



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

Guide to the

Middleton "Spike" Harris Civil War and Reconstruction collection

1861-1914

Sc MG 34

Summary

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

Title: Middleton "Spike" Harris Civil War and Reconstruction collection

Date: 1861-1914

Size: 0.25 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Purchase, 1976.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: The Middleton "Spike" Harris Civil War and Reconstruction collection consists of documents pertaining to the Civil War from both the Union Army and the Confederate states. Among other items, there is a pay claim issued by the Confederate Army, U.S. Army discharge papers, and an amendment to the Negro Soldier Bill investing Confederate General-in-Chief Robert E. Lee with full power to call slaves into service. Included is a letter from William Lloyd Garrison in which he declares that the U.S. government should be held responsible for abolishing slavery. The Reconstruction era is represented by three documents including a signed loyalty oath, 1865, and a letter to President Andrew Johnson from someone seeking to be appointed an agent to sell cotton brought to market by freedmen in Texas, 1867.

Preferred citation: [Item], Middleton "Spike" Harris Civil War and Reconstruction 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

Separated Materials:

Transferred to Art and Artifacts Division: bank notes.

Related Materials:

Also found in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in

Black Culture:

Middleton "Spike" Harris newspaper collection, Sc MG 34

Middleton "Spike" Harris papers, Sc MG 34

Middleton "Spike" Harris slavery and abolition 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 Civil War and Reconstruction collection consists of documents pertaining to the Civil War from both the Union Army and the Confederate states. Among other items, there is a pay claim issued by the Confederate Army, U.S. Army discharge papers, and an amendment to the Negro Soldier Bill investing Confederate General-in-Chief Robert E. Lee with full power to call slaves into service. Included is a letter from William Lloyd Garrison in which he declares that the U.S. government should be held responsible for abolishing slavery. The Reconstruction era is represented by three documents including a signed loyalty oath, 1865, and a letter to President Andrew Johnson from someone seeking to be appointed an agent to sell cotton brought to market by freedmen in Texas, 1867.

Arrangement: Arranged chronologically.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American soldiers
Confederate States of America. Army -- African American troops
Reconstruction (U.S. history, 1865-1877)
United States. Army -- African American troops -- History

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Muster rolls

Geographic Names

United States -- Armed Forces -- African Americans -- History
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Participation, African American

Names

Garrison, William Lloyd, 1805-1879
Harris, M. A., 1908-1977

Container List

1861

- b. 1 **Adams, Theodore letter to Elisha O. Crosby**
Elisha O. Crosby was the Resident Minister to Guatemala, 1861-1864. Letter mentions Union troops in Washington, D.C. and attack on Baltimore.
- b. 1 **Brownlow, William G. farewell address**
Parson Brownlow's farewell address discussed his imprisonment by the rebels.
- b. 1 **Muster roll for the 3rd Regiment, Battery K, New York Volunteer, Light Artillery 1861-1865**
Includes men enlisted in Cayuga County, NY, together with month return of Quartermaster's stores.
- b. 1 **Garrison, William Lloyd letter to Aaron M. Powell 1862 February 16**
Letter by William Lloyd Garrison, abolitionist and publisher, written from Boston during a lecture tour in Massachusetts, to Aaron M. Powell. Supported holding the government responsible to abolish slavery under the Constitution's powers of war and opposed an amendment in case the war ended and pro-slavery status was restored.

1863

- b. 1 **Pay claim for a white officer, Lucius W. Bissell of the 3rd Regiment, Corps d'Afrique and his Negro servant, Joseph Alexander**
Corps d'Afrique fought with the Union Army.
- b. 1 **Special Field Orders and pay voucher 1863 August-1864 April**
Orders for Captain Robert Headon of the 1st Regiment U.S. Colored Troops to report to Colonel Charles R. Thompson of the Department of the Cumberland. Pay voucher for Captain Robert Headon of Company "E," 12th U.S. Colored Troops. Lists his servant, Heziah Lawler.

1864

- b. 1 **Wheeler, Henry C., 2nd Lieutenant, Company "D" 14th Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops, discharge 1864 February**
Extract (handcopied) of discharge from U.S. Army.
- b. 1 **McKim, James letter to Henry Royles 1864 June**
Letter to Henry Royles from James McKim, officer of the Pennsylvania Freedman's Association, regarding Royles' appointment as a teacher in a freedman's school.

1865

- b. 1 **Amendment to the Negro Soldier Bill 1865 February 14**
Confederate House of Representatives invests General-in-Chief Robert E. Lee full power to call into service slaves who volunteer for service or those pressed into service by their owners.
- b. 1 **Kirby, Wilson of Company "I," Fourth Regiment of the U.S. Colored Troops, discharge**
Includes five documents regarding his discharge.
- b. 1 **Henry, James John discharge**
Discharge paper for James John Henry, who at time of enlistment in 1863 in Company E, Fourth Regiment, was a free man; and receipt for \$300 for discharge pay.
- b. 1 **Loyalty oath**
Signed by W. I. Brooks, Forsyth, Georgia.

1867

- b. 1 **Ruttkay, A. letter to President Andrew Johnson**
Letter from A. Ruttkay, Texas, to President Andrew Johnson giving his qualifications to be appointed agent to receive and sell cotton brought to market by freedmen in Texas. Includes typed transcription.
- b. 1 **Creighton, J. Blake, Commander of U.S.S. Oneida, letter to Admiral Bell**
Letter requesting discharge of William H. Smith (colored) so that he could be assigned to the Oneida.

- b. 1 Copies of three bank notes issued by banks in Georgia (\$1), South Carolina (\$5 picture of Benjamin Harrison), and the Confederate States of America (\$50) undated
- b. 1 Certificate from the Bureau of Pensions for Samuel Newman, who served in Company G, 5th Regiment, U. S. Colored Infantry during the Civil War 1914