

WOMBLE-ABELL-NORMAN FAMILY PAPERS

Mss. 4879

Inventory

Revised by
Luana Henderson

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

2012

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SUMMARY

Size.	4.3 linear ft.
Geographic locations.	Louisiana, Gainesville, Ga., Japan.
Inclusive dates.	1861-2011.
Bulk dates.	1900-1955.
Languages.	English.
Summary.	Womble-Abell-Norman family papers document five generations of personal activities, family life, and the genealogy of the Womble-Abell-Norman family and the related Buie family. Collection is comprised of correspondence, photographs, personal family papers, and professional papers of Evelyn Abell Norman.
Access Restrictions.	None.
Copyright.	For those materials not in the public domain, copyright is retained by the descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. Copyright law.
Citation.	Womble-Abell-Norman Family Papers, Mss. 4879, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
Stack location.	103:40-43, OS:W

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Annie Mamie Womble Abell (1880-1973) was a teacher in northeast Louisiana and the wife of Edward Charles Abell, Jr. (1874-1905). She was born Aug. 8, 1880 to John Warren Womble (1851-1922) and Laura Louise "Lalau" Buie (1858-1920) of Franklin, La. After the death of her husband in 1905, Mamie married George Frank Purvis (1877-1960) in 1912. She had three children, two by Edward C. Abell: Edward, Jr. and Evelyn, and George Frank, Jr. by her second husband.

Evelyn Abell Norman was born July 31, 1902, to Edward Charles and Annie Mamie Womble Abell of Winnsboro, La. She spent her childhood in the Winnsboro/Rayville area of northeast Louisiana. She attended Brenau College, a private college for women in Gainesville, Ga. Shortly after graduation in 1922, she married Ernest Barry Norman, Jr. (1901-1981) of Louisville, Ky. Barry was the son of Ernest Barry Norman, Sr. (d. 1933) and Mattie Mabel Colgan Norman (d. 1904).

The year after they were married, Barry and Evelyn moved to Kansas City, Mo., where Barry was employed as a sales representative. In 1927, they relocated to St. Landry Parish, La., so that Barry could assume the management of his father's lumber mill, E. B. Norman Lumber Co. Evelyn accepted a job at the Emergency Relief Administration where she began the implementations of the New Deal social programs. Evelyn also began writing a column for the *Opelousas Daily World* newspaper. While employed at the Emergency Relief Administration, it was her responsibility to verify the eligibility of applicants for financial assistance. She also assisted in establishing the Louisiana Rural Rehabilitation Administration and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in Avoyelles Parish. In 1944, she was appointed the director of the St. Landry Parish Public Welfare Department, a position she held until her retirement in 1969. After E. B. Norman Lumber Co. closed in 1930, Barry worked at a distillery, a job that kept him away from home for many months at a time. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, and again in the Korean War. The couple had three children: Evelyn (b. 1924) married William Reed Raser, Patricia Ann "Pan" (b. 1927-1983) married John R. Thistlewaite, and Katherine (1930-1933), who died in childhood. Barry and Evelyn divorced in 1951, and he later relocated to Japan and remarried.

Edward Charles "Bub" Abell, III (1900-1973), the son of Edward Charles Abell, Jr. and Annie Mamie Womble Abell, also spent his childhood in the Winnsboro/Rayville area. He attended Louisiana State University where he was active in the Friar's Fraternity and Glee Club. After he left LSU, he began a career in the oil industry. Edward married Ara Dorman (1910-1997) of Bunkie and they had three children: Edward C. Abell, Jr., Ann, and Susan Elizabeth.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Womble-Abell-Norman family papers consist of correspondence, photographs, and personal papers documenting five generations of family members. The collection also contains the professional papers of Evelyn Abell Norman. Correspondence, which reflects a close familial bond, concerns family matters, health, employment, personal finances, student life, and interpersonal relationships. Correspondence also includes letters written during World War II and letters that discuss economic conditions in Japan and the U. S. during the 1970s. Photographs provide images of five generations of family members, some from early childhood through latter years of adulthood. Photographs include several cabinet cards. Personal papers relate to the history of the family and include the history of the allied Buie family. They consist of ephemera, biographical sketches, transcripts of family histories, newspaper clippings, and a scrapbook. Professional papers pertain to the career of Evelyn Abell Norman in the field of social work.

LIST OF SERIES AND SUBSERIES

Series I. Correspondence, 1886-2011, undated.

Subseries 1. Evelyn Abell Norman and Annie Mamie Abell Purvis
Correspondence, 1909-1964, undated.

Subseries 2. E. Barry Norman, Jr. Correspondence, 1922-1951, 1971-1978,
undated.

Subseries 3. Edward Charles Abell, III, Correspondence, 1919-1973, undated.

Subseries 4. Family Correspondence, 1886-2011, undated.

Series II. Personal Papers, 1859-2011, undated.

Series III. Evelyn Abell Norman Professional Papers, 1940-1984, undated.

Series IV. Family Photographs, 1861-1984, undated.

SERIES AND SUBSERIES DESCRIPTIONS**Series I. Correspondence, 1886-2011, undated.****Subseries 1. Evelyn Abell Norman and Annie Mamie Abell Purvis Correspondence, 1909-1964, undated.**

Letters in this subseries are those of Evelyn Abell Norman and her mother, Annie Mamie Abell Purvis. The women discuss family matters, personal and social activities and the health of family members and friends. Correspondence begins with Evelyn's childhood letters (1909-1917) and continues nearly six decades. Evelyn relates news of her life at Brenau College, including her classes, sorority activities, day trips to Atlanta, and her travel by train between her home in Louisiana and school. She frequently requests money and clothing from her mother and permission for off campus outings. She mourns the death of her grandmother, Laulu Buie Womble in 1920. When she marries in October 1922, she writes about her honeymoon in New Orleans. After the young couple move to Missouri, she describes St. Louis, their new apartment, and social events. She also gives details on her pregnancy and medical care (Sept. 1923). Occasionally, she includes a note to her younger brother, Frank. From her home in Bunkie, La., she tells her mother about a local outbreak of scarlet fever and how she is caring for Barry, who is suffering from malaria (Oct. 1932). She also mentions that African American trustees kill three escaped white convicts (Sept. 14, 1933). Evelyn confides in her mother about financial difficulties and updates her on Barry's employment status (1940s). Mamie often writes about her job as a teacher. She tells Evelyn that she was elected chair of a newly organized classroom teachers group (Oct. 24, 1946, Oct. 1949). She also describes the boarders who rent rooms in her house (Oct. 24, Dec. 13, 1946).

Subseries 2. E. Barry Norman, Jr. Correspondence, 1922-1951, 1971-1978, undated.

This subseries contains Barry Norman's correspondence with family members that include his wife, Evelyn Abell Norman, his daughters, and brother, John Colgan Norman. They relate to family matters, personal finances, and his employment. He describes his work at his father's lumber company, later at a distillery, and he discusses difficulties in finding employment. Letters to Evelyn illustrate the couple's personal and financial struggles over the years. Letters from his father concern the financial status of his lumber company (1928-1931). War letters discuss the political situation in Europe, and concerns that the Germans may soon control the French fleet (June 24, Dec. 15, 1940). From Japan, he describes Japanese celebrations and the festival of the emperor's birthday and the Yasukuni Shrine (April 29, 1945). In a letter to his daughter, Barry explains his position on the limited role for women in the military (Feb. 7, 1945). His letters also describe military life during the Korean War (1951). In letters to Colgan, he describes his alcohol problem and his recovery (1949). During the 1970s, Barry writes from Japan about his health and that of his wife, Taka, and the economic conditions in Japan and the U. S. He also gives Colgan information on their grandfather's business ventures at the turn of the century (May 12, 1972). In addition, he receives updates on family news and events from Evelyn Abell Norman during this period.

Subseries 3. Edward Charles Abell, III, Correspondence, 1919-1973, undated.

This subseries consists of letters exchanged between Charles Edward Abell and his family, particularly his mother. They report on family matters and health, and comment on personal finances. Early correspondence (1919-1926) reflects his life as a college student, with news of friends, social activities, and events. For the most part, his later letters relate news about his job and family. However, in a letter to his mother he remarks on the political situation in Europe between Germany and Russia (Oct. 11, 1942).

Subseries 4. Family Correspondence, 1886-2011, undated.

Family correspondence relates news on family matters, personal finances, social activities, employment, health, and personal affairs. The subseries begins with letters by Edward C. Abell, Jr. to his wife, Mamie (1901-1903), and the childhood letters of Evelyn Abell (1909, 1914). The remainder of this subseries is comprised largely of letters exchanged between Evelyn Abell Norman and her daughters. Correspondence also reflects the experiences of young adults in the letters of Evelyn and Patricia Ann "Pan" Norman, and in the letters of their friends. Evelyn Norman refers to the Blue Moon Club in Bunkie, a popular dance club among the young people of , La. Letters she receives from a soldier comment on camp life and military bureaucracy (1941-1943). Aunt Betty describes Christmas festivities (Jan. 8, 1946). In later years, Evelyn Abell Norman communicates her views on social issues to political figures such Gov. David Treen and President Ronald Reagan (July 16, 1981, Sept. 11, 1982). Correspondence at the end of the century and into the next include letters of Evelyn Norman Raser and her children.

Series II. Personal Papers, 1859-2011, undated.

Personal papers consist of ephemera, biographical sketches, newspaper clippings, and a scrapbook relating to family history and the activities of family members. Early papers include a newspaper article [photocopy] on A. J. Pennybacker, an Abell family ancestor (Dec. 1859). A school award for Laulu Buie (July 28, 1875), Laulu's autograph book inscribed by friends and family (1881-1884), and a document [photocopy] certifying the election of Charles E. Abell, Jr. as Marshall of Winnsboro, La. (April 30, 1904). Papers contain dance cards (1920-1921), Evelyn Abell's grade reports (1920-1921), invitations to social events, and newspaper clippings. Clippings feature an article on the Blue Moon in Bunkie, La., a popular upscale dance club located in Bunkie during the mid-20th century (Sept. 29, 2011). Clippings also report on accidents in the Rayville area (1921). A program for an "Open House" lists Evelyn Norman as LSU student body president, making her the first female to hold that position at the University (Nov. 4, 1944). Also included are typed copies of LSU radio broadcasts (1944). A scrapbook compiled by Evelyn A. Norman contains obituaries, photographs, and ephemera relating to Evelyn Abell and Barry Norman, and the Abell family. Genealogical material includes biographical sketches of John Washington Womble (July 19, 1956) and Evelyn Abell Norman (Nov. 21, 1975). Transcripts of published articles on the history of the Womble-Abell-Norman and related Buie families are found in this group. A history of Rayville School in Richland Parish, La. is also found in this group (undated).

Series III. Evelyn Abell Norman Professional Papers, 1940-1984, undated.

This series relates to the career of Evelyn Abell Norman in field of social services and offers insight into the daily workings of the St. Landry Department of Public Welfare. The papers

contain correspondence, newspaper clippings, speech notes (1953-1968), meetings notes (1965-1966), and personnel statistics for the years 1952-1954 and 1965-1968. Correspondence with colleagues and public officials relate to programs, policies, and problems in delivering financial assistance and healthcare. They also discuss education of the poor. In some cases, she offers her own recommendations to rectify problems within the system.

Series IV. Family Photographs, 1861-1984, undated.

This series reflects five generations of the Womble-Abell-Norman family and related Buie, Wiggers and Gilbert families. The span of several decades also documents the aging of some family members from early childhood through adulthood with card photographs, snapshots, and 20th century studio portraits. The parents and grandparents of Evelyn Abell Norman and E. Barry Norman are represented in 19th century photographs. The first of these early card photographs is of Lau Lu Buie seen as an infant in an 1861 carte-de-visite. Others include John W. Womble and Lau Lu Buie Womble, maternal grandparents of Evelyn Abell Norman (ca. 1870s), as well as her father, Edward C. Abell, Jr., as a young man dressed in military uniform (ca. 1890). A circa 1880 photograph of Mattie Mabel Colgan, mother of E. Barry Norman, Jr., at the age of twelve months. Group photographs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries depict family groups and student groups. Among them are the family groups of Abell-Womble (1900) and Abell-Wiggers (1901). Two photograph albums contain additional photographs of Womble family members (ca. 1890-1914). Early 20th century images show Evelyn and Edward C. Abell, III, and E. Barry Norman as children and young adults (1900-1922). They include photographs taken at a naval school in Culver, Ind., where Barry Norman spent the summer of 1916. Also found are photographs of Evelyn with friends at Brenau College (1921) and of Edward C. Abell, III (1922).

Most family snapshots and studio portraits taken in the mid to late 20th century are of Evelyn Abell Norman, her children and grandchildren. Other family members, including Barry Norman and Annie Mamie Abell Purvis are represented to a lesser extent. Among them is a portrait (1943) and a group photograph of Barry Norman during World War II (1943, 1945).

INDEX TERMS

Terms

	Series, Subseries
Abell family.	I-IV
Abell, Edward C. III, 1900-1973.	I.3-4, IV
African Americans--Louisiana.	I.1, 3
Alcoholism.	I.2
Blue Moon (Bunkie, La.).	I.4, II
Boardinghouses--Louisiana--Rayville.	I.1
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College students--Georgia--Gainesville--Social life and customs--20th century.	I.1
College students--Louisiana--Baton Rouge--Social life and customs--20th century.	I.3-4, IV
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Norman family.	I.1-2, 4, II, IV
Norman, Ernest Barry, 1901-1981.	I.1-2, II, IV
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CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders</u>	<u>Contents</u>
	103:40	1	1-64	Series I. Correspondence, 1886-2011, undated.
			1-31	Subseries 1. Evelyn Abell Norman and Annie Mamie Abell Purvis Correspondence, 1909-1964, undated.
			32-48	Subseries 2. E. Barry Norman, Jr. Correspondence, 1922-1951, 1971-1978, undated.
			49-61	Subseries 3. Edward Charles Abell, III, Correspondence, 1919-1973, undated.
	103:41	2	1-41	Subseries 4. Family Correspondence, 1886-2011, undated.
	103:42	3	1-35	Series II. Personal Papers, 1859-2011, undated.
	OS:W		1	Clippings 1859, 1967, 1987. Election certification, 1904.
	103:42	3	36-61	Series III. Evelyn Abell Norman Professional Papers, 1940-1984, undated.
	OS:W		1	Clipping, 1969.
	103:43	4	1-3	Series IV. Family Photographs, 1861-1984, undated. Photograph albums, 1890s-1914.
			5	Photographs, 1861-1905.
			6	Photographs, 1906-1945.
			7	Photographs, 1946-1984.