
Guide to the

BRITAIN FAMILY COLLECTION 1890-1992

1 linear ft.

**Accession Numbers: 9697-33; 9899-15; 0001-45; 0001-149; 0102-90; 0102-122;
0102-148; 0203-26; 0203-97**

Collection Number: 63

**Prepared by Kevin Kendro
October 2009**

**CITATION: Britain Family Collection, Collection 63, Box number, Folder number,
Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.**

Biographical Sketch

The Britain family arrived in Texas in 1859 and were pioneers in the section of northwest Dallas County that would later become the town of Irving. Henry Britain sold eighty acres of his land to J. O. Schulze and Otis Brown on which they established the town in 1903.

Henry W. Britain

D. C. (David Chadwell) Britain (1831-1906) and his wife Martha T. Leeman Britain (1825-1891) moved to Dallas County, Texas, from Wilson County, Tennessee, in 1859. The Britains settled between the Elm and West Forks of the Trinity River in what would become known as the Kit community and would later become the eastern section of the city of Irving.

The couple had three children: Henry W. Britain (1852-1934); Mary Elizabeth Britain Miller (1860-1926); and Joseph Britain (1866-1940).

When Henry W. Britain was 16, just after the Civil War and before the railroads arrived in north Texas, he got a loan from a Dallas banker to buy a freight wagon and oxen in order to transport goods between Dallas County and Jefferson, Texas, which is on the eastern border of the state. Jefferson, at that time, was a deepwater port with access down the Red River to the Gulf of Mexico. Within a decade though, railroad tracks were being laid across north Texas. With wagon transport no longer necessary, Britain sold his equipment and bought land in the area that today is Irving, Texas. Through the years, he continued to buy land on which he ran cattle and sheep.

In 1874, Henry W. Britain married Sarah Catherine (Kate) Caster (1856-1905). The Caster family came to Dallas County from Illinois in 1852. Henry and Kate Britain had four children, three of whom survived infancy: David Earl (1876-1957); Alice Eunice

(1882-1968); and Daniel Lee (1886-1957).

Around 1900, Henry Britain gave each of his three children parcels of land from his acreage. In 1902, Britain and son David Earl sold eighty acres of their land to two young railroad survey crew members who established the town of Irving on the site.

Kate died in 1905, and Henry married Emma Savannah Jackson in 1906. They had a daughter, Martha Elizabeth (1909-1975).

In the early 1920s, Henry Britain sold the remainder of his land in Dallas County and purchased land in Parker County near Azle, where he lived the remainder of his life. He died in 1934.

Lee Britain

Daniel Lee Britain, known as Lee, was Henry W. Britain's youngest son and the only one of his children to live his entire life in Irving and the surrounding area. Lee operated a dairy farm on the land his father gave him between today's Britain Rd. and Nursery Rd. Lee Britain was active in the early development of the town of Irving and served on the Irving Independent School District Board of Trustees for 22 years. In 1965, the school district named an elementary school in his honor.

Lee Britain married Kate Murphy (1888-1964) in Irving in 1906. Kate Murphy was the daughter of John Murphy (1845-1934) and Mary Mount (1859-1938). The Murphys moved to Parker County, Texas, from Tennessee in 1881. Murphy worked as a farmer and also for the Texas and Pacific Railroad.

In 1904, the Murphys moved to Irving, where John went to work as a section foreman for the Rock Island Railway Co. In its early days, Irving's railroad depot was known by the locals as "Murphy's mansion." In 1908, John Murphy retired from the railroad and opened a general store in Irving with Tom C. Haley, a member of another pioneer family. The business closed in 1912. Murphy was elected Justice of the Peace for Irving in 1913 and served in that position until 1925. The Murphys had eight children, one of whom, Kate, married Lee Britain.

Lee Britain and Kate Murphy Britain had five children and lived out their lives on land that Lee had received from his father. Lee Britain died in 1957. Kate Murphy Britain died in 1964.

Dave Britain

Dave Britain (1912-1994) was one of five children born to Lee and Kate Britain. Dave attended school in Irving; graduating from Irving High School in 1932. In 1934, he married Juanita Mae Jones (1913-) of Fort Worth, Texas. The couple lived in Oklahoma where Dave worked in the shoe sales business with his brothers. In 1945, they returned to Irving where they raised their two sons. Dave continued selling men's shoes and clothing in department stores throughout the area. Juanita worked for Sanger-Harris department store in Irving. Much of the personal material in this collection relates to Dave Britain's years at Irving High School, 1928-1932.

Sources: The Britain Family Collection; and taped interviews with Juanita Mae Jones Britain, June 11, 1998, and October 20, 2001.

Scope and Content Note

The Britain Family Collection, contained in two flat boxes and one ½-size manuscript box, is composed primarily of family genealogical research and photocopies of articles from Irving newspapers relating to the history of the city. Also of note are two Irving High School letterman sweaters from 1930 and 1932 and school class and family photos.

Series I consists of genealogical research on the Britain and Murphy families. The material on the Britain family is extensive; beginning with David Chadwell Britain in 1831. Although not as extensive, the Murphy family material is also detailed.

Series II is made up of photocopies of newspaper articles and pictures relating to the history of the City of Irving and area pioneer communities. Most of the articles are from the golden anniversary special section of the April 16, 1964, edition of the *Irving Daily News Texan*. At that time the city was celebrating the 50th anniversary of its incorporation. Most of the remainder of the articles come from various issues of the Progress Editions of the *Irving Daily News*, 1970s. The articles provide a good history of some of the areas early families, businesses, and events prior to the establishment of the city and during the city's early years. The original newspaper articles have been discarded.

Series III is made up of photographs and digital images. Three of the photos (copies) are of Dave Britain's elementary school classes from the 1920s. There are two photos of Lee Britain and Kate Murphy Britain and family members in 1956 at the couples 50th wedding anniversary. The digital images are of Lee and Kate Britain and their children and members of the Britain and Murphy families, 1890-1960s.

Series IV consists of personal documents and correspondence. Among the material are a business card belonging to Dave Britain when he was the president of the board of Oak Grove Memorial Gardens, a photocopy of Dave Britain's high school diploma, correspondence regarding naming a school for Lee Britain, and copies of newspaper articles relating to the Britain family members.

Series V is made up of two Irving High School letter sweaters from 1930 and 1932. Both belonged to Dave Britain.

Provenance Statement

The Britain Family Collection was donated to the Irving Archives by Juanita Jones Britain in nine accessions over seven years: accession 9697-33 was made in January 1997; accession 9899-15 was made on October 6, 1997; accession 0001-45 was made on December 5, 2000; accession 0001-149 was made on May 30, 2001; accession 0102-90 was made on January 22, 2001; accession 0102-122 was made on February 15, 2002; accession 0102-148 was made on March 25, 2002; accession 0203-26 was made on October 24, 2002; and accession 0203-97 was made on January 31, 2003. Prior to its donation to the Irving Archives, the material was in the possession of the Britain family.

Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish from the Britain Family Collection must be obtained from the Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.

Note to Researcher

See also:

Juanita Jones Britain, interviewed by Jan Hart, June 11, 1998, tape #036, and transcript, Oral History Collection, Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.

Juanita Jones Britain, interviewed by Jan Hart, October 20, 2001, tape #092, and transcript, Oral History Collection, Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.

Container List

Series I. Genealogical Research

Box 1

Folder

1 Contains a nineteen-page genealogical study on the families of John Murphy, Mary Mount (Murphy), and the Flippin family. The Flippins were relatives on Mary Mount's mother's side; a 33-page genealogical study on John and Mary Murphy and their eight children and their grandchildren; a photocopy of a letter from Earl Britain and Bess Murphy Britain explaining some of the family history; and a copy of an extensive report listing the descendents of David Chadwell Britain and Martha T. Leeman prepared by Henry W. Britain of Grand Prairie, Texas, in 1993.

Series II. Newspaper Articles, 1933-1992

2 Contains photocopies of newspaper articles and pictures relating to the Britain family and the history of early Irving and the surrounding area. Most of the articles are from the golden anniversary supplement of the *Irving Daily News Texan*. In 1964, the city sponsored a celebration for the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of Irving. The town was founded in 1903, but was not incorporated until 1914. There are also a number of city history-related articles from the Progress Editions of the *Irving Daily News* from 1976 and 1977.

Series III. Photographs and Digital Images, 1890-1979

3 Contains photographs (6): three of Dave Britain's Irving Elementary School classes, 1923, 1924, 1925; two photos of Lee and Kate Britain and family in 1956; and a photo of the Irving High School football team of 1929 at a 50-year reunion in 1979.

The digital images (79) consist of images of Lee and Kate Britain and their children and the families of their children, 1890s-1970s.

Series IV. Personal Documents, 1930s-1990s

4 Contains correspondence relating to naming an IISD school in honor of Lee Britain; a photocopy of Dave Britain's diploma from Irving High School, 1932; a program from the rededication of Lee Britain Elementary school, 1987; a program from the groundbreaking for Heritage Park, 1986; one of Dave Britain's cards from when he was president of Oak Grove Memorial Gardens; photocopies of newspaper articles relating to various members of the Britain family, 1930s-1990s; a deed of trust in which Emile Story sells five acres to Henry Britain, 1905; and a student research paper entitled "Law in a Small Town." The paper deals with law enforcement in Irving during its first few decades. There are also copies of newspaper articles relating to members of the Britain family, 1930s-1990s.

Series V. Letter Sweaters, c. 1930 and 1932

Box 2 Contains Dave Britain's Irving High School letter sweater. The sweater is a black pull-over with a gold letter "I" in the center of the chest and two gold stripes around the left sleeve, c. 1930.

Box 3 Contains Dave Britain's Irving High School letter sweater. The sweater is a black pull-over with a gold letter "I" in the center of the chest and four gold stripes around the left sleeve, 1932.