

Collection #  
P 0464

**ELMHURST (JAMES N. HUSTON RESIDENCE) COLLECTION  
CA. 1895–1950**

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Processed by

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 Box

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1895–1950

PROVENANCE: Gift from Miss Evelyn Craig of Vevay, Indiana, received in May, 1963

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1963.0502

NOTES: See also: *The Elmhurst School for Girls: Fayette County, Indiana*. Pamphlet Collection: LD7501.C6 E5 1909.  
*Elmhurst School: Connersville, R.F.D.G., Indiana*. Pamphlet Collection: LD7501.C6 E49 1909.  
*A History of Masonry in Connersville: A Listing of the Membership of the Various Bodies as of 1941 and the Story of Elmhurst*. General Collection: HS539.I552 F73 1941.  
Clipping File: Fayette County.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL SKETCH**

The Elmhurst mansion at the south edge of Connersville, in Fayette County, Indiana, was home to political leaders, a station on the underground railroad, a sanatorium, an exclusive girls' school, a military institute, and finally, a Masonic lodge.

The house was originally built in 1831 by pioneer statesman Oliver H. Smith, then a member of Congress from Indiana. The second occupant of the house was another congressman, Caleb B. Smith, who later served as Secretary of the Interior during part of President Lincoln's administration.

The mansion was an important station of the pre-Civil War underground railway. The trail of the road by which escaped slaves were smuggled to freedom divided there at the Old Elm Farm, as the estate was then known.

A third congressman, Samuel W. Parker, acquired the mansion in 1850. He was a devout conservationist and is given credit for planting many of the trees that surround the house. After his return from Washington he became president of the Junction Railroad Company and the Whitewater Canal. He gave invaluable support to the career of Henry Clay, who was a visitor to the mansion. It is said that canal boats would ring their bells as they passed the mansion in honor of Parker.

The estate became the property of Senator James Nelson Huston (1849-1927) in 1881. He spent \$44,000 to remodel the structure. He added the wings to the house and the massive columns that adorn the porch. He added some huge fireplaces carved of red sandstone imported from Italy. Huston designated one room in the mansion for the exclusive use of Benjamin Harrison and his wife. Huston managed Harrison's political campaign and became United States Treasurer when Harrison took office. During Huston's tenure, the estate was known as Elm Park, but also became known as "The White Home of Indiana." Most of the photographs in this collection were taken around 1895, when the mansion was the Huston home. Pictured in the collection are the bedrooms of his children: William, born 11 January 1875, and Marie, born 5 August 1877.

In 1901 Dr. Andrew Daum built an annex of twenty-six rooms to the house and turned it into a sanatorium. Following Daum's death, the sanatorium was operated by Dr. W.J. Porter, whose wife gave the estate its name of Elmhurst.

From 1906 to 1909 the mansion was the summer home of a Pennsylvania family. Then in 1909 the property was acquired by Isabel Cressler and Caroline Summer, who established the Elmhurst School for Girls. It was an exclusive school that limited its enrollment to twenty-four students from wealthy and prominent families of the Midwest. The school closed in 1929. The estate then became the Pennington Military Institute, which operated for only one year. Around 1940 the mansion became the lodge of the Connersville Masons.

Sources:

Items in the collection, including clippings: "Elmhurst Mansion," *Indianapolis Star Magazine*, 26 March 1950, page 14; "A Spot Near Cincinnati" by Caroline Williams, *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, n.d.

Note accompanying the collection.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of thirty-one photographs, a reprinted article, and three newspaper clippings pertaining to what is now known as the Elmhurst Mansion. The collection is arranged into four series, as detailed below.

**Series 1, James N. Huston Residence Photographs, ca. 1895:** This series is composed of twenty-eight mounted photographs taken around 1895, during the time the mansion was the home of James N. Huston. All but two of these photographs are interior views.

**Series 2, Elmhurst School for Girls Photographs, ca. 1915:** This series contains three photographs of exterior views of the estate grounds taken around 1915 when the estate was home to the Elmhurst School for Girls.

**Series 3, Reprinted Article:** This series consists of one article about a visit to the Elmhurst School for Girls, titled “Elmhurst Films: Being Some Impressions of an Unusual School” by Grace Willard. It was reprinted from *Country Life in America*, 1 July 1912.

**Series 4, Newspaper Clippings:** This series includes copies of three newspaper clippings that provide accounts of the history of the Elmhurst Mansion and its various inhabitants from the original owner to the Connersville Masons. One article is from 1923, one is from 1950, and the other’s date is unknown.

## SERIES CONTENTS

### Series 1: James N. Huston Residence Photographs, ca. 1895

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
“Elm Park” – exterior view of mansion from the side (#1).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“Home of Mr. J.N. Huston / Connersville, Ind.” – exterior view with two dogs sleeping on the porch (#2).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“Mantle in lower Hall” – shows fireplace (#3).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“Lower Hall” – shows fireplace, chairs, grandfather clock (#4).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“Stair Way in Lower Hall” – shows stairway and lamps (#5).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“Mantle in upper Hall” – shows fireplace (#6).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“Upper Hall” – shows fireplace, chairs, other furniture (#7).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“First Floor Bath Room” – shows a small and a large bathtub (#8).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“Dining Room” – shows fireplace and one end of a table with chairs (#9).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“Dining Room” – shows a sideboard, chair, and table (#10).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
“Dining Room” – shows table with punchbowl and ladle, chairs, another sideboard, and a portrait hanging on a wall near floor-length windows (#11).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
“Dining Room” – shows glass cabinet, fireplace, table with punchbowl and ladle, chairs (#12).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
“Library” – shows full bookcases, a stepstool, chairs, and other furniture (#13).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2

“Mr. Huston’s Library” – shows desk, chairs, mirror, overhead light fixture, window, and pictures on wall (#14).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
“First Floor Guest Room” – shows chest of drawers with mirror, small tables and chairs, overhead light fixture, windows, portrait of a man on the wall (#15).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
“First Floor Guest Room” – shows mirrored wardrobe, rocking chair, sliding wooden door (#16).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
“First Floor Guest Room” – shows fireplace with seascape painting above mantle, rocking chairs (#17).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
“Will’s Room” (bedroom of Mr. Huston’s son) – shows photographs on chest of drawers with mirror, foot of the bed, desk, rocking chairs, and a hat hanging near a window (#18).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
“Marie’s Suite” (bedroom suite of Mr. Huston’s daughter) – shows desk with a portrait of a girl on it, and a plant by a window (#19).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
“Marie’s Suite” (bedroom suite of Mr. Huston’s daughter) – shows a canopied bed, a table with a lamp on it, a table with a tea set on it by a window, a floral painting on an easel, rocking chairs (#20).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
“Marie’s Suite” (bedroom suite of Mr. Huston’s daughter) – shows wood paneling, lounge chair, rocking chair, lamp, and other light fixture (#21).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
“East Room / Drawing Room” – shows piano, banjo, fiddle, paintings on walls, stuffed chair, sofa, chandelier and other light fixtures, table with tea service (#22).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
“East Room / Drawing Room” – shows desk with candelabrum, small tables, stuffed chairs, fireplace, portraits on wall, overhead light fixture, window (#23).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
“Mantle in East Room” – shows fireplace with mirror, clock, urns, and portrait of a woman on wall (#24).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3

“East Drawing Room” – shows table with candelabrum and books, stuffed chairs, rocking chair, overhead light fixture (#25).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
“Drawing Room East” – shows china cabinet, table with crystal bowl and candelabra, wicker chairs, painting on wall, chandelier (#26).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
“Reception Room” – shows fireplace, candelabra, lamp, chairs, windows (#27).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
“Reception Room” – shows paintings on wall above paneling, stuffed chairs, lamp, display shelves holding objects such as a plate, pitcher, vase, etc. (#28).	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3

## **Series 2: Elmhurst School for Girls Photographs, ca. 1915**

### **CONTENTS**

“Lake, Elmhurst” – shows three girls in a canoe on a lake at Elmhurst.

“East Front, Elmhurst” – shows girls sitting on the porch and in the yard.

“On the Farm, Elmhurst” – shows sheep grazing.

### **CONTAINER**

Photographs,  
Box 1, Folder 4

Photographs,  
Box 1, Folder 4

Photographs,  
Box 1, Folder 4

## **Series 3: Reprinted Article**

### **CONTENTS**

“Elmhurst Films: Being Some Impressions of an Unusual School” by Grace Willard. Reprinted from *Country Life in America*, 1 July 1912. In somewhat fragile condition.

Photocopy of above article: “Elmhurst Films: Being Some Impressions of an Unusual School” by Grace Willard. Reprinted from *Country Life in America*, 1 July 1912.

### **CONTAINER**

Pamphlet F Collection:  
LD7501.C6 E6 1912

Photographs,  
Box 1, Folder 5



## Series 4: Newspaper Clippings

### CONTENTS

Photocopy of newspaper clipping titled “Historic Connersville” from the *Indianapolis Star*, 31 December 1923, page 30. Includes a display ad for the Elmhurst School and an article about the school and the history of the estate. Original newspaper clipping is very fragile and is in the clipping file for Fayette County.

Photocopy of newspaper clipping of drawing with caption titled “A Spot Near Cincinnati” from the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, n.d. Drawing is of the mansion; caption is a brief history of the estate. Original newspaper clipping is in the clipping file for Fayette County.

### CONTAINER

Photographs,  
Box 1, Folder 6

Photographs,  
Box 1, Folder 7