



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Richard T. Greener papers**

1870-1918

Sc MG 107

Home to Harlem Project, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

## Summary

**Creator:** Greener, Richard Theodore, 1844-1922

**Title:** Richard T. Greener papers

**Date:** 1870-1918

**Size:** 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** Probably Arthur A. Schomburg, 06/24/1987

**Revision History:** This finding aid was updated by Allison Hughes.

**Abstract:** The papers consist of correspondence and writings by Richard T. Greener. Two letters, June 22, 1916 and June 4, 1918 are to Arthur Alfonso Schomburg and are in response to letters Schomburg had written in his capacity as Secretary of the Negro Society for Historical Research.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Richard T. Greener papers, Sc MG 107, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

## Creator History

Educator, lawyer and consular officer. Richard T. Greener was born in Philadelphia on January 30, 1844 and died in Chicago on May 2, 1922. He attended Harvard College where he won top prizes for oratory and dissertation writing and in 1870 became that institution's first African-American graduate.

After graduation Greener pursued a teaching career and was a professor of metaphysics and logic at the University of South Carolina from 1873 to 1877, during which time he also served as University Librarian. In this period he also completed his law degree, and was admitted to the bar in 1876 in the state of South Carolina and in the District of Columbia, a year later. From 1877 to 1880 he was a law instructor and dean of the Law Department of Howard University. With the disbanding of the Howard University Law Department, Greener remained in Washington where he practiced law and actively campaigned on behalf of the Republican Party.

Greener later entered the foreign service and was appointed Consul to Bombay, India in 1878, a post he declined. However, later that year he accepted an appointment as the first U.S. Consul to Vladivostok, Russia. Upon the recommendation of the Russian government he was reappointed as commercial agent and served in this capacity until 1905 when he was dismissed from his post and from the foreign service on unsubstantiated charges. Greener retired to Chicago after 1906 and devoted his time to his writings, continuing to contribute articles to various periodical publications.

## **Custodial History**

Originally formed part of the Miscellaneous American Letters and Papers Collection.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The papers consist of correspondence and writings by Richard T. Greener. Two letters, June 22, 1916 and June 4, 1918 are to Arthur Alfonso Schomburg and are in response to letters Schomburg had written in his capacity as Secretary of the Negro Society for Historical Research. The writings consist of Greener's Bowdoin Prize dissertation, "The Tenures of Land in Ireland" (June 23, 1870; 68pp.); two essays, "Michael Angelo" (37pp) and "Socrates as a Teacher" (76pp.); "The Academic Life," a speech delivered before the Alpha Phi Society of Howard University (November 26, 1878; 66pp.); and his English translation of the poem "My Portrait" (2pp.) by Alexander Pushkin, translated by Greener in 1899 while he was U.S. Consul to Vladivostok.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American college teachers  
African American diplomats  
African American lawyers  
Land tenure -- Ireland

### **Names**

Greener, Richard Theodore, 1844-1922  
Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1475-1564  
Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeevich, 1799-1837  
Schomburg, Arthur Alfonso, 1874-1938  
Socrates

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Manuscripts
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence
- b. 1 f. 3 Writings