



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

Guide to the

**J. R. Casimir papers**

1919-1981

Sc MG 110

## Summary

**Creator:** Casimir, J. R. Ralph

**Title:** J. R. Casimir papers

**Date:** 1919-1981

**Size:** 0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

**Source:** Purchased from J. R. Ralph Casimir, May 1988.

**Revision History:** Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

**Abstract:** J. R. Casimir was a poet, editor, and founding member and secretary of the Roseau, Dominica Division of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The papers consist of correspondence, legal documents, and printed matter relating to Casimir's writing, and they deal with social and political issues affecting the island of Dominica.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], J. R. Casimir papers, Sc MG 110, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Accessioned by Victor Smythe, May 1988. Processed through the Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project.

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

**Related Materials:**

Universal Negro Improvement Association miscellaneous collection, Sc MG 442, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

## Creator History

J. R. Casimir was a poet; editor; founding member and secretary of the Roseau, Dominica Division of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA); and organizer of the Dominica Taxpayers Reform Association. Casimir was born in St. Joseph, Dominica, West Indies, on September 26, 1898. He taught school for several years before resigning to pursue other interests. In 1919, he helped found a Division of the UNIA in Roseau and travelled throughout the island to organize other branches; he served as secretary of the Roseau branch until its dissolution in 1923. Casimir also acted as the Dominican agent for the *Negro World*, the official organ of the UNIA, as well as for other Black periodicals published in the United States.

Casimir's interest in politics continued long after his UNIA activities. He was the organizer and Assistant Secretary of the Dominica Taxpayers Reform Association and Assistant Secretary of the Dominica Conference of 1932, a forerunner of the Federation of the West Indies, which advocated democratization of the English-speaking colonies as a first step towards self-government. He was also active in politics at the local community level.

His interest in writing, especially in poetry, resulted in the publication of several booklets of his verse and four anthologies of Dominican verse. Over the years, he contributed articles and poems to African, American, and Caribbean magazines and newspapers and was a correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Courier* (New York Edition) from 1950-1952. Casimir was also engaged in the bookbinding business.

## Scope and Content Note

These papers consist of correspondence, legal documents, and printed matter relating to Casimir's writing. They focus on social and political issues affecting the island of Dominica, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and the Black nationalist movement worldwide, during the 1920s and 1930s. Significant correspondents include: Marcus Garvey, founder of the UNIA; Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast* (Ghana) editor and author of *Ethiopia Unbound*; Malaku Bayen, of the Ethiopian World Federation; Sylvia Pankhurst, editor of the *New Times* and *Ethiopia News*; John E. Bruce, African American journalist; Monroe Work, editor of the *Negro Year Book*; Langston Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, Roy Wilkins, and other staff of *Crisis* magazine; Thomas L. G. Oxley, editor of *The Poets' Journal*; Victor L. Gray of the *Chicago Bee*; and Cyril V. Briggs, founder of the African Blood Brotherhood. The dispute between the UNA, the African Blood Brotherhood, and *The Emancipator* magazine in 1920 are well documented in the correspondence between Cyril V. Briggs, Casimir, and Anthony Crawford, president of the Inter-Colonial Steamship and Trading Company of New York. Other correspondence files relate to Casimir's activities as an agent of the Black Star Line and the *Negro World*. Rare publications include *The Black Man*, *The Brownies' Book*, *The Challenge*, *The Comet*, as well as scattered issues of *The Messenger* and a complete run of *The Crusader*, September 1918 to August 1921. Also in the collection are the membership register and certificates of the Dominica Division of the UNIA. Casimir's writings span from 1919 to 1981 and consist of typewritten and published poems, as well as several holograph poems written on the verso of letters.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American newspapers  
Authors, Black

Authors, Caribbean  
Authors, Dominican  
Black nationalism -- United States  
Dominica poetry (French Creole)  
Harlem Renaissance  
Political activists

### **Occupations**

Journalists.

### **Names**

Briggs, Cyril V. (Cyril Valentine), 1888-1966  
Casimir, J. R. Ralph  
Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963  
Garvey, Amy Jacques  
Garvey, Marcus, 1887-1940  
Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967  
African Blood Brotherhood  
Black Star Line, Inc.  
Universal Negro Improvement Association

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Black Star Line
- b. 1 f. 2 Certificate of membership, UNIA 1921
- b. 1 f. 3 Oxley, Thomas L. G ca. 1920-1929
- b. 1 f. 4 Garvey, Amy Jacques 1923-1973
- b. 1 f. 5 *Chicago Bee*
- b. 1 f. 6 *Negro Year Book* 1920s-1930s
- b. 1 f. 7 *The Crisis*
- b. 1 f. 8 Hayford, Casely 1920s
- b. 1 f. 9 Briggs, Cyril V 1921 October
- b. 1 f. 10 General correspondence 1930s-1940s
- b. 2 f. 1 *The Messenger*
- b. 2 f. 2 Periodicals scrapbook 1920-1939  
Includes: *The Blackman*, May-June, 1934, June 1935, December 1937, and June 1939; *The Brownies' Book*, August 1920; *The Challenge*, August 1919; *The Colored American Magazine*; *The Comet*, August 29 and October 31, 1936; *The Favorite Magazine* December 1919 and January 1920; *The Promoter* July-November 1920; and *The Southern Workman*, August 1920.
- b. 2 f. 3 Dominica Division of UNIA, Charter No. 85
- b. 2 f. 4 Book of Negro poems and songs 1919
- b. 2 f. 5 Casimir's writing
- b. 2 f. 6 Inter-Colonial Steamship and Trading Co 1920s
- b. 2 f. 7 Hughes, Langston
- b. 2 f. 8 Garvey, Marcus
- b. 2 f. 9 Clippings 1920-1922
- b. 2 f. 10 Miscellaneous
- b. 2 f. 11 Marcus Garvey scrapbook