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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Middleton "Spike" Harris slavery and abolition collection

1718-1876

Sc MG 34

Summary

Collector: Harris, M. A., 1908-1977

Title: Middleton "Spike" Harris slavery and abolition collection

Date: 1718-1876

Size: 0.46 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Purchase, 1976.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: The Middleton "Spike" Harris slavery and abolition collection consists of individual documents pertaining to slavery and abolition in the United States. Included are legal documents, indentures, manumission papers, bills of sale, agreements to hire slaves, other business records, deeds, letters, and indentures referencing specific slaves and their masters and detailing the situations for which the documents were produced. The states in which these documents were issued are Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia. There are also letters from the following abolitionists: Granville Sharp, Gerrit Smith, Charles Sumner, and Francis Jackson.

Preferred citation: [Item], Middleton "Spike" Harris slavery and abolition collection, Sc MG 34, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Related Materials:

Also available in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture:

Middleton "Spike" Harris Civil War and Reconstruction collection, Sc MG 34

Middleton "Spike" Harris newspaper collection, Sc MG 34

Creator History

Middleton A. "Spike" Harris was born January 22, 1908, in Brooklyn, New York. He attended local schools where he earned the nicknamed "Spike" from participating in track and field events. He graduated from Howard University with a B.A. in Sociology in 1931, and in 1965, he earned a master's degree in social work from Fordham University. From 1931 until July 1935, Harris worked for the Boys Club, YMCA, and the Emergency Welfare Administration of New York City. In 1937, he was employed by the New York State Executive Department, Division of Parole, as a parole officer and supervisor, and retired in 1972. During World War II, Harris served as an American Red Cross Field Director in the Southwest Pacific.

Harris's interest in African American history was stimulated by his family's history, which dated to the colonial period. Propelled by his discoveries, Harris began to research the African presence in North America and began collecting original documents, books, prints, and newspapers. Over the years, Harris put together a substantial collection documenting the contributions of peoples of African descent to American history. Using these original materials and photocopies of original documents gathered from his research at the National Archives, historical societies, and libraries, he created exhibitions, slide shows, manuals, and monographs, primarily under the auspices of the Negro History Associates, an organization that he helped to establish.

Negro History Associates

In 1963, Harris and fellow-collectors of Afro-Americana founded the Negro History Associates (NHA). Among those present at that meeting were Glenn Carrington, Thomas Feagens, Clarence Holte, Levi Hubert, and Marvin Warren. Like Harris, they wanted to include the contributions of African Americans into American history books and hoped that by creating the NHA they would be able to disseminate the information.

Harris was the driving force of the organization, and he persuaded the other associates that the best approach was to use an audiovisual format to teach young people about the history of African Americans. He presented his idea to the Human Relations Bureau of the New York City Department of Education, and encouraged by the Bureau and his fellow collectors, he produced, at his own expense, a pilot filmstrip entitled *Meet Some Great Americans*. After receiving positive commentary from the Bureau, Harris began work on the *Great American Series*, which would eventually include filmstrips and booklets on scientist Lewis Latimer, inventor Granville Woods, and physician Dorothy L. Brown.

Harris and Levi Hubert incorporated the NHA in 1964, via a partnership agreement, with Harris as the principal stockholder. The NHA Board consisted of the founding members and others, including Jean Blackwell Hutson, chief of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature, History and Prints; Martin Jacobwitz, a collector of anti-slavery coins; and author/actress Gertrude McBrown. Each member brought his/her knowledge of Afro-Americana and/or technical skills to the enterprise, which included research; consulting; and artistic, photographic, and printing skills.

From 1964 to 1969, its most active period, the NHA produced filmstrips; erected commemorative plaques on city buildings (most of which are no longer there); produced exhibitions; published books; and sold photographic prints of persons, places, events, documents, and newspapers. Income was generated by the sales of the filmstrips and photographs, which together with Harris's financial

contributions (from his savings and salary) kept the NHA afloat.

Scope and Content Note

The Middleton "Spike" Harris slavery and abolition collection consists of individual documents pertaining to slavery and abolition in the United States. Included are legal documents, indentures, manumission papers, bills of sale, agreements to hire slaves, other business records, deeds, letters, and indentures referencing specific slaves and their masters and detailing the situations for which the documents were produced. The states in which these documents were issued are Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia. There are also letters from the following abolitionists: Granville Sharp, Gerrit Smith, Charles Sumner, and Francis Jackson.

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by state first (with England last), then alphabetically by topic or name.

Key Terms

Occupations

Abolitionists.
Slaveholders.

Subjects

Antislavery movements -- United States
Slave records
Slavery -- United States

Names

Harris, M. A., 1908-1977
Jackson, Francis, 1789-1861
Sharp, Granville, 1735-1813
Smith, Gerrit, 1797-1874
Sumner, Charles, 1811-1874

Container List

Alabama

- b. 1 Legal document regarding a debt 1826
Includes note that Sam a Negro boy of 15 years, the property of the debtor, can be used to help cover the debt.
- b. 1 Legal suit 1827
Suit filed in Lawrence County to recover money. Richard Burnes(?), slave owner, hired out a slave for \$75 to William Banks, who failed to pay.
- b. 1 Complaint lodged in Chancery Court by a slaveholder 1828
Slaveholder hired out slaves to a man (Campbell) who mortgaged them for a loan which he did not repay. The rightful owner sued to recover his property after discovering that the slaves were about to be sold to satisfy the loan.
- b. 1 Report to divide estate of William Felton 1837
Report gives his widow land and thirteen slaves in Lawrence County.
- b. 1 Testimony of James L. Herbert about the death of a twenty-year old slave woman named Joana 1838
Joana died during her ownership by "negro trader" named Achilles Barnett. She was being transported from Virginia to Alabama and had been formerly owned by William Bunton. Cause of death is unknown.
- b. 1 Complaint filed in Circuit Court, Lawrence County 1843
William A. McClain hired a slave boy named Squire from the owner in 1839, and failed to pay the owner, the slave tax, or clothe the youth.
- b. 1 Lawsuit filed in Lawrence County 1843
Lawsuit filed in Lawrence County to recover a twenty-year old slave woman and two children withheld by a man named Christopher C. Guvin(?).
- b. 1 Legal complaint filed in Circuit Court, Lawrence County 1845
Legal complaint filed in Circuit Court of Lawrence County by estate administrator who charged a white man with withholding property from the estate, namely a ten-year old slave girl named Susan, valued at \$1000.
- b. 1 Bank action 1850
Action by bank to force debtor to put up five Negro slaves as security against arrears on loans in Lawrence County.
- b. 1 Indictment of a white man, Robert McAmy, for harboring a slave in Lawrence County 1851
- b. 1 Indictment filed in Circuit Court, Lawrence County 1859
A white man was arrested for purchasing meat from a slave. Since a slave could not own property, it was assumed that the meat was stolen.
- b. 1 Annual settlement for minor heirs in Talledega County 1861
Transcript; shows inventory of five Negro slaves.
- b. 1 Complaint filed in Lawrence County court demanding the hire or "use thereof" of the defendant's property, a Negro man 1861
- b. 1 Indictment filed in Circuit Court of Lawrence County against Julius A. King for offense of trading with slaves 1863

Georgia

- b. 2 Agreement between Philip Conway, master of the sloop, "Charming Nancy," and Thomas Doty to sell Negro man named Prince when the sloop arrived in Georgia 1769
- b. 2 Estate inventory and appraisal of William Harvey 1802
- b. 2 Estate appraisal of all goods and chattel of Owen Fort, Jefferson County 1818
List of names and monetary value of 24 slaves; 3 pieces.

Georgia (cont.)

- b. 2 **Bill of sale for Charlotte, aged seventeen 1859**
Bill of sale for \$1200 received from William J. Bremlington for a Negro girl Charlotte, aged seventeen. Signed by Robert D. F. Gant. Bremlington gave W.R. Phillips \$30 commission.

Kansas

- b. 2 **Chase, Salmon P. letter to John Jay 1854**
Letter from Salmon P. Chase to John Jay regarding his disappointment that the Kansas-Nebraska bill was not defeated.
- b. 2 **Giddings, Joshua R. letter to Mr. Bradburn 1856 July 2**
Letter from Joshua R. Giddings, leading abolitionist and U.S. representative from Ohio, to Mr. Bradburn. Refers to "Bleeding Kansas" and President James Buchanan as being a traitor "and we ought to impeach him."
- b. 2 **Bloody Kansas 1856**
New Jersey Anti-Lecompton Ticket for the 1856 election; Garnet Adrain ran for and won Congressional seat on the Anti-Lecompton ticket. Lecompton constitution of the state of Kansas would have allowed slavery and protected the rights of slaveholders.

Kentucky

- b. 2 **Will of John Keel of Warren County 1848**
States that in order to support his widow and children, widow will retain slaves to care for family and remainder may be hired out to support family.
- b. 2 **Will of Thomas Blewett of Warren County disposing of real estate and slaves 1848**
- b. 2 **Louisiana 1844-1850**
Petition for succession of estate of Mrs. Maria Holliday. Includes names, sex, ages, and monetary value of all slaves. From Jefferson Parish. Petition filed 1844, copy made 1850.

Maryland

- b. 1 **Grand jury document 1773**
Brought charges against William Cockey for "forcibly taking a Negro Boy belonging to the Estate of Charles Flanagan."
- b. 1 **Account of slaves and merchandise sold from the schooner "Hatty" 1781**
"Hatty" commanded by Captain Henry Darnell, in Baltimore. Slaves sold included Joe, Paul, Daniel, and Rebeccah and her two children (Harry and Fanny). Names of all men who made purchases and list of merchandise is given.
- b. 1 **Manumission paper for John 1806-1812**
John, about 27 years old, set free by Isaiah Boone, Montgomery County.
- b. 1 **Lawsuit against yeoman Benedict ?_arnall 1813**
Lawsuit against yeoman Benedict ?_arnall for beating Negro Michael, slave of Roger B. Taney, judge in the Dred Scott case. Slave valued at \$500. Frederick County.
- b. 1 **Affidavit for Negro Caleb manumitted by Alexander Mansfield 1823**
- b. 1 **Witness swears that Nathan, or Nace, O'Brien, a mulatto man, was manumitted and set free by Jacob Trox, Frederick County 1829**
- b. 1 **Affidavit by Bennett Campbell and Maku Cato(?) swearing that the Negro woman, Priscilla, is the same person that was manumitted by John Campbell in 1830 1831**
- b. 1 **Sworn witness testifies that Shadrack Bayer(?), a Negro man, was Free born and has papers to that effect, Frederick County 1838**
- b. 1 **Proof of ownership 1865 March**
Document for claim by Levin Atkinson, that he was the owner of Joseph Atkinson, who enlisted in the Ninth Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops Co. A in November 1863.

Mississippi

- b. 1 **Letter of recommendation 1837**
Letter of recommendation as to character of prospective slave dealers Mr. Lake and Mr. Puggetts of Vicksburg. "...Their note will be met at maturity."

Mississippi (cont.)

- b. 1 **Feo_e(?), F. C. letter to Brother Montgomery 1861 February 21**
 The writer, from Tallulah, appears to have been a Baptist circuit preacher, expressing great religious fervor. He states that his "circuit extends up and down the River for 46 miles. I have about 12 white members". Montgomery may refer to a slave owned by Jefferson Davis's brother Isaiah.
- b. 2 **Missouri 1852**
 Bill of sale in the amount of \$750 from George F. Rootes, agent of Major R. B. Lee, U.S. Army of St. Louis County, to Daniel D. Pago, for one slave woman named Rachel and two baby boys.

New York

- b. 2 **Birth registration of female slave born to slave Hannah owned by John Myer, Sr. of Harlem, New York City 1805**
- b. 2 **Conveyance from Ann Allen 1815**
 Conveyance from Ann Allen receiving a girl named Bett for a term of eight years, to treat her with humanity and to set her free at end of term.
- b. 2 **Certificate of manumission for George, property of John Delaney 1817**
- b. 2 **Certificate of manumission for Mary Manning(?), property of Susan Ayenigg(?) 1818**
- b. 2 **North Carolina 1817**
 Bill of sale in amount of \$200 from Nathan Ray to his son, Wormley R. Ray, for two slaves, Jude and Lucy, free of all encumbrances. Wake County.

Pennsylvania

- b. 1 **Indenture 1784**
 Wherein Elizabeth Feirnan (or Feimen) bound herself to serve a term of four years with James Thompson. Partially printed document.
- b. 1 **Insurance policy for schooner "Peggy" 1798**
 Sailed from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Santo Domingo and two French ports in Hispaniola. Includes statement of value of loss of cargo (French capture, English recapture). For Smith and Ridgeway. Also includes financial statement of cargo and freight prepared by Wharton and Lewis, insurance brokers for the cargo on the schooner.
- b. 1 **Indenture for Negro boy, George 1807-1813**
 Indenture for Negro boy George, age about fourteen, manumitted by Benjamin Gibbs. He was to become servant to former owner for a period of fourteen years; terms of condition detailed. Philadelphia. On reverse, value of term of time transferred to Dr. Samuel McCrosky, Philadelphia, 1813.
- b. 1 **Bill of expenses for capture and return of John Martin, a runaway white slave 1827**
- b. 1 **Extract from minutes of annual meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers) 1839**
 Printed sheet with appeals for demonstration of brotherly love for people of color "whatever the sacrifice of material things may cost us or popularity". Philadelphia.

South Carolina

- b. 2 **Tax bill for 6 slaves 1843**
- b. 2 **Deed for disposition of seventeen slaves 1851**
 Includes list of names, color (i.e. black or mulatto), and birth date. Owned by David Johnson in trust for his daughter, Eliza Penelope Wharton, and her husband, John Wharton. Union District. With affidavit (Governor's certificate) for above transaction.

Texas

- b. 2 **Legal document regarding dispute in Harris County, over rental and recovery of slaves 1846**
- b. 2 **Legal document regarding debt in Guadalupe County 1857**
 The judgment included transfer of ownership of enslaved man to pay the debt.

Virginia

Virginia (cont.)

- b. 1 **Slave trial 1761**
 Partially printed document. An order empowering several colonists from Norfolk County to act as justices in the trial of "Negro man Samey" (or Jamey) belonging to John Jones, on a felony charge, as per "an act directing the trial of slaves committing capital crimes...." Williamsburg
- b. 2 **Deed of gift 1817**
 From Samuel Dorset to his daughters, Sarah and Nancy Dorset, conveying two slaves. Signed by William C. Newton, Sarah's husband, Fairfax County.
- b. 2 **Pass issued to Benjamin McDaniel in New Market, Shenandoah County 1843**
- b. 2 **Slave tax receipts for Peter S. Rollen 1860-1862**
- b. 2 **Patrick, M. R. letter 1865 May**
 Regarding George Smith, a colored man accused of stealing a horse and the punishment options.

England

- b. 1 **Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade 1791**
 Letter from Anglican co-founder Granville Sharp to Hercules Ross. With red sealing wax showing imprint of medallion created by Josiah Wedgewood.
- b. 1 **Note referring to votes on abolition in the House of Lords ca. 1807**
- b. 1 **Transmittal sheets from the British Foreign Office 1839-1851**
 Three sheets regarding the slave trade. Documents are not included, but the 1842 transmittal sheet references the treaty concluded at Montevideo.

Abolition

- b. 2 **Smith, Gerrit letter 1854 January 19**
 Smith was an abolitionist and member of the U.S. House of Representatives (N.Y.). Wrote that he intends to make many speeches while in Congress "but it is very difficult to get the floor". Smith was elected on the Free Soiler ticket in 1852 and resigned in 1854. Washington, D.C.
- b. 2 **Sumner, Charles letter to John Jay 1856**
 Letter from Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, abolitionist and co-sponsor of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 to John Jay, New York abolitionist. Sumner was attacked severely by Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina with the metal knob of his walking stick. Brooks was a nephew of Senator Andrew Butler, also of South Carolina, who argued with Sumner during the debate of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1856. The letter was written during Sumner's convalescence and discusses the physician's treatment using fire and strychnine, and that Sumner prefers this to slavery and the actions of Congress.
- b. 2 **Jackson, Francis letter to Francis J. Garrison 1859**
 Letter from Francis Jackson, secretary of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, to Francis J. Garrison, discussing the Society. The latter was the son of William Lloyd Garrison, founder of the Society.
- b. 2 **Jackson, Francis note 1860**
 States that he is "for the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery..."
- b. 2 **Eddy, Eliza F. letter to Miss Halley 1876**
 Eddy was the daughter of Francis Jackson. She quotes a verse her father had copied into a book authored by William Lloyd Garrison.
- b. 2 **African Squadron 1843 May-1846 August**
 Four letters (1843, May-August 1846) from William M. Kinney (possibly the ship's Chaplain), aboard the U.S. Frigate United States, flagship of the African Squadron, to his daughter in Baltimore. Letters are primarily concerned with personal matters, on occasion Kinney describes the places where the Frigate lays anchor. Accompanied by transcriptions and typed notes from unnamed official source regarding the activities of the Frigate United States during June-August 1846.
- b. 2 **American Colonization Society undated**
 Includes blank certificate.

Bills of sale

- b. 2 **Receipt for sale of a Negro man named "Boatswain" 1718**

Bills of sale (cont.)

- b. 2 **Receipt for sale of slaves to several individuals by William and J. P. Broadnax 1823**
- b. 2 **Dananhour(?), John M 1839**
Manuscript regarding the suffering of enslaved persons.
- b. 2 **Garnishment 1858**
Slave dealer, I. W. Rand, garnished slave to get \$125 that he claimed was overpaid to the man for whom he sold slaves.

Hiring of slaves

- b. 2 **Agreement 1825**
Agreement to hire and cloth an enslaved person, Kenny Bishop; would pay H. Pitway \$124.75.
- b. 2 **Hire of slave woman and her three children 1843**
Would pay estate of John Reynolds \$63.
- b. 2 **Prohibition of slave trade ca. 1826**
Six published pages re expenditure of the appropriation for the prohibition of the slave trade for 1826. Printed for the U.S. House of Representatives.
- b. 1 **"Underground" map of routes to Canada**