)
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	8	--	Vol. 4 Clarke Scrapbook (undated)
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		22	Vol. 7 Clarke Ledger (1920-1921)
		23	Vol. 8 Clarke Ledger (1935)
		24	Vol. 9 Clarke Ledger (undated)

**FRENCH-CLARKE FAMILY PAPERS****Mss. 3494**

1809-1961

LSU Libraries Special Collections

1:34	11	25	Vol. 10 Cornelia French Scrapbook (1841)
		26	Vol. 11 Julia Edwards' memo book (1878)
		27	Vol. 12 H. French Scrapbook (possibly Martha Hickey French) (185?)
1:35	12	28	Vol. 13 Clarke Address book (1920)
		29	Vol. 14 C. F. Alexander memo book (1914)
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**Series VII. Newspapers**

98:	--	5-6	(1863-1940)
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**Series VIII. Artifacts**

1:35	13	32	Two Masonic aprons, a newspaper-clipping holder and a needlepoint design
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