

FOSTER (MURPHY J. AND FAMILY) PAPERS
(Ms. 4710)

Inventory

Compiled by
Charles F. Thomas

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

1998

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SUMMARY

Size: 4.3 linear ft.

Geographic locations: Louisiana; Washington, D.C.; Philippine Islands.

Inclusive dates: 1880-1955.

Bulk dates: 1880-1930.

Languages: English.

Summary: Personal and political correspondence, political papers, photographs, newspaper clippings, biographical materials and other miscellaneous items related to the career and family life of Murphy J. Foster, his wife Rose Ker Foster, and their children.

Source: Donation, 1998.

Restrictions: Personal correspondence between Murphy J. Foster and his wife, Rose Ker Foster, may be read, but may not be reproduced, published, or quoted, either in whole or part without the express written permission of the donors or their heirs until 2023.

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Citation: Murphy J. Foster and Family Papers, Mss. 4710, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

Stack location: UU:286-287, 98:F

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Murphy James Foster (1849-1921) was an attorney, Louisiana state senator (1880-1892), Governor (1892-1900), and United States Senator (1900-1912). He was born near Franklin, La., the son of Thomas Foster and Martha P. Murphy. He attended college at Washington and Lee University and Cumberland University in Tennessee, where he graduated in 1870. Subsequently, he studied law at the University of Louisiana (now Tulane University) and passed the Louisiana bar examination in 1871. He was married briefly to Florence Daisy Hine, then remarried in 1881 to Rose Routh Ker, daughter of John Ker and Rose Routh, at Ouida Plantation in West Feliciana Parish, La. They produced ten children, nine of whom reached maturity:

Rose Routh Foster (1882-1972)
Elizabeth Ratliff Foster (1883-1974)
Lucy Price Foster (1885-1886)
Mary Lucy Foster (1886-1984)
Willia Ker Foster (circa 1889-1993)
William Prescott Foster (1890-1947)
Louisiana Navarro Foster (1894-1984)
Martha DeMari Foster (1896-1991)
Murphy James Foster, Jr. (1898-1981)
Sarah Ker Foster (1903-1992)

Murphy J. Foster was elected Governor with the assistance of the Farmer's Alliance in 1892, and re-elected in 1896. After his tenure as Governor and then as a U. S. Senator, he was appointed as a collector of customs in New Orleans. Some of Foster's main political concerns during his career were the outlawing the Louisiana Lottery Company, efforts to protect sugar growers, flood control, and the regulation of railway rates. Many of these issues gained national attention, in part thanks to his efforts. He died at his home on Dixie Plantation in 1921.

Rose Routh Ker was the youngest of five children. She was born in 1861 on a plantation owned by her grandfather in Catahoula Parish, La. Both of her parents died before she was four years old, so she was raised by her cousins, Alice Wade and Elizabeth Ratliff of Eilerslie Plantation outside St. Francisville.

Rose was sent to the Sacred Heart Convent in St. James Parish for an education at the age of eleven. She later was sent to a finishing school at Afton Villa. She met Murphy J. Foster in 1880, when he was already a State Senator. They married in 1881. In 1883, they purchased an abandoned plantation near Franklin, La., and named it "Dixie."

When Murphy Foster was elected Governor in 1892, the family moved to Baton Rouge, and left Dixie Plantation in the hands of a caretaker. Rose Ker Foster and her husband were active hosts,

and entertained parties for groups such as the Association of Firemen regularly.

During Murphy Foster's residence in Washington D.C., Rose managed Dixie Plantation. She and her husband lived at Dixie until his death in 1921. Rose remained in the family home until her death at the age of 97, in 1959.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Murphy J. Foster and Family Papers (1880-1955, bulk 1880-1930) extensively document Foster's political career, his relationship with his wife Rose Ker Foster, and their children's formative years. Materials in the collection include correspondence; financial papers such as receipts for household items and check stubs; legislative papers such as petitions, clippings, speeches and printed items; photographs, mainly of the extended Foster family; invitations to social and political functions; scrapbooks (mostly duplicated with photocopies); newspaper clippings; and photocopies of materials still owned by the donors of this collection.

Topics addressed in this collection include family matters such as the development and education of the Foster children; Rose's management of Dixie Plantation in Murphy's absences; occasional mentions of both Foster's legal practice and the activities of members of the extended family; Foster's political career and the issues that concerned him, such as the Anti-Lottery campaign, a national income tax, regulating railway rates, flood control, poll taxes, and protection of sugar growers; family genealogy; Senator Foster's 1905 trip to the Philippine Islands with William Taft; and numerous issues tangential to his career.

INDEX TERMS

Materials relating to these people, places, and things can be found throughout the entire collection.

Anti-lottery League of Louisiana.
Bills (financial)
Bills (legislative)
Check stubs.
Clippings.
Correspondence.
Dixie Plantation (La.)
Flood control--Louisiana.
Foster family.
Governors--Louisiana.
Income tax--Law and legislation--United States.
Invitations.
Ker family.
Legislators--United States.
Louisiana--Politics and government.
Ouida Plantation (La.)
Petitions.
Photographs.
Railroads--Rates--Law and legislation--Louisiana.
Scrapbooks.
Speeches.
Sugar--Manufacture and refining--Louisiana.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTENTS

Series I. Personal Correspondence, 1880-1955, undated (1.3 linear ft.)

Hundreds of letters, predominantly correspondence between Murphy J. Foster and his wife Rose, document the activities of the Foster family. These letters begin with their early courtship and relate Foster's activities as a politician, husband and father; Rose K. Foster's management of Dixie Plantation and her children; the growth, education and travels of their children; and other concerns of the Foster family. This series includes occasional personal letters from friends and other relatives, and a few letters from Murphy J. Foster's partners in legal practice.

LOCATION	BOX	FOLDER #	DESCRIPTION
UU:286	1	19 Folders	Personal Correspondence, undated, 1881-1892
UU:286	2	15 Folders	Personal Correspondence, 1892-1955
UU:286	3	13 Folders	Correspondence, Murphy J. and Rose K. Foster, undated, 1880-1883 (Restriction: Patrons may view but not reproduce, quote, or publish without permission of the donor or heirs)
UU:286	4	20 Folders	Correspondence, Murphy J. and Rose K. Foster, 1883-1913 (Restriction: Patrons may view but not reproduce, quote, or publish without permission of the donor or heirs)

Series II. Political Papers, 1884-1912, undated (0.6 linear ft.)

This series contains political correspondence, surviving copies of several speeches, materials related to the 1896-1897 selection of a State Quarantine Officer, memorabilia and correspondence from a 1905 trip to the Philippine Islands with U. S. Secretary of War William Taft, and other miscellaneous items related to Murphy J. Foster's political career as a State Senator, Governor, and U. S. Senator.

Political correspondence covers topics such as Foster's well-known battle against the pro-Lottery faction; bills dealing with property rights and railroads in Louisiana; a national income tax, and a variety of other matters.

Foster's 1905 trip to the Philippine Islands with U. S. Secretary of War Taft included stops in Hawaii, Japan and Korea. Items related to this trip include correspondence, photographs,

postcards, a baggage claims form, and invitations to several social functions while on the trip.

The miscellaneous papers include newspapers clippings, citizen petitions, political commentaries on various legislation, guides to legislative standing committees, invitations, and a 1900 inaugural ball program.

LOCATION	BOX	FOLDER #	DESCRIPTION
UU:287	5	1	Political Correspondence, undated
		2	Political Correspondence, 1884-1889
		3-6	Political Correspondence, 1890
		7	Political Correspondence, 1891-1893
		8	Political Correspondence, 1894
		9	Political Correspondence, 1896-1899
		10	Political Correspondence, 1904-1912
UU:287	6	1	Political Papers, 1896-1897, State Quarantine Officer Appointment
		2	Political Papers, Speeches, 1900 and undated
		3	Political Papers, Speeches, undated
		4	Political Papers, circa 1905, Trip to Philippine Islands
		5	Political Papers, Misc., 1884-1891
		6	Political Papers, Misc., 1892-1900 and undated

Series III. Financial papers, undated, 1883-1946 (0.1 linear ft.)

Surviving financial papers consists mainly of receipts for groceries and household items, but also includes items such as letters related to stock holdings, insurance policies, check stubs, bills for tuition and other instruction for the Foster children, and Rose K. Foster's 1907 expense log.

LOCATION	BOX	FOLDER #	DESCRIPTION
UU:287	7	1	Financial papers, undated and 1883-1890
		2	Financial papers, 1892-1913
		3	Financial papers, 1917-1946

Series IV. Photographs, mostly undated (0.1 linear ft.)

Numerous photographs of Murphy J. Foster and family. Also included are photocopies of a portion of the photographs of the extended family, still owned by Mrs. Routh Wilby.

LOCATION	BOX	FOLDER #	DESCRIPTION
UU:287	7	4	Photographs
		5	Photographs and photocopies [annotated]
		6	Photocopies of photographs retained by donor
98:F	8	-	Undated photograph of Murphy J. Foster and what appear to be other members of the Louisiana State Senate.

Series V. Biographical materials, mostly undated (0.1 linear ft.)

A small group of photocopies, clippings, and birth announcements relate biographical information, mostly about Murphy J. Foster and his wife Rose.

LOCATION	BOX	FOLDER #	DESCRIPTION
UU:287	7	7	Biographical materials

Series VI. Miscellaneous, circa 1850-1904 (0.1 linear ft.)

This series contains items related to the education of the Foster children, including graduation invitation for Southern Female College, a grade report from the Baton Rouge Institute, and other materials; invitations to miscellaneous social functions; printed matter and clippings related to the anti-Lottery campaign; recipes; contracts for remodeling the Governor's mansion in 1899; a map of the Teche River; prints of photographic portraits of members of the U. S. Senate, originally bound; and newspaper clippings of articles mainly about Murphy J. Foster. The newspaper clippings are very fragile and will be microfilmed at a future date.

LOCATION	BOX	FOLDER #	DESCRIPTION
UU:287	7	8	Miscellaneous materials, circa 1850-1904, undated
		9	Remodeling of Governor's mansion, 1899

98:F	8	-	Map of Teche River, undated
			-Printed photographic portraits of members of U. S. Senate, circa 1904.
		-	Photocopies of newspaper clippings
98:F	9	-	Newspaper clippings
98:F	10	-	Newspaper clippings