## Collection Information

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<tr>
<td>VOLUME OF COLLECTION:</td>
<td>1 Box</td>
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<td>COLLECTION DATES:</td>
<td>1891-2007</td>
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<td>RESTRICTIONS:</td>
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<td>REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:</td>
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<td>ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:</td>
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<td>OTHER FINDING AIDS:</td>
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<td>LOCATION:</td>
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<td>NOTES:</td>
<td>See also: Eli and Mary Louise Crothers in Cemetery Walk folders, and Photos – People: Crothers</td>
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**Brief History**

Rachel Crothers (1870/78 - 1958) was born in Bloomington to Drs. Eli Kirk Crothers and Marie Louise (DePew) Crothers. Rachel Crothers' birth year is disputed. Often listed as 1878 though references could cite the same source, the website myheritage.com gives it as 1870. Crothers died in her sleep at her home in Danbury, Connecticut, the night of July 5/6, 1958. Her body was taken to a Georgetown funeral home. Although her parents, sister Lulu, and brother Eli are buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington, Illinois, Rachel’s burial place is listed as unknown.

Her parents were prominent in the Bloomington community. Dr. Eli Kirk Crothers (1826 - 1893) was a successful physician and druggist from the time of his arrival in Bloomington in 1850. He is most remembered for his involvement in what is thought to be one of the earliest medical malpractice suits in the state of Illinois, *Fleming v. Rogers and Crothers* (1855)—or better known today as the “Chicken Bone” Case. Crothers married Marie Louise DePew in 1851, the daughter of Elijah DePew, a successful businessman in the dry-goods trade. Mr. Depew was a dedicated Whig turned Republican who was well acquainted with Judge David Davis and future President Abraham Lincoln. Rachel Crothers' mother Mary Louise (1833 - 1920) was one of the first successful female physicians in Central Illinois. For further information, see Biographies on the McLean County Museum of History's website mchistory.org.

The Crothers had nine children, four of whom lived to adulthood: two sons, Noble E. and Eli Kirk Jr., and two daughters, Louise (Lulu) and Rachel. Both sons made careers as jewelers, whereas Lulu followed in her parents’ footsteps, becoming the first female pharmacist in Bloomington. Rachel, the most famous of the Crothers children, followed her artistic aspirations to New York where she established herself as an esteemed playwright and director. Only Eli Jr married (Emily) and had children (Eli Kirk III and twins Worth and James Hall).

Rachel wrote her first play when she was twelve and continued to write one-act farces while a student at what is today Thomas Metcalf School and University High School in Normal, Illinois. She wrote and directed plays while a student at Illinois State Normal University.

After graduating from university, Rachel studied dramatic art in Boston and New York City, where she appeared with various theatrical companies. At her family's insistence, she returned to Bloomington and taught elocution and gave recitals. In 1896/1897, she returned to New York and acting. She attended and then taught at the Stanhope-Wheatcroft School of Acting, appearing on stage for several seasons. After some of her one-act plays began to attract critical attention, she focused on playwriting. Her first full-length Broadway play "The Three of Us," produced by John Golden, was the highlight of the 1906 season. For the next three decades, she maintained the extraordinary average of one Broadway play a year, the majority of them popular and critical successes. Most remarkable, she cast, produced, and directed nearly all her plays herself (*Women in American History*).

Rachel Crothers was active in charitable work. She founded and headed the Stage Women's War Relief Fund during World War I and continued relief work during World War II. She helped organize the Stage Relief Fund to aid unemployed actors during the Great Depression in 1932. She was honored at a White House reception by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939, when she was awarded the Chi Omega sorority national achievement award by Eleanor Roosevelt.
Her plays usually dealt with controversial topics while upholding traditional values. Alvin Goldfarb opined in 1979, "In the annals of the American theatre, Rachel Crothers is now a forgotten figure. Yet she was one of this country's most popular playwrights for over a quarter of a century" from 1900 to 1937. Some of her plays were successfully adapted into films, such as "Let Us Be Gay" starring Norma Shearer.

Plays: Nora (1903), Point of View (1904), Criss Cross (1904), Rector (1905), The Three of Us (1906), The Coming of Mrs. Patrick (1907), Myself Bettina (1908), A Man's World (1910), Ourselves (1913), Young Wisdom (1914), The Heart of Paddy Whack (1914), Old Lady '31 (1916), Mother Carey's Chickens (with K. Douglas Wiggin, 1917), Once Upon a Time (1918), A Little Journey (1918), 39 East (1919), He and She (1920), Nice People (1921), Everyday (1921), Mary the Third (1923), Expressing Willie (1924), A Lady's Virtue (1925), Venus (1927), Let Us Be Gay (1929), Bon Voyage (1929), Caught Wet (1931), As Husbands Go (1931), When Ladies Meet (1932), Susan and God (1937), We Happy Few (1935).

Scope

With the exception of many newspaper clippings already in the archives of the McLean County Museum of History, items in this collection were obtained by the MCMH in Spring 2020 from J. James Auctions in Plymouth, Massachusetts. They were pasted in a 3-ring binder and have been removed for this collection. The auctioneer had no provenance from the consigner but speculates a family member may have put the scrapbook together since part of the family lived in North Plymouth, Massachusetts, for a while.

This collection consists of newspaper articles and ephemera about the Crothers family; articles about Rachel Crothers’ career covering the years 1892-1964; letters to her sister Lulu and mother Marie Louise, as well as other people covering the years 1898-1935; postcards sent at various times between 1909-1943 to her nephews Worth and Kirk and sister-in-law Emily Crothers; programs from recitations and plays (1892-1964); botanical drawings made by Rachel in 1890 while a student at Illinois State Normal University.

Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Biographical Materials
1.1 Rachel Crothers family and residence information from www.myheritage.com.
1.2 Family relationships, typed, source unknown.
1.3 Family relationships, handwritten, source unknown.
1.4 Bloomington City Directory listings for Rachel Crothers, 1891-1913.
1.5 Invitation to graduation of Rachel Crothers from Illinois State Normal University, June 23, 1891.
1.6 Invitation to memorial service for Rachel Crothers, November 18, [1958?], New York City.


Folder 2: Programs

2.1 Invitation to "Readings by Miss Rachel Crothers" at the Bloomington Club, February 18, 1892.

2.2 Bloomington High School, senior class 1912, “The Rector” by Rachel Crothers and “A Scrap of Paper” by Palgrove Simpson, April 6 and 8, 1912 (photocopy, original in the Bloomington High School—Theater Programs vertical file).

2.3 Rachel Crothers, Dramatic Reader - testimonials from various sources, probably to advertise RC's success in reading programs, undated.

2.4 Miss Rachel Crothers, Dramatic Reader, Bloomington, Illinois - testimonials from various sources, probably to advertise RC's success in reading programs, undated.

2.5 Program for "39 East" at the Shubert-Wilbur Theatre, Boston, week of February 16, 1920.

2.6 Invitation to The Town Hall Club dinner in honor of Rachel Crothers, November 21 [year unknown]. Back page is description written by RC of its success: "There were 400 people at this dinner. ... I have never heard such tributes & praise given to anyone."

2.7 Program for "Susan and God," McCarter Theatre, April 10 [year unknown], starring Gertrude Lawrence.

2.8 Program for “Susan and God” by Rachel Crothers, third production of Community Players, 1963-64 season (2 copies).

Folder 3: Botanical Drawings

Title page and 11 pen-and-ink and colored drawings made by Rachel Crothers for a botany class at ISNU, Spring 1890. Individual pages measure 5x7" on slightly foxed paper.

Folder 4: Crothers Family Ephemera

Note: Brief family connections:
Dr. Eli K. Crothers (1826-1873) married Dr. Maria Louis DePew Crothers (1833-1920)
Their surviving children:
Noble E. Crothers (1856-1940)
Eli Kirk Crothers II (1867-1916) married Emily Peterson Crothers (1874-1946)
Lulu Crothers (1865-1940)
Rachel Crothers (1878/1870-1958)


4.2 Family relationships, typed, source unknown.

4.3 Family relationships, handwritten, source unknown.

4.4 Bearer note for tuition, signed E.K. Crothers, October 16, 1865.


Note that original receipt of casket, etc. for funeral of Dr. E. K. Crothers is in Wolcott Collection, Folder 4.

“Death comes to Dr. Crothers,” *Pantagraph*, June 1, 1920.


Notice of funeral of Angeline Crothers, January 24, 1859. Angeline (1852-1859) was the oldest child of Eli and Maria Louise Crothers.

Invoice for furniture purchased by E. K. Crothers from Howard & Kirkpatrick, Bloomington, November 1, 1895, 2pp.

Certificate that E. K. Crothers is a member of Mohammed Temple, Peoria, Illinois, January 29, 1906.

Business cards (2) and small envelope for E. K. Crothers, jeweler, watchmaker and engraver, Bloomington, Illinois.

Newspaper notice of jewelry repairing, newspaper notice that Mrs. E. K. Crothers will continue the jewelry and watch-repairing business will be continued [after husband's death], and address label to Emily Crothers from E. K. Crothers.

Announcement of wedding between Emily Peterson and Elijah K. Crothers, probably from Duxbury, Massachusetts, newspaper; obituary for Emily S. Crothers, Kingston, Massachusetts paper, 1946; funeral notice for Emily Crothers.

Obituary for Catherine McCabe Peterson, wife of Emily Crothers' brother James Herbert Peterson, 1915, Duxbury, Massachusetts paper.

Letter to E. K. Crothers appointing him General Inspector of watches for the Chicago & Alton Railroad Road, June 30, 1896, 2pp on onionskin.

“Practices Pharmacy. Miss Lulu Crothers the Only Lady Pharmacist in the City of Bloomington,” *Pantagraph*, February 18, 1897: 5.


"Lulu Crothers Dies--Private Rites Tuesday." *Daily Pantagraph*, December 23, 1940: 3.

"Antique Furnishings Used Effectively in Local Home of Miss Lulu Crothers," *Pantagraph*, June 9, 1940.

Photo of Dorothy Hatfield in the living room of Lulu Crothers' home, Pantagraph, undated.

"Lincoln Owned This Property," caption with photo of Crothers homestead, undated.


Clippings about Eli Kirk Crothers III regarding U of I scholarship (1915) and departing for university., *Pantagraph*, undated.


Wedding announcement of Worth Bradford Crothers and Gladys Ruth Marvel, October 21, 1932. Worth is a retail fish dealer in Kingston, Massachusetts, where the couple will live. Twin brother Hall Crothers was best man. Obituary for Gladys Crothers, June 26, 1988.

Obituary for James Hall Crothers, October 10, 1984.

Two receipts for E. K. Crothers for dues: Bloomington Chapter of R.A.M. dated August 22, 1913, and Bloomington Council No. 43 Royal and Select Master, dated August 22, 1913.

Certificate that M. L. Crothers completed private course of instruction in clinical gynecology at Rush Medical College, March 14, 1881.
Folder 5: Correspondence I
Correspondence is organized chronologically by recipient. RC often did not provide the year on correspondence. Letters for which year could not be identified by postmark are listed at the end of their section.

To Mother from Rachel Crothers:
5.1 Letter about two one-act plays being published in *The Smart Set*, and a trial where "the jury pronounced him [unnamed] a well man," with envelope postmarked, October 24, 1908.
5.2 Letter about various details, including RC playing basketball with Grace (Mrs. James) Robinson, with envelope postmarked December 7, 1908.

To sister Lulu Crothers from Rachel Crothers:
5.3 Letter primarily about RC's concern with their mother's health, with envelope, from Munich, August 5, 1910.
5.4 Detailed letter describing previous night's opening at the little theater in Danbury, August 9, 1932. In pencil on badly foxed and fragile paper, with envelope.
5.5 Letter with check enclosed, with envelope postmarked February 15, 1935.
5.6 Note indicating RC's arrival into Bloomington, with envelope, April 9, 1935.
5.7 Letter mostly describing Santa Monica, California, with envelope, January 29, 1936.
5.8 Note, "The play is getting lots of praise but not doing good business," with envelope postmarked April 18, 1937.
5.9 Telegram: "Looks like real success," October 8, 1937.
5.10 Note to accompany an unidentified enclosure, with envelope, January 6, 1938.
5.11 Letter primarily about a mutual friend Ruth and her illness [and affair?], with envelope, October 12, 1939.
5.12 Note saying RC came to Atlantic City to recuperate from the flu, with envelope, March 23, 1940.
5.13 Penciled letter explaining delay in writing, Friday, no other date.
5.14 Typed letter indicating play tentatively "When Ladies Meet" has been sent off for typing, July 28, year unknown.
5.15 Envelope postmarked April 5, 1935, no enclosure.

Folder 6: Correspondence II
To others from Rachel Crothers:
6.1 Note to Julia Hodge, Bloomington, thanking her for flowers, with envelope postmarked February 25, 1915.
6.2 Note to "My dear boys" from Aunt Rachel, saying the play looks like a success, undated with penciled note in another hand - Nice People, 1921.
6.3 Telegram conveying best wishes to Community Players Majestic Theatre, October 5, 1939. Photocopy, original in Community Players Theatre Collection.
6.4 Letter to sister-in-law Emily Crothers indicating a check is enclosed in light of Emily's illness, and describing RC's health, with envelope, May 8, 1942.
6.5 To Emily Crothers saying RC has just sent off five boxes to Emily, undated.
6.6 Note to nephew Hall, undated but penciled note in another hand, December 22, 1920.

To Rachel Crothers:
6.7 Note from Arthur Lewis in New York, July 24, 1898. He suggests RC contact him when she returns to New York "and I will do all I can for you." The return address includes the name of noted actress Julia Arthur, relationship to Arthur Lewis could not be ascertained by this finding aid organizer. RC worked with Julia Arthur in support of the Stage Women's War Relief.

6.8 Card from Julia Morris [signature unclear] saying to meet at the Palmer House, with envelope, August 11, 1898.


Folder 7: Postcards
These postcards were sent by RC at various times between 1907 and 1943 to her nephews Kirk, Worth and James, her sister-in-law Emily Crothers, and her sister Lulu. Many are from RC's European travels.

7.1 To Emily Crothers, sister-in-law.
7.2 To [Eli] Kirk Crothers III, nephew.
7.3 To Worth Crothers and James Hall Crothers, twin nephews.
7.4 To Lulu, sister, and Ruth Murphy, living at Crothers' residence in 1911.

Folder 8: Newspaper clippings 1892-1925
(from The Pantagraph unless noted)
8.1 Classified advertisement, “Miss Rachel Crothers, Teacher of Elocution,” March 26, 1892, p. 6.
8.4 Notice on Bloomington Dramatic Club production (Crothers a cast member), Daily Leader, November 12, 1895, p. 7.
8.5 “Acted In Her Own Play,” October 10, 1902, p. 3.
8.7 “Rachel Crothers Talks,” November 24, 1906, p. 15.
8.8 “Picked Up a Dollar,” March 9, 1907, p. 7.
8.9 “Miss Crothers Abroad,” April 26, 1907, p. 5.
8.10 “Maxine Elliott in New Crothers Play,” January 22, 1908, p. 7.
8.14 “Miss Crothers In Talk to Students,” April 16, 1910, p. 6.
8.17 “Miss Crothers In Broadway Hit,” Daily Bulletin, January 8, 1914, p. 3.
8.18 “Audience Calls Miss Crothers,” January 8, 1914, p. 12.
8.20 “As Soon Share Her Toothbrush,” Daily Bulletin, February 1, 1914, p. 11.
8.21 “Miss Crothers’ Play Hit In Chicago,” February 28, 1914, p. 11.
8.25 “Bloomington Woman’s Play Sways Audience,” December 5, 1917, p. 3.
8.29 “Miss Crothers Great Actress In Own Play,” July 2, 1919, p. 6.
8.30 “Miss Crothers’ Play in Chicago,” July 9, 1920, p. 8.
8.31 “Rachel Crothers In ‘Shop Talk,’” July 15, 1920, p. 5.
8.32 “Critics Discuss Crothers’ Play,” October 28, 1921, p. 8.
8.33 “Miss Crothers In Demand Again,” November 29, 1921, p. 9.
8.34 "Rachel Crothers the Author of Many Popular Plays," [Boston paper?], day and month unknown 1920.
8.35 "Rachel Crothers’ First Play Failed," source unknown, day and month unknown 1921.
8.36 “Writes of New Crothers’ Play” (Yale student Ralph Pierson review), February 6, 1923, p. 9.
8.37 “Reviews Work of Rachel Crothers” (excerpt from Helen Bullitt Lowry review in Pictorial Review), March 17, 1923, p. 18.
8.38 “Rachel Crothers Advises Beginners on Stage Start,” March 22, 1924, p. 11.
8.40 “Westminster Cast to Give Crothers Comedy Tonight” and “Wilbur Theatre.” sources and date unknown.

Folder 9: Newspaper clippings 1926-1939
(from The Pantagraph unless noted)
9.1 “Miss Rachel Crothers Bloomington Playwright Tells of ‘Spring Magic,’” November 13, 1926, p. 9-B.
9.2 “Miss Crothers Scores Success,” March 3, 1929, p. 5B.
9.3 “Local Talent Continue Hit,” May 17, 1929, p. 1D.
9.4 "Broadway Didn't See First Play," Los Angeles Times, June 9, 1929.
9.5 “Rachel Crothers’ First Play Failed” and “Rachel Crothers the Author of Many Popular Plays,” June 1929, source unknown.
9.7 “Crothers Play Is Presented,” May 8, 1931, p. 3.
9.11 “Miss Crothers In Relief Work,” December 18, 1932, p. 17.
9.17 “Miss Crothers Works on Film,” May 5, 1935.
9.20 "Film Previews! - Splendor," Variety, November 20, 1935.
9.21 Newspaper advertisement for movie “Splendor,” April 19, 1936.
9.22 Photo of Rachel Crothers directing “Susan and God” and advertisement for play, source unknown, month and date unknown 1936.
Folder 10: Newspaper clippings 1940-1964
(from The Pantagraph unless noted)

10.2 "War Relief Calls Rachel Crothers," February 5, 1940, p. 12.
10.3 "Miss Rachel Crothers Busy At Two Jobs in New York City," November 24, 1940, p. B 11.
10.4 "How Great Director Works Told by Writer," December 19, 1940, p. 10.
10.5 "Rachel Crothers Numbered Among Eminent Playwrights for Number, Quality of Plays," May 11, 1941, p. 9.
10.6 "Noted Playwright, War Relief Worker Talks Here March 31," March 15, 1942, p. 18.
10.7 "Celebrity Comes Home to Speak," March 22, 1942, p. 11.
10.8 "Miss Crothers Arrives for War Benefit," March 29, 1942, p. 11 (accompanying photograph from a clipping).
10.9 "Rachel Crothers Appears in Community Play at Grand Opera House Back in 1892," Pantagraph 100th Anniversary Issue, November 20, 1946, p. 54 (clipping and photocopy).
10.18 Two newspaper photographs, Crothers visiting sister Lula M., no date.
10.20 “White House Reception For Rachel Crothers Described,” Source and date unknown.
10.21 “Rachel Crothers’ Play Is Delayed by Her Illness” and “Authors’ League Benefit,” sources and dates unknown.