

WRIGHT (CHARLES L.) PAPERS

(Mss. 4785)

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Baton Rouge, LA

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WRIGHT (CHARLES L.) PAPERS

1884-1970

Mss. 4785

Special Collections, LSU Libraries

SUMMARY

Size.	2 linear feet.
Geographic locations.	St. James Parish, La., Lake Charles, La., Michigan, Mississippi, Giles County, Va.
Inclusive dates.	1884-1970.
Bulk dates.	1907-1934.
Language.	English.
Summary.	Personal and business papers including letters, correspondence, photographs, financial records, and printed items, especially relating to Wright's involvement with the Excelsior Cypress Company, Timberton, St. James Parish, La.
Source.	Acquired 2000.
Access.	No restrictions.
Copyright.	Physical rights are retained by the LSU Libraries. Copyright of the original materials is retained by the descendants of the creators of the materials in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
Citation.	Charles L. Wright Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
Stack designation.	32:134; OS:W

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Charles L. Wright (1867-1951) worked in various capacities in the lumber industry in Michigan, Virginia, Mississippi, and Louisiana. He was born in Oakland (now Wayne) County, Mich. Wright began his career in lumber mills at the Interior Lumber Company on the upper peninsula of Michigan in 1891. He and the former Jennie Crotty (d. 1938) were married the same year.

By 1896, Wright was a shipping agent for Interior Lumber, and in 1897, the Wrights moved to Giles County, Va., where Interior Lumber Co. built a new mill. Between 1898 and 1900, Wright moved to Harvey, La. to work at the Louisiana Cypress Timber Co. Between 1900 and 1905, Charles Wright and his brother Harry established their own sawmill in Noxapater, Miss. This mill was run by Harry Wright and was in operation until about 1926. Cecil Wright (Charles' and Harry's brother) also worked at the Noxapater mill. The Wrights built a railroad siding, constructed the mill, built houses for themselves and the mill employees, a boarding house, and a company store.

In 1906, Joseph Rathborne (d. 1923), owner of Louisiana Cypress Timber Co. and believed to be on the board of directors of Interior Lumber Co., assigned Charles Wright the task of building the Excelsior Cypress Mill and the company town of Timberton in St. James Parish, La. Wright became 2nd vice-president of Excelsior Cypress. The mill began operating in 1907 and harvested approximately 11,700 acres of cypress in the adjacent area before closing in 1923. The mill buildings and equipment were salvaged and the town of Timberton reverted to swamp.

In 1918, Wright moved from Timberton to Neta Plantation, a 467-acre farm near Romeville, St. James Parish, La. The Wrights had two children: Charles Kenneth Lafayette Wright (1897-1991), known as Kenneth, and Ruth Evelyn Crotty Wright (1900-1993). Charles Wright was also Timberton's postmaster. After Excelsior Cypress closed in 1923, Charles and Jennie Wright moved to Canton, Miss. Charles Wright was president of Dealers Lumber Company there until a few years before his death. Wright was a life-long Mason and attained the 32nd degree while at Timberton and served as Worshipful Master at the Canton Lodge.

After Charles and Jennie Wright moved to Canton, Kenneth Wright farmed Neta Plantation, operated a sugar mill, and was an assistant parish agricultural agent. By the 1930's because of the Depression, he was having great difficulty making a living on the plantation. In 1935, after turning Neta over to the Federal Land Bank, Kenneth and his family (wife Elmer, daughter Beverly Ann, and son Charles) moved to Nashville, Tenn., where he worked in a creamery. Kenneth Wright returned to Neta in the early 1940's, but left for good in 1942. He operated ice cream plants in Nashville and Metairie, La., and after retirement, moved in with his daughter in Farmville, La., where he died.

Ruth Wright attended Silliman College in Clinton, La., Mississippi Synodical College in Holly Springs, Miss., and spent two terms at a business school in Lake Charles, La. After business school, she and her roommate from Silliman, Lillian Carroll, opened the Rose

Gift Shop in the Alvin Hotel in Baton Rouge. The gift shop lasted only a few months, and Ruth Wright moved with her parents to Canton, Miss. She married Leon Ollie Wright in 1927 and their only child, L. O. Wright was born in 1929. Ruth and Leon Wright owned Wright Appliance Co. in Canton and lived there until 1985. Ruth Wright left Canton to be near her son in Savannah, Ga.

Charles Wright's brothers, Harry and Cecil, along with their brother-in-law, George Tibbits (married to Edith Wright), all worked in the timber industry. They worked at the Interior mill in Michigan and Harry joined Charles at the Interior mill in Virginia and later at the Louisiana Cypress mill in Harvey, La. George Tibbits and his sons Arthur, Charles, and Lewis also came to Harvey and all worked with Charles Wright at various times. George Crotty, Jennie Wright's stepbrother, came to Louisiana, as well, and worked at the Morley Cypress Co. and later at the Standard Oil (now ExxonMobil) Refinery in Baton Rouge.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Personal and business correspondence and letters, financial and legal papers, printed items, and photographs of Charles L. Wright and family and the Excelsior Cypress Co. Correspondence and letters consist of those between Wright and his children and friends, his supervisors at Excelsior Cypress, associates in the lumber industry, and business partners. Financial and legal papers consist of those relating to the operation of Neta Plantation, Wright's personal income tax returns, insurance policies, clerk of court's documents and correspondence relating to two lawsuits, power of attorney over matters at Excelsior Cypress Co., and documents concerning the operation of Excelsior Cypress Co. and company-owned businesses in the town of Timberton, La. Printed items consist of copies of newspaper clippings about Wright's family and friends, greeting cards, invitations, brochures, hunting licenses, business cards, booklets, items dealing with Wright's tenure as Timberton's postmaster, and various other personal items. Photographs consist of those of Wright and his family and friends, scenes of Timberton and the Mississippi River, and the buildings, machinery, and operations of Excelsior Cypress Co.

LIST OF SUBGROUPS AND SERIES

Subgroup 1. Charles L. Wright Family Papers

Series I. Correspondence and Letters, 1898-1942; 1970 (Box 2 and 6)

Series II. Financial and Legal Papers, 1913-1926 (Box 2)

Series III. Photographs, 1891-1935 (Box 4 and 5)

Series IV. Printed Items, 1884-1951 (Box 1, 3, and 6)

Subgroup 2. Excelsior Cypress Co. Records

Series I. Correspondence and Letters, 1906-1927 (Box 3)

Series II. Financial and Legal Papers, 1904-1924 (Box 3 and 6)

Series III. Photographs, 1907-ca. 1914 (Box 5)

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Subgroup 1. Charles L. Wright Family Papers

I. Correspondence and Letters, 1898-1942; 1970

Letters between Kenneth Wright and Charles Wright about family matters and difficulties farming during the Depression; letters between Charles Wright and Ruth Wright and Lillian Carroll about family and school matters and the opening of a gift shop; letters to and from Charles Wright and family members and friends including thank-you notes, holiday greetings, death notices, and livestock; a series of letters concerning the sale of property in Donaldsonville, La.; letters dealing with Masonic issues; correspondence concerning a failed attempt at opening a dealership for Piedmont automobiles; a letter from Bessie Colomb to Ruth Wright concerning the death of Bessie's brother, Dr. Henry Octave Colomb, Sr.; and letters from the Baton Rouge Rice Mill Syndicate and River Farm Bureau Rice Growers Cooperative to Charles Wright concerning the availability of seed, when to harvest rice, and news about the rice market.

II. Financial and Legal Papers, 1913-1926

Correspondence and clerk of court documents pertaining to *Charles L. Wright v. Joe Scott* and *C. L. Wright v. Sydney Pate*; title search, farm transactions, and ledger sheets of Neta Plantation; a rice-growing partnership agreement; federal income tax returns; Louisiana tax assessment lists; and correspondence concerning repair of a railroad spur for use at Neta Plantation.

III. Photographs, 1891-1935

Images of Wright's family and friends; scenes along the Mississippi River; the Romeville high schools; Noxapater Lumber Co.; and dedication of the Jerusalem Masonic Temple in New Orleans, La. Photographs identified by the donor.

IV. Printed Items, 1884-1951

Photocopies of a poem, advertisements, pages from the family Bible, death and marriage notices, and a page from a National Women's Christian Temperance Union pamphlet; Wright's business cards; article about the Morley Cypress Co.; pass to the 1920 Rex Mardi Gras ball; hunting licenses; brochures; civil service examination for postmaster; Wright's postmaster's certificate; U. S. Post Office charts and receipts; *The Lacy Timber Digest*; Christmas cards; death notice cards; announcements; Masonic lodge membership cards; booklets; a catalog containing Wright's field notes; automobile insurance policies; U. S. Census of Agriculture Farm Schedule; a questionnaire from the YMCA; and certificates of Charles Wright's membership in various organizations.

Subgroup 2. Excelsior Cypress Co. Records

I. Correspondence and Letters, 1906-1927

Correspondence concerning repairs to a railroad spur and the sale of equipment by Excelsior Cypress Co.; letters to and from Charles Wright and his associates in the lumber industry concerning the business atmosphere during World War I and the lumber industry in general; letters to and from Joseph Rathborne concerning timber lands, mill production, lumber grading, and financial matters; letters from R. C. Hawkins to J. E. Windham concerning the possibility of Excelsior Cypress purchasing their land; and a letter to the Louisiana Department of Labor concerning the legality of compelling workers to remain at Excelsior Cypress Co.

II. Financial and Legal Papers, 1908-1924

Notice to share holders, trial balance, and stock sheet from Excelsior Cypress; past due accounts from the Excelsior Saloon; power of attorney allowing Charles Wright to handle affairs of Excelsior Cypress; hand-drawn plat of Excelsior Cypress land; promissory notes from Interstate Trust and Banking Co.

III. Photographs, 1907-ca. 1914

Images of the town of Timberton, La. and Excelsior Cypress Co. buildings, machinery, and operations. Photographs identified by donor.

INDEX TERMS

Materials about these topics are found in the subgroups and series indicated.

Terms

Agricultural, cooperative--Louisiana.
 Agricultural laborers.
 Agriculture--Statistics.
 Baton Rouge Rice Mill Syndicate (La.)
 Depression--1929--United States.
 Excelsior Cypress Company.
 Farm income--Louisiana.
 Farm life--Louisiana.
 Farm management.
 Farmers--Louisiana.
 Forest production--Louisiana.
 Freemasonry--Louisiana.
 Log transportation--Louisiana.
 Loggers.
 Lumber trade--Louisiana.
 Lumbering--Machinery.
 Neta Plantation (La.)
 Professional education of women--Louisiana.
 Rice--Planting--Louisiana.
 Rice trade--Louisiana.
 River Farm Bureau Rice Growers Association (La.)
 Rural families--Louisiana.
 Sawmills--Mississippi--Noxapater.
 Women-owned business enterprises--Louisiana.

Location

Subgroup 1, Series I
 Subgroup 1, Series I, II, and III
 Subgroup 1, Series II
 Subgroup 1, Series I
 Subgroup 1, Series I
 Subgroup 2, Series I-III
 Subgroup 1, Series I and II
 Subgroup 1, Series I-III
 Subgroup 1, Series I and II
 Subgroup 1, Series I-IV
 Subgroup 2, Series I-III
 Subgroup 1, Series I, III, IV
 Subgroup 2, Series I-III
 Subgroup 2, Series I and III
 Subgroup 2, Series I-III
 Subgroup 2, Series I-III
 Subgroup 1, Series I-III
 Subgroup 1, Series I
 Subgroup 1, Series I and II
 Subgroup 1, Series I and II
 Subgroup 1, Series I
 Subgroup 1, Series I-III
 Subgroup 1, Series I and III
 Subgroup 1, Series I

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
Subgroup 1. Charles L. Wright Family Papers			
I. Correspondence and Letters, 1898-1942; 1970			
32:134	2	1	undated-1898
		2	1907-1917
		3	1918-1922
		4	1923
		5	1924
		6	1926
		7	1931
		8	1932
		9	1933
		10	1934
		11	1935-1942
		12	1970
OS:W	6	1	1914
II. Financial and Legal Papers, 1913-1926			
32:134	2	13	1913-1914
		14	1914-1917
		15	1918-1919
		16	1920-1921
		17	1922-1924
		18	1925-1926
III. Photographs, 1891-1935			
32:134	4	1	Ca. 1891-ca, 1918: Charles and Jennie Wright at Neta Plantation; Kenneth (under 1916 Hudson) and Elmer Wright; Neta Plantation home; C. L. Wright at time of marriage, 1/5/1891; robbing beehives of honey; Wright home in New Orleans, 1906; Ruth Wright, 1906; Ruth Wright on steps of Silliman Institute; Wright's 1916 Hudson Super Six on Pretty Creek Bridge, Clinton, La.
		2	1912: Torras Crevasse at Morley, La.
		3	Ca. 1916: Y&MV train at Timberton Junction; "colored" houses on Neta Plantation; two views of Neta Plantation from the Mississippi River.
		4	1922: postcard from Mr. Peet to Charles L. Wright.
		5	1935: Aftermath of storm at Ferriday, La.
		6	undated: Wright's cattle in yard at Timberton; "Kenneth [Wright] on his big steel mule" at Timberton; Charles Wright's home in Timberton
		7	undated: George Tibbits photographs (not from Timberton). Cypress logs on the bayou; steam skidder in the swamp; liquor still; "donkey boy" with rifle.

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
		8	undated: Romeville High School girls basketball team; First Romeville High School; second Romeville High School
		9	undated: Three steamboat photographs. <i>Hale, V. L. Watson, and Imperial.</i>
		10	undated: "Aunt Viney, Colomb's cook at Romeville;" Colomb children.
	5	1	undated: Dedication at Jerusalem Temple, New Orleans, La.
			IV. Printed Items, 1884-1951
32:134	1	--	1884: <i>Houghtaling's Hand-Book of Useful Information</i> ; 1912: <i>Law for the Conservation of Game Birds, Deer, Fur-Bearing Animals, Game Preserves, Fresh Water Common Fish, Fresh Water Game Fish, Fisheries, Streams and Diamond Back Terrapin</i> ; 1919-1943: Masonic lodge membership cards; undated: Graton & Knight Mfg. Co. catalogue with Charles Wright's field notes.
	3	1	1913: Instructions for taking the postmaster's examination and trial examination.
		2	1914: U. S. Post Office rate table; receipt for shipping insurance for a table cloth; copy of newspaper clipping of J. C. Rathborne's death.
		3	1916: Louisiana hunting licenses; instructions for postmaster's examination.
		4	1917-1918: Application for automobile registration; automobile insurance policies; certificate: "Member of the Council of Defense for the Parish of St. James;" balance sheet and brochures from Piedmont Motor Co.
		5	1919-1951: Hunting license; reprint of article about the Morley Cypress Co.; Wright's business cards; invitation to the Rex Mardi Gras ball; <i>The Lacy Timber Digest</i> ; pass to the Louisiana Postal Conference Convention; death notice cards and reprints of newspaper articles for Joseph Rathborne; registry dispatch receipt; U. S. Post Office Supply order; copy of advertisement announcing sale of bonds in Dealers Lumber Co.; copies of obituaries for Colomb family members and Jennie and Charles Wright.
		6	undated: Christmas cards; announcement of the availability of gravel for road building; YMCA questionnaire; photocopies: page from pamphlet by the National Women's Christian Temperance Union; poem; births, deaths, and marriages from the family Bible; page from Jennie Wright's cookbook; newspaper articles about Wright children's achievements; Estelle Colomb's marriage notice; article on Dr. Charles Gelbke's 50 th year as a doctor.
OS:W	6	2	1913: 32 nd degree Mason's certificate
		3	1921: Postmaster's certificate
		4	1923: Certificate from the Ancient Arabic Order, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine.

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
Subgroup 2. Excelsior Cypress Co. Records			
I. Correspondence and Letters, 1906-1927			
32:134	3	7	1906-1908
		8	1910-1912
		9	1913-1914
		10	1916-1918
		11	1919
		12	1920-1922
		13	1923-1927
II. Financial and Legal Papers, 1908-1924			
32:134	3	14	1908
		15	1913-1918
		16	1923
		17	1924
OS:W	6	5	undated: Hand-drawn plat of Excelsior Cypress Co. lands.
III. Photographs, 1907-ca. 1914			
32:134	5	2	1907: Timberton Hotel just after completion. Charles Wright at extreme left, Joseph Rathborne at extreme right.
		3	1909-ca.1914: 1909 postcard of Excelsior Cypress mill; exterior photographs of Excelsior Cypress mill; "gator in the mill pond;" Timberton Post Office; possibly sawmill employees and wives; Timberton School; 1912: Excelsior Cypress skidder at work; stacks of lumber blown over, Timberton, La.; dry kiln fire at Timberton; left to right: Milton LaBau, C. L. Wright, Ruth Wright, Jenny Wright, Kenneth Wright, Mr. Patten; Ruth Wright; storm damage to lumber stacks; back of the Timberton lumber yard.
		4	undated: Lumber at Excelsior Cypress
		5	undated: Views of Timberton, La.
		6	undated: Charles Wright checking inventory.
		7	undated: View of Excelsior Cypress mill across log pond; Excelsior Cypress Co. mill: shipping shed at left, sawmill and planning mill at right
		8	undated: Sawmill interior, Timberton, La.; planning mill interior, Timberton, La.
		9	undated: Rail shipping shed, Timberton, La.; cypress logs in pond, Timberton, La.

LIST OF BOXES BY SUBGROUP AND SERIES

Box Number	Contents	Subgroup	Series
1	Printed Items	1	IV
2	Correspondence and Letters	1	I
	Financial and Legal Papers	1	II
3	Printed Items	1	IV
	Correspondence and Letters	2	I
	Financial and Legal Papers	2	II
4	Photographs	1	III
5	Photographs	1 and 2	III
6	Correspondence and Letters	1	I
	Printed Items	1	IV
	Financial and Legal Papers	2	II