

Collection #
P 0873

**ELIHU M. THORNBURG FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS
1897-CA. EARLY 1920S**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 photograph folder; 2 OVB photograph folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1897–ca. early 1920s

PROVENANCE: Gift from Joyce A. Smidley of Poland, Indiana, October 2022

RESTRICTIONS: None

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NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL / HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Thornburg Family

Elihu “Eli” Marion Thornburg was born 22 December 1844 to Joab Stansbury Thornburg and Lydia Howell Thornburg. He grew up with several siblings in a farming family in the Liberty Township of Delaware County, east of Muncie, Indiana. During the Civil War, Eli served with the 19th and 20th Indiana Infantries. In April 1867, he married Mary Florence Hiron. Their children included: Parker Emerson, Laura May, Andrew Everett, Charles Hiron, Alonzo “Lon” Clifford, and Frank Edgar. It appears that there was another son, Elmer Ellsworth, who was born on 16 June 1868, who may have died as an infant.

At the time of the 1870 census, Eli and his family lived in Liberty Township, where he farmed. The 1880 census shows the family living in Windfall in Tipton County, with Eli working as a lumber merchant. By 1900 he was back to farming in Liberty Township, where it appears he remained for the rest of his life. Eli died on 19 August 1927.

Mary Florence Hiron Thornburg was born on 22 August 1848 to Parker C. Hiron and Rebecca Miller Hiron. Her family lived in a part of Virginia that would later become part of West Virginia. Her father worked as a carpenter. Sometime in the 1850s her family moved to Liberty Township in Delaware County, Indiana, where her father farmed. Mary died on 21 March 1924.

Parker Emerson Thornburg was born on 3 December 1869. At the time of the 1900 census, he was working as a schoolteacher. He married Armina M. Shroyer (1883–1980) on 6 November 1901. They had four children: Noel, Marietta (Shafer), Roscoe Eli, and Laura (Knight). Parker began working for the Post Office around 1905, retiring from the Muncie Post Office in 1940. He was a member of the United National Association of Post Office Clerks, the Delaware County Board of Public Welfare, the DeSoto Methodist Church, the Sons of Union Veterans, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and the Knights of Pythias. He died on 1 April 1952.

Laura May Thornburg was born on 25 March 1872. She was still living with her parents at the time of the 1910 census. Laura died following surgery at a Muncie hospital on 6 April 1912.

Andrew Everett Thornburg was born on 30 September 1875. He married Ella Mae Sheller (1877–1963) in December 1898. The couple lived on her parents’ farm in the Delaware Township of Delaware County at the time of the 1900 census. By 1920 they had moved to Liberty Township, where they farmed. They had two children, Delbert and Viola (Smidley). Andrew died on 4 November 1938.

Charles Hiron Thornburg was born on 16 January 1879. He married Emma Moletta “Letta” Pittenger (1880–1983) in December 1900. They had three children: Wilma Irene (Scott), Gerald E., and Mary Susanna (Kennedy). They lived on a farm in Liberty Township. Charles died in 1927.

Alonzo “Lon” Clifford Thornburg was born on 6 April 1881. By 1900 he was living in Muncie where he worked as a cigar salesman. In August 1904 he married Mary N. Sample (1884–1928) in Jay County, Indiana. They had three children: Karl Sample, Virginia J.

(Hale), and Elizabeth Adaline (Love). In 1910 Lon operated a cigar store in Muncie. By 1920 he had gotten into the hotel management business. At the time of his death on 18 June 1947, he was president of the Thornburg Hotel Company, which operated the Roberts and Delaware hotels in Muncie. He had served as president of the Indiana Hotelmen's Association and the Sons of Union Veterans. He was well known in state Republican Party circles.

Frank Edgar Thornburg was born on 9 April 1883. He married Lola Fadley (1886–1971) in December 1908. They farmed first in Liberty Township but had moved to a farm in Delaware Township by 1920. They had one son, Perry Earl. Frank served as Delaware County Commissioner. He died on 27 March 1964.

The Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was organized in the rural South after the Civil War to assert claims of white supremacy during Reconstruction; it collapsed in the 1870s. The Klan resurfaced in the early twentieth century in small towns and rural areas throughout the country. This second wave of the Klan grew dramatically in the early 1920s, enrolling an estimated three to six million people in a crusade for a white, native-born, Protestant America.

Women's participation in the Klan began in the early 1920s when male membership in the KKK was increasing rapidly. Women's auxiliaries of the Klan included the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK), Kamelia, and Ladies of the Invisible Empire. In Indiana, Klan leader D.C. Stephenson sponsored the Queens of the Golden Mask (QGM). In the mid-1920s the QGM and other women's Klan organizations merged into the larger WKKK. By the 1930s, this second wave of the Klan was also collapsing.

William Earl Blamey was born in Muncie on 30 November 1893 to William J. Blamey and Lucinda Taylor Blamey. He was assistant physical director at the local YMCA before going to work as a draftsman for the Indiana Bridge Company. While in the Army during World War I, he served in France. He married Rebecca Hazel Bartlett in December 1920. He died after a brief bout of pneumonia on 11 February 1923. A Muncie newspaper obituary stated that he was "widely and popularly known." His son, bearing his name, was born eight months later.

Sources:

Ancestrylibrary.com (Accessed 17 January 2024):

- Find a Grave
- Indiana, U.S., Birth Certificates, 1907–1944
- Indiana, U.S., Civil War Soldier Database Index, 1861–1865
- Indiana, U.S., Death Certificates, 1899–2017
- Indiana, U.S., Marriage Index, 1800–1941
- Indiana, U.S., Marriages, 1810–2001
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Blee, Kathleen M. “Women in the 1920s’ Ku Klux Klan Movement” in *Feminist Studies* Vol. 17, No. 1, Spring 1991 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178170?origin=crossref>
Accessed 26 April 2024.

“Funeral Services for William Earl Blamey.” *The Muncie Morning Star*, 14 February 1923, p. 14.

“Popular Girl Dies After Operation.” *Muncie Evening Press*, 6 April 1912, p. 3.

“Thornburg Rites.” *The Muncie Star*, 29 March 1964, p. D-7.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection is composed of four photographs of groups of people; two include Elihu Thornburg – one photo with his family in 1897 and one at a 1915 reunion of members of the 19th Indiana Infantry, a unit with which he had served during the Civil War. The other two photographs are related to the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1920s in Muncie, Indiana; one is of a KKK funeral for William Earl Blamey and the other is of a gathering of the women’s group known as Queens of the Golden Mask.

The donor found the photographs in family files. It is unknown, what, if any, connection there was between the Thornburg family and the Ku Klux Klan.

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Thornburg family portrait, taken March 1897 (mounted photograph). Names and ages listed on back: Papa [Eli], 52; Mama [Mary], 48; Parker, 28; Laura, 24; [Andrew] Everett, 21; Charlie, 18; Lonnie, 16; Frank, 14. [They appear possibly in this order: standing in back, left to right: Andrew Everett, Parker, Charlie; in front, left to right: Eli, Lon, Laura, Frank, Mary.]

Group portrait of reunion held for surviving members of the 19th Indiana Infantry on 14 September 1915 in Richmond, Indiana (mounted photograph by W.L. Dalbey of Richmond). Twenty-three individual men are identified on the back; wives of eight of the men appear in the photo and one man has two daughters and two granddaughters in the photo. The men's names are listed along with which companies they served in within the 19th regiment and their hometowns.

Those included are: Joseph B. Bennett of Richmond; Ephraim Bartholomew of Fairmount; Eldridge Anderson of Hope; Oliver Carmichael (and wife [Martha Losh Carmichael]) of Muncie; Henry C. Marsh (and wife [Mary Ann Wilson Marsh]) of Muncie; Elihu M. Thornburg of Muncie; Benjamin B. Duke (and wife [Eliza Jane Evans Duke]) of Richmond; Richard Taylor Stott (and wife [Eliza Ann Chaille Stott]) of Westport; James H. Baughan (and wife) of Parker; Daniel Hawk of Lincoln Centre, Kansas; William H. Hartman of Southport; David P. Fort of Indianapolis; Enoch Adams of Carrington, North Dakota; James L. Mitchell (and wife) of Greenfield; Timothy Hart (and two daughters [Mary J. Huffman and Martha Belle Wampole] and two granddaughters [Sarah Lucile Huffman and Marjorie M. Huffman]) of Richmond; Andrew J. Wood of Ridgeville; Greer N. Williams of Richmond; Isaac S. Pruitt of Winchester; William Robert Green (and wife [Jane "Jennie" Stone Brown Green]) of Ridgeville; Henry Kirby of Bryant; Richard Williams (and wife [Elizabeth Elliott Williams]) of Richmond; Milton Franklin of Hagerstown; Jesse E. Jones of Richmond.

CONTAINER

OVB Folder 1 of 2

OVB Folder 2 of 2

Funeral for William Earl Blamey, 14 February 1923 – photo shows white-hooded crowd at cemetery. Caption reads: “200 Members of Muncie Klan No. 4, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Giving Klan funeral ceremony. Largest and longest procession ever held in Muncie. / To our absent brother / William Earl Blamey. / Zero weather.” (photo by Swift of Muncie)

Folder 1 of 1

Queens of the Golden Mask gathering – photo shows a crowd of women at night by a burning cross and American flags in Muncie [ca. early 1920s] (photo by Swift of Muncie). [Queens of the Golden Mask was a women’s order of the Ku Klux Klan, composed of wives, mothers, and daughters of Klansmen.]

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