

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn Collection

Papers, 1956-1964

**.25 linear feet
1/2 manuscript box**

Accession #122
DALNET #
OCLC #

The papers of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in July of 2000 by Nunzio Pernicone, a distant relative, and were opened for research in November of 2000.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was born August 7, 1890 in Concord, New Hampshire, the daughter of immigrant Irish revolutionaries. She joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) as a high school student in 1906, but left school a year later to dedicate herself to organizing full time. A gifted and popular speaker, over the next several years she participated in IWW free speech and legal defense fund-raising campaigns and helped organize the Lawrence and Paterson textile strikes. A tireless defender of labor and political agitators facing deportation, Ms. Flynn helped found the ACLU in 1920, only to be expelled in 1940 for having joined the Communist Party three years earlier. She also wrote and lectured extensively on women's issues. In the mid-1950s she was imprisoned for violation of the Smith Act and in 1961, became the first woman to serve as chair of the U.S. Communist Party, a position she held until her death in Moscow on September 5, 1964.

The Elizabeth Gurley Flynn Collection consists primarily of family correspondence, mostly letters she wrote to her nephew, Peter Martin, while in prison and while traveling in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the western United States in the 1960's. There is also some correspondence with her sister Kathie and Kathie's daughter, Mrs. Frances Onipede, while the two were living in Nigeria, and with her niece, Roberta Bobba. While its content largely concerns family and personal matters, including her health, it also contains some political commentary as well as her impressions of prison life and the places she visited.

Important subjects in the collection:

Communist Party of the USA
Communists--United States--Biography
Europe, Eastern--Social life and customs
Soviet Union--Social life and customs
Women and communism--United States

Women labor leaders--United States--Biography

Non-manuscript material:

A tape recording of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's personal recollections of the IWW, made in 1962, was added to the Archives Audiovisual Collection in 1964.

Box 1

1. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (EGF); corres. from Peter Martin, c . 1954
2. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin from prison, 1956-57
3. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin, 1958
4. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin from Moscow, May-Jun 1960
5. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin from Bucharest and Prague, Jun-Jul 1960
6. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin from Moscow and Leningrad, Aug 1960
7. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin from Prague and Moscow, Sep-Dec 1960
8. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin and Kathie, 1961
9. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin, 1962
10. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin and from Art Shields and her niece, Frances Onipede, 1963
11. EGF; corres. to Peter Martin and EGF birthday celebration in Moscow, 1964
12. EGF death, corres. to Peter Martin about, 1964
13. EGF death; memorial service, obituaries, Sep 1964
14. EGF; notebook of legal defense fund accounts (?) and EGF weight loss record, 1961-64
15. EGF, pamphlets authored by, 1960s
16. EGF; parents' graves, maintenance of, 1961-62
17. EGF; will, draft of, 1963
18. Frances Onipede; corres. to Peter Martin, 1956-57