

MSS. Collection #212

Clegg Family Papers, ca. 1884-2010 [bulk 1910-1920s; 1940s-1950s].
2½ boxes (29 folders), ca. 100 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name or topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

The Clegg Family Papers consist of correspondence, photographs, and printed materials pertaining to **William F. Clegg** and his son, **Luther Clegg**. W.F. Clegg was a prominent Greensboro businessman whose many ventures included the Hotel Clegg on South Elm Street. His son, Luther, served aboard the U.S.S. *Melville* during World War II and later became well known around Greensboro as a door-to-door salesman for the Fuller Brush Company. The collection contains photographs and correspondence relating to the personal life of W.F. Clegg. Wartime publications and printed materials from the Fuller Brush Company may also be of interest to researchers.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into two series and arranged within series by subject and/or document type. The first series contains materials pertaining to **W.F. Clegg** and the second contains items that belonged to his son, **Luther Clegg**.

Provenance: This collection was donated by Mary Gay Brady in 2011 and assigned the accession number 2012.1.1. She added three books from the National Health Series in 2014 (2014.12.1a-c) and a framed photograph of Luther Clegg as a boy in 2019 (2019.39.1). Mary Gay Brady and her family looked after Luther Clegg during the last five years of his life.

Processing: This collection was organized by intern Kate Hayworth, and the finding aid was completed in June 2013. The additions were incorporated soon after their receipt by Archivist Elise Allison, and the finding aid was updated each time.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Born six miles from Pittsboro on June 25, 1869, versatile businessman **William Francis Clegg** moved to Greensboro at a young age with his parents, Isaac H. and Sarah Bynum Clegg. Around 1889, he launched the W.F. Clegg Cigar Company on South Elm Street across from the Southern Railway Passenger Depot. He soon began selling coffee and sandwiches to passengers for a nickel and in 1891, because of all the business from the railroad, was able to expand into the Hotel Clegg, which eventually offered 72 rooms. He operated the hotel for 47 years, entertaining a range of guests from New York millionaires to famed orator William Jennings Bryan. His cigar factory was located on the third floor of the building and had up to sixteen popular brands, including the “General Greene.”

W.F. Clegg was also the proprietor of the Greensboro Billiard Manufacturing Company. According to his son, Luther, at one point he operated 28 pool rooms across the state. In addition, he ran the Crystal Theatre, Greensboro's first movie house. He entered the wholesale fruit and produce business with the W.F. Clegg Commission and Brokerage Company, and at one time he also managed the Lindley Park recreational center and Uptown Café.

Clegg married **Minnie Mae Burton** in 1907 and the couple had a son, Billie, who died in infancy in 1911, and two children, Sarah and Luther, who survived to adulthood. The Clegg family lived in a suite of rooms at the hotel for more than 13 years before moving to 103 North Park Drive, a two-story house across from Fisher Park, around 1921. Additionally, W.F. Clegg was a charter member of the Greensboro Elk Lodge. The depression cost him almost everything, and he died following an illness on April 12, 1941. The former hotel was razed in 1961.

W.F. Clegg's son **Luther**, the future "Fuller Brush Man," was born in 1919 and named after an uncle from San Antonio, Texas. Luther's salesman days started at the age of nine when he began selling issues of *The Saturday Evening Post*. In high school, he also worked for O.Henry Drugstores and delivered telegrams for Western Union. He later sold baked goods door-to-door in a truck for Marian Lewis Bake Shop.

Luther Clegg joined the Navy as a welder in 1942 and was assigned to the M.V. *Rhode Island*. After injuring himself lifting boxes, he was sent to Norfolk Naval Hospital, from which he was discharged on June 1, 1943. He then worked abroad the U.S.S. *Melville* as a Shipfitter 2nd Class. After spending seventeen months in England, Luther was discharged on September 19, 1945, and returned home. He began attending Campbell College the same year.

In 1956, Luther became a door-to-door salesman for Fuller Brush Company, a job he would continue until the age of 88, becoming a familiar figure around Greensboro in the process. He never married and looked after his mother until her death in 1978. Luther himself died on November 6, 2010, at the age of 91.

Biographical Sources: This biographical note was compiled from materials in the collection, including newspaper articles, obituaries, autobiographical information by Luther Clegg, and notes taken by Archivist J. Stephen Catlett.

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The types of material included in the Clegg Family Papers are primarily correspondence, photographs, and printed materials.

The series relating to William F. Clegg contains materials that shed light on both his business ventures and personal life. Items featuring his businesses include letters on Hotel Clegg letterhead (1:1), blank forms from the Billiard Supply Co. (1:10), and W.F. Clegg Cigar Company stationery (1:11). The more personal photographs show him with his parents and siblings (1:6), him and his wife with Luther and Sarah Burton Clegg as children (1:6), and the interior and exterior of the family home at 103 North Park Drive (1:7).

The materials pertaining to Luther Clegg highlight his service in the Navy during World War II, his career with the Fuller Brush Company, and his interest in health and fitness. Items that shed light on his military service include his registration card for Selective Service (2:15), a guidebook for "Survival On Land and Sea" (2:16), and programs from services held in England

to celebrate victory in Europe in 1945 (2:14). His early years working for the Fuller Brush Company are reflected in his Independent Dealer's Contract (2:2), a product manual (2:3), a dealer information booklet (2:3), and a letter from his supervisor praising his work (2:1).

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Clegg, W.F. 13 folders (ca. 30 items). 1907-1955.

Items in this series include correspondence, photographs, printed materials, and newspaper clippings relating to W.F. Clegg. The series contains a portrait of him (1:9) and one of his wife, Minnie, in her wedding dress (1:5). Also included are two letters from W.F. Clegg to Minnie, dated July 18 and August 17, 1913 (1:1). Both the envelope and the letterhead feature the Hotel Clegg logo and the slogan, "The traveller at home."

The Cleggs had three children, two of whom survived to adulthood. A birth announcement and memory book of photographs pertain to Billie, their first son who died in infancy in 1911 (1:2-3). Family portraits show the Isaac Clegg family, as well as W.F. and Minnie with their children Luther and Sarah Burton Clegg (1:6). The series also contains interior and exterior photos of the Clegg residence at 103 North Park Drive (1:7).

W.F. Clegg was an active businessman and member of the community. Blank forms from the Billiard Supply Co. (1:10) and W.F. Clegg Cigar Company stationary (1:11) are among the printed materials. Clegg was a charter member of the Greensboro Elk Lodge and the series includes his 1914 membership card (1:3). Newspaper clippings from the time of his death in 1941 provide an overview of his personal and business life (1:13).

2. Clegg, Luther. 16 folders (ca. 70 items). 1884-2010 [bulk 1940s-1950s].

Included in this series are primarily printed materials and some photos that belonged to Luther Clegg. His baby book documents the first few months of his life (2:6) and a colorized photograph shows him around age five (2:7).

Luther Clegg served in the Navy during World War II. Photos and negatives in this series show him in his Navy uniform, and a small photo labeled "Portland Harbor off *Melville*" shows him with a friend in September 1944 (2:7). The series also contains his registration card for Selective Service dated October 16, 1940, as well as a shore leave pass (2:15). During the war, Luther spent seventeen months in England and brought back programs from three services held in April and May 1945 at St. Paul's Cathedral and Totnes Parish Church celebrating victory in Europe (2:14). Additional materials from his time in the Navy include two copies of the devotional book "Strength for Service to God and Country" given to him by acquaintances in 1942 (2:13). He also saved clippings from wartime publications, including the August 22, 1942, issue of *Liberty* magazine (2:12), and a 1944 guidebook for "Survival On Land and Sea" (2:16). Finally, the series includes a booklet from the Randolph County Honor Guard, which fired a 3-volley salute at Luther's funeral in November 2010 (2:14).

After the war, Luther attended Campbell College. This series contains college assignments he completed in the 1940s, as well as a certificate from his completion of a Dale Carnegie leadership course (2:5). While considering career options during college, Luther received a letter and a pamphlet on geology from the North Carolina Department of Conservation and

Development in response to his previous requests for information (2:11). Also included are two pamphlets on industry in North Carolina and a 1940 membership invitation and booklet from the National Geographic Society (2:11).

In 1956, Luther became a door-to-door salesman for the Fuller Brush Company, a job he would continue until the age of 88. Included among the company items in the series are his 1955 Independent Dealer's Contract (2:2), a product manual (2:3) and dealer information booklet (2:3). Of interest is a 1957 letter from a Fuller attorney acknowledging his complaint that another dealer was infringing on his territory and promising to "inquire into the matter immediately" (2:1). A 1956 letter from Luther's supervisor invites him to renew his contract and praises him as having "the makings of one of the Branch's top dealers" and being "persistent enough to sell but not too persistent as to offend" (2:1).

Health conscious, Luther kept a number of articles, signed photos, and exercise guides from bodybuilder Charles Atlas (2:8). Among other miscellaneous items in the collection is a 1880s autograph book containing messages addressed to "Maggie" (2:4).

FOLDER LISTING

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
1	1	Clegg, W. F.	-- Correspondence (1913)
	2	"	-- Miscellaneous -- Birth Announcement (1910)
	3	"	-- " -- Elk Lodge Membership Card (1914)
	4	"	-- " -- Memory Book (1911)
	5	"	-- Photographs -- Clegg, Minnie Burton (1907)
	6	"	-- " -- Family
	7	"	-- " -- House
	8	"	-- " -- Kiwanis Convention (1922)
	9	"	-- " -- Portrait
	10	"	-- Printed Materials -- Billiard Supply Co. (1930s)
	11	"	-- " -- W.F. Clegg Cigar Company Stationary
	12	"	-- " -- Minnie B. Clegg Social Insurance Form (1955)
	13	"	-- " -- Newspaper Clippings (1941)
2	1	Clegg, Luther	-- Fuller Brush Co. -- Correspondence (1956-1957)
	2	"	-- " -- Independent Dealer's Contract (1955)
	3	"	-- " -- Printed Materials (1959-1960)
	4	"	-- Miscellaneous -- Autograph Book (1884-1890)
	5	"	-- " -- Education (1949)
	6	"	-- " -- Infancy (1919-1920)
	7	"	-- Photographs (ca. 1924, 1940s)
	8	"	-- Printed Materials -- Atlas, Charles
	9	"	-- Printed Materials -- Books (National Health Series, 1937)
	10	"	-- World War II -- Newspaper Clippings (1939)
	11	"	-- " -- Pamphlets (1940-1945)
	12	"	-- " -- Clippings (1942)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
2	13	Clegg, Luther	-- World War II -- Devotional Books (1942)
	14	“	-- “ -- Pamphlets (1945-2010)
	15	“	-- “ -- Registration Cards (1940)
	16	“	-- “ -- “Survival On Land and Sea” (1944)