

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

The Kirby name has long been associated with the worlds of business and philanthropy. It was Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. who began what would become the family business – a five-and-dime store in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. in 1884. Fred Kirby himself had served as a clerk in a similar store in Watertown, New York for many years prior. The near-immediate success of Fred Kirby's own store afforded him the opportunity for a joint-venture with C.S. Woolworth. The two partners met with such success that they eventually opened some ninety-six stores located in nearly every state east of the Mississippi. By 1911, Kirby and C.S. Woolworth merged with one of their fellow entrepreneurs and C.S. Woolworth's brother, F.W. Woolworth. This partnership between the three men was very successful and *Woolworth's* grew to be one of the largest retail chains in the world throughout most of the twentieth century.

The financial success of the F.W. Woolworth chain gave Fred Kirby, in the early decades of the twentieth century, an estimated fortune of approximately thirty to fifty million dollars. This enabled the businessman to establish the Fred Morgan Kirby Foundation. He became a shareholder in many other corporations, including the Allegheny Railroad Company.

But Fred Kirby was not only known for his business acumen. He was well-respected for his philanthropic spirit as well. He was a major benefactor to Wilkes-Barre, the town where his success began. He donated the money for a community health center in memory of his mother, Angeline Elizabeth Slater Kirby. He also donated the money for a park and its upkeep to be in the center of Wilkes-Barre as well as numerous other cultural institutions throughout the city.

In addition to these philanthropic activities, Fred Kirby became one of Lafayette College's foremost benefactors. By far, his most significant endowments to the college were for the establishment of the Fred Morgan Kirby Professorship of Civil Rights in 1921 and for the construction of the Kirby Hall of Civil Rights in 1929. Fred Kirby's financial contributions to the college continued until his death in 1940. Fred Kirby's son, Allan Price Kirby, followed in his father's footsteps in both business and charity. Allan P. Kirby '15 attended Lafayette for one semester and was a brother of Zeta Psi fraternity. However, his commitment to Lafayette College was not constricted by the short amount of time he spent here. Instead, after taking control of his father's business ventures, Allan P. Kirby began a life-long affiliation with the college. He served as President of the Alumni Association for an unprecedented two terms (1929-1931) and was elected a lifetime trustee in 1937. From 1945-1956, he was the chairman of many fund-raising committees and in 1960 he gave all the funding necessary for the construction of a residence hall in memory of his mother, Jessie Kirby.

Over the years Allan P. Kirby donated many of the historical portraits that hang in the Government and Law building his father built. In 1952, Allan P. Kirby oversaw the establishment of the Marquis Foundation, which in its subsequent years would raise over eight million dollars for the college. Allan P. Kirby was a strong supporter of athletics at

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Lafayette College and contributed frequently on their behalf. It was due mainly to his interest in Lafayette athletics that in 1973 the new field house was dedicated in his honor and memory.

Following the death of Allan P. Kirby, his two sons, Fred and Allan Jr., maintained ties to Lafayette College. Fred was graduated in 1942 and Allan Jr. in 1953. Both men have also, like their father and grandfather before them, contributed generously to the college in various ways. A fourth generation of Kirbys has also attended Lafayette.

SCOPE AND CONTENT/PROVENANCE

The Kirby Family Collection was compiled from assorted documents in the Kirby Museum in the Kirby Hall of Civil Rights. The collection consists mainly of items relating to Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – these include various honors, tributes, and awards that were presented to him in appreciation for his philanthropic spirit. There are also several portraits of Kirby as well as a few pieces of correspondence. Most notable among the correspondence is a letter of appreciation from President Herbert Hoover after Fred Kirby donated the money for a health care center in Wilkes-Barre. Also included in the collection are numerous newspaper clippings regarding the death of Fred Kirby in 1940.

The collection also has many items pertaining to Allan P. Kirby. Most items relating to Allan P. Kirby are pieces of his correspondence as well as newspaper clippings regarding his donations to various institutions throughout the region.

INVENTORY

Box 1

- 1:1 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – letter to Lafayette College, October 10, 1934, TLS, 1 page
- 1:2 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – newspaper articles regarding his death (original) Oct. 17-21, 1940 – Jan. 25, 1943
- 1:3 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – newspaper articles regarding his death (two sets of copies) Oct. 17-21, 1940 – Jan. 25, 1943
- 1:4 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – newspaper articles regarding his death (reflections on life history and philanthropies) Oct. 17-21, 1940
- 1:5 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – honors, tributes, and awards – “Great Works Good Name Go Marching On, 1884-1950” Nov. 16, 1950
- 1:6 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – honors, tributes, and awards – Mason’s Certificate 1929
- 1:7 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – honors, tributes, and awards – Calvary Church, Wilkes-Barre, Pa. 1940
- 1:8 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – honors, tributes, and awards – Appointed to Commissioner of Conciliation Sept. 12, 1922
- 1:9 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – honors, tributes, and awards – Wilkes-Barre Wyoming Valley Merchants’ Award June 5, 1933
- 1:10 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – letter from Ernest G. Smith Nov. 22, 1934
- 1:11 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – booklet for the dedication of the Angeline Elizabeth Kirby Memorial Health Center April 22, 1931
- 1:12 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – The Christmas Caravan of Love Dec. 1927
- 1:13 Allan Price Kirby, Sr. – letter regarding his mother’s portrait in the Kirby House and instructions for its care Dec. 18, 1950; minutes, Jan. 12, 1951
- 1:14 Allan Price Kirby, Sr. – miscellaneous correspondence March 3, 1950, Aug. 31, 1971
- 1:15 Allan Price Kirby, Sr. – correspondence with Walter S. Biddle 1960
- 1:16 Allan Price Kirby, Sr. – correspondence with Ernest Heg 1953, 1963, 1961, 1987

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- 1:17 Allan Price Kirby, Sr. – articles pertaining to artwork he donated to institutions other than Lafayette College 1940, 1944
- 1:18 Allan Price Kirby, Sr. – two photographs regarding the dedication of the 1964 Melange to Allan Kirby
- 1:19 Allan Price Kirby, Sr. – newspaper clippings 1954, 1958, 1973
- 1:20 Allan Price Kirby, Sr. – miscellaneous 1950
- 1:21 Kirby Family Articles 1983, 1990

Box 2

(oversize)

- 2:1 Kirby Family Coat of Arms n.d.
- 2:2 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – oversize biography (two copies) and oversize descriptions of the Fred Morgan Kirby Professorship of Civil Rights (two copies) n.d.
- 2:3 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – Wilkes-Barre Times Leader, September 10, 1934 commemoration edition for the fiftieth anniversary of the opening Kirby's first store (two copies) 1934
- 2:4 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – honor from the Wyoming Historical and Genealogical Society n.d.
- 2:5 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – honor from the Free Masons 1909
- 2:6 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – signed photograph with the Lafayette administration following the dedication of the Kirby Hall of Civil Rights (*framed) n.d.
- 2:7 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – signed photograph of a portrait of Kirby (*framed) n.d.
- 2:8 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – letter from President Herbert Hoover regarding Kirby's donation of a health center to the people of Wilkes-Barre (*framed) 1931
- 2:9 Fred Morgan Kirby, Sr. – artwork pertaining to the Angeline Elizabeth Memorial Health Center in Wilkes-Barre – caption reads "The Spirit of Helpfulness" (*framed) n.d.

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Box 3

(oversize)

3:1 Memories – Volume I, The Early Years, 1861-1884; 1931-1932; 1985-1989

3:2 Memories – Volume II, The Formative Period, 1884-1912; 1933, 1937, 1988

Box 4

(oversize)

4:1 Memories – Volume III, The Years of Achievement, 1913-1933; 1933

4:2 Memories – Volume IV, Philanthropies 1933

Box 5

(oversize)

5:1 Lafayette Family Coat of Arms