



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

Guide to the

**Hiram Revels collection**

1870-1948

Sc Micro R-6478

Processed by Janice Quinter, May 1991, as part of Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project.

## Summary

**Creator:** Revels, Hiram R. (Hiram Rhoades), 1827-1901

**Title:** Hiram Revels collection

**Date:** 1870-1948

**Size:** 0.06 linear feet (1 reel)

**Source:** Gift of Horace Cayton, February 1951 and December 1977. 12/01/77

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

**Abstract:** The Hiram Revels collection consists principally of a scrapbook of news clippings and biographical articles on Revels. The scrapbook (1870-1893) discusses Revels as a senator, pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and president of Alcorn University; describes local events; and contains homilies and miscellany. There are also some letters written to Revels and a couple of programs and invitations. The collection also includes several letters Revels wrote to his family (1870-1900); a biographical sketch written about him in the first person which appears to have been written by his daughter, Susie; a typescript of an obituary of Revels; and legal papers regarding settlement of his estate. There are also letters soliciting information about Revels from Hermann R. Muelder of Knox College, who planned to write an article about Revels. Obituaries of his daughter, Susie Revels Cayton, complete the collection.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Hiram Revels collection, Sc Micro R-6478, 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:** Processed by Janice Quinter, May 1991, as part of Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project.

## Creator History

Hiram Rhoades Revels was a clergyman, the first African American appointed as an United States

senator from a southern state during Reconstruction, and a college president. He was born free in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where he received his early education, and continued his studies at a Quaker seminary in Ohio, later graduating from Knox College in Galesburg (1857). Revels's birth date is unclear as published sources indicate 1821, while his daughter's biography of him lists 1827. In 1845, Revels was ordained a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore. He served A.M.E. congregations in Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Texas, and elsewhere. From 1858 to 1863, he was the first African American pastor of the Madison Street Presbyterian Church in Baltimore. He served briefly as a chaplain in the Union Army; helped the Freedmen's Bureau set up schools in Mississippi; and assisted the provost marshal in managing the affairs of the freedmen in Vicksburg. Revels began his political career as an alderman in Natchez, Mississippi in 1868, and was elected to the Mississippi State Senate in 1869. The state legislature in January 1870 elected him to the U.S. Senate, and after acrimonious debate, the Senate allowed him to fill the expired term of Jefferson Davis; he served as senator from February 1870 until March 1871. Among other issues, Revels voted for enforcement of the Fifteenth Amendment. His political career, however, was typified by some of his accommodationist views and practices.

In the early 1870s Revels was named the first president of Alcorn College, a Black institution, in Rodney, Mississippi, but he was not an adept administrator. He became caught between the demands of a white dominated legislature and some members of the faculty and student body who wanted him to be a more aggressive leader. Despite these problems, he served as president from 1871 to 1873 and again from 1876 to 1882.

Revels and his wife, Phoebe Rebecca Bass Revels, had six daughters, including Susie Revels (1870-1943). She taught school in Mississippi until her marriage in 1896 to Horace Roscoe Cayton.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Hiram Revels collection consists principally of a scrapbook of news clippings and biographical articles on Revels. The scrapbook (1870-1893) discusses Revels as a senator, pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and president of Alcorn University; describes local events; and contains homilies and miscellany. There are also some letters written to Revels and a couple of programs and invitations. The collection also includes several letters Revels wrote to his family (1870-1900); a biographical sketch written about him in the first person which appears to have been written by his daughter, Susie; a typescript of an obituary of Revels; and legal papers regarding settlement of his estate. There are also letters soliciting information about Revels from Hermann R. Muelder of Knox College, who planned to write an article about Revels. Obituaries of his daughter, Susie Revels Cayton, complete the collection.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American clergy  
African American college administrators  
African American legislators

### **Names**

Revels, Hiram R. (Hiram Rhoades), 1827-1901  
Alcorn University

## **Container List**

- r. 1 Scrapbook 1870-1893
- r. 1 Correspondence, biographical sketch, legal papers, and obituaries 1870-1948