ELI LILLY
PAPERS, 1937–1961

Collection Information

Biographical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Cataloging Information

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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 8 Manuscript Boxes; 1 Box of Photographs, 14 Negatives

COLLECTION DATES: 1937–1961
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Eli Lilly (1885-1977) was born in Indianapolis, the son of Josiah Kirby Lilly and Lilly Maria Ridgely Lilly. He graduated from Shortridge High School in 1904, and three years later earned a degree as Pharmaceutical Chemist from Philadelphia College of Pharmacy. In 1935 he received a Ph. M. degree from the same institution.

In 1907 he began work at Eli Lilly and Company, the pharmaceutical firm founded by his grandfather. From 1909 to 1915 he was superintendent of the manufacturing division; from 1915 to 1920 he was general superintendent; from 1920 to 1932 vice president; and from 1932 to 1948 president. He served as board chairman from 1948 to 1961 and from 1966 to 1969, and as honorary board chairman from 1961 to 1966 and from 1969 until his death. During his lifetime, and largely because of his efforts, the company grew to a billion-dollar-a-year business.

Mr. Lilly had several intense interests outside his business. One was philanthropy. In 1937 he initiated the establishment of Lilly Endowment, which became the third largest philanthropic foundation in the country. Dying without immediate family, he left generous bequests to many organizations, particularly religious and educational institutions in Indianapolis, which had a major effect on their outlook and operation.

He was also actively interested in archaeology and history, and became a respected participant in both fields. In cooperation with Glenn Black, he worked on the prehistory of Indiana, and produced two books, Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana (1937) and Walam_Olum (1954). A continuing interest in Greek archaeology resulted in Schliemann in Indianapolis (1961). A lifelong love of Lake Wawasee led him to write Early Wawasee Days (1960). The Civil War was also an area of interest to him, and he led the local chapter of the Loyal Legion, meeting in Foster Hall at the Lilly Orchard, to become a sort of Civil War round table. When he bought a large farm outside Noblesville in order to raise Percheron horses, he discovered that the farmhouse had belonged to pioneer William Conner, and worked to restore the building.

Mr. Lilly was also a religious man, quite active in the affairs of Christ Church (Episcopal). He contributed to the restoration of the church building, erected in 1859, and to having it made the diocesan cathedral. He wrote a history of the church, The Little Church on the Circle (1957). During the 1950s and 1960s he worked, in a partnership which was not always easy, with activists Bishop John P. Craine and Dean Paul Moore, Jr. (later Bishop of New York).

An interest in inculcating religious values through education brought him to espouse the ideas of Ernest M. Ligon (b. 1897), whose The Psychology of Christian Personality (Macmillan, 1935) claimed to "interpret the teachings of the
Sermon on the Mount in terms of psychology."

Sources:


SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains typed manuscripts of books, and a small amount of related correspondence, research notes, and photographs and drawings. The books were published between 1937 and 1961. The collection is arranged by book.

Lilly’s materials relating to his Early Wawasee Days book consist of two typescripts of the publication. Also contained within this section is a carbon typescript of a book on early education by Leona J. Smith. Each chapter is headed by a quotation from Ernest M. Ligon, and the general theme of the book is the inculcating of Christian values in young children up to the age of nine.

Materials for Schliemann in Indianapolis consist of a photocopied typescript of the book. Illustrations for this book, line drawings and portraits of Schliemann and his wife, are stored with Visual Collections.

Items for Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana consist of a carbon typescript of the manuscript. Photographic illustrations for this book, mainly of pottery and arrowheads, are stored with Visual Collections.

Lilly’s material for Little Church on the Circle contains the original typescript, with many editorial changes. Photographic illustrations for this book are stored with Visual Collections. Also included with this publications materials are typed cards with research notes for the book.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Early Wawasee Days Manuscript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>CONTAINER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Wawasee Days, pp 1-25</td>
<td>Box 1, Folder 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Wawasee Days, pp.26–67</td>
<td>Box 1, Folder 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Wawasee Days, pp. 68–95</td>
<td>Box 1, Folder 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript of Leona J. Smith, pp. 1–71</td>
<td>Box 1, Folder 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript of Leona J. Smith, pp. 72–167</td>
<td>Box 1, Folder 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript of Leona J. Smith, pp. 168–231</td>
<td>Box 1, Folder 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript of Leona J. Smith, pp. 232–289</td>
<td>Box 1, Folder 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Series 2: Schliemann in Indianapolis Manuscript

CONTENTS

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Photocopy of Typescript, pp. 1–17
Box 1, Folder 10

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Photocopy of Typescript, pp. 18–50
Box 1, Folder 11

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Photocopy of Typescript, pp. 51–73
Box 1, Folder 12

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Photocopy of Typescript, pp. 74–100
Box 1, Folder 13

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Photocopy of Typescript, pp. 101–125
Box 1, Folder 14

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Photocopy of Typescript, pp. 126–157
Box 1, Folder 15

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Photocopy of Typescript, pp. 158–183
Box 1, Folder 16

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Photocopy of Typescript, pp. 184–206
Box 1, Folder 17

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Correspondence
Box 1, Folder 18

Schliemann in Indianapolis, Illustrations

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 1

Heinrich Schliemann Transcripts, 1869, 1872
Box 8, Folder 1

Heinrich Schliemann Transcripts, 1869, 1872
Box 8, Folder 2

Heinrich Schliemann Transcripts, 1870
Box 8, Folder 3

Heinrich Schliemann Transcripts, 1870
Box 8, Folder 4

Heinrich Schliemann Transcripts, 1870
Box 8, Folder 5

Heinrich Schliemann Transcripts, 1870
Box 8, Folder 6

Heinrich Schliemann Transcripts, 1868–71
Box 8, Folder 7

Heinrich Schliemann Transcripts, 1868–69
Box 8, Folder 8
Series 3: Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Manuscript

CONTENTS

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Carbon Typescript, pp. 1–46
Box 2, Folder 1

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Carbon Typescript, pp. 47–88
Box 2, Folder 2

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Carbon Typescript, 90–130
Box 2, Folder 3

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Carbon Typescript, pp. 131–182
Box 2, Folder 4

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Carbon Typescript, pp. 183–236
Box 2, Folder 5

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Carbon Typescript, pp. 237–297
Box 2, Folder 6

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Carbon Typescript, pp. 298–348
Box 2, Folder 7

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Illustrations (1 of 5)
Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 2

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Illustrations (2 of 5)
Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 3

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Illustrations (3 of 5)
Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 4

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Illustrations (4 of 5)
Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 5

Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana, Illustrations (5 of 5)
Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 6

Series 4: Little Church on the Circle, Manuscript

CONTENTS

Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 1–35
Box 2, Folder 8

Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 36–95
Box 2, Folder 9

Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 96–158
Box 2, Folder 10

Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 159–199
Box 2, Folder 11
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 200–238  Box 2, Folder 12
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 239–282  Box 3, Folder 1
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 283–322  Box 3, Folder 2
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 323–368  Box 3, Folder 3
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 369–416  Box 3, Folder 4
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 417–465  Box 3, Folder 5
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 466–538  Box 3, Folder 6
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 539–599  Box 3, Folder 7
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, pp. 600–646  Box 3, Folder 8
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, Index  Box 3, Folder 9
Little Church on the Circle, Typescript, Illustrations  Box 3, Folder 10
Little Church on the Circle, Photographs for Illustrations  Photographs: Box 1, Folder 7
Little Church on the Circle, Negatives for Illustrations of Church interiors  8 x 10 Acetate Negatives Negatives [1–13]
Little Church on the Circle, Negatives for Illustration of Bishop Talbot  5 x 7 Acetate Negatives Negative [14]
Little Church on the Circle, Research Note Cards for Years 1821–46  Box 4
Little Church on the Circle, Research Note Cards for Years 1847–60  Box 5
Little Church on the Circle, Research Note Cards for Years 1861–63  Box 6
Little Church on the Circle, Biographical History and Battle of the Thames, 1806–35  Box 7

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://opac.indianahistory.org/
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 0184).

5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.