



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

Guide to the

**Minstrel collection**

1863-1928

Sc MG 939

Processed by Tiffany Carcamo, 2017.

## Summary

**Title:** Minstrel collection

**Date:** 1863-1928

**Size:** 4.0 linear feet (4 boxes)

**Source:** Unknown provenance.

**Abstract:** The Minstrel collection consists of various published minstrel books from an assortment of publishing series. All of the publishing series within the collection are incomplete. The majority of the collection comes from the De Witt's Ethiopian and Comic Drama publishing series, which was published by Robert M. De Witt and the De Witt Publishing House in New York City. Other series include the Ames' Series of Standard and Minor Drama, Baker's Darkey Plays, Denison's Black-Face Series, Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation, the Comic Drama, the Darkey and Comic Drama, and the Ethiopian Dram. The books are organized alphabetically by publishing series and title. It also consists of works written by Frank Dumont, G. W. H. Griffin, A. J. Leavitt, J. C. Stewart, and Charles White.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Minstrel collection, Sc MG 939, 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 Tiffany Carcamo, 2017.

## Creator History

Minstrel shows or minstrelsy were an American form of entertainment developed in the early 19th century. In skits, song, and dance, white performers portrayed Black individuals in a stereotypical manner, such as dim-witted, lazy, buffoonish, superstitious, and "happy-go-lucky". In the 1840s, Blacks began to perform in minstrels. The first African Americans to perform on stage were William Henry Lane and Thomas Dilward. Blacks' first contribution to minstrels did little to diminish the stereotypes set forth by white writers; ironically, it reinforced them.

At the height of their popularity in the 1840s, dozens of minstrel companies toured the United States and England, from frontier camps to the White House. Minstrel troupes toured in the same circuits as

the opera companies, circuses, and European itinerant entertainers. The venues ranged from lavish opera theatres, such as The American Theatre in New York, the Fifth Avenue Opera House, the Providence Academy of Music, and Griffin and Christy's Minstrels' Opera House to makeshift tavern stages on the Lower East Side of New York.

Minstrels consisted of a three-part structure developed by Edwin Christy. The first part consisted of the troupes dancing on stage and exchanging wisecracks and singing songs. The second part, called the olio, consisted of singers, dancers, comedians, other novelty acts, and stump speech. The stump speech was a long speech that would range from nonsense to important matters such as science, politics, and society. In these speeches, the performer would be dim-witted and try to speak eloquently, which would lead to countless malapropisms, jokes, and unintentional puns. The third act, called the afterpiece, consisted of skits in from the early days of minstrels set on Southern plantations; they usually included song and dance. It idealized the plantation lifestyle with happy slaves. In the later years of minstrel shows, troupes started to perform burlesque renditions of Shakespeare and other playwrights.

The publication of the minstrel playbooks consisted of a wide assortment of works, including *Othello* and *An Ethiopian Burlesque*, from Ames' Series of Standard and Minor Drama. The publications are playscripts, and include such information as the performers, lines, stage settings, and songs.

Other minstrel publishing series are Baker's Darkey Plays, the Comic Drama, The Darkey and Comic Drama, Denison's Black-Face Series, De Witt's Ethiopian and Comic Drama, The Ethiopian Drama, Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation, and the Vaudeville Stage. The publishers of the minstrel series are: A.D Ames, Walter H. Baker and Co., The Dramatic Publishing Company, which is still around today, T.S. Denison and Company, The De Witt Publishing House, Robert M. De Witt, and Dick and Fitzgerald. These publishing houses were located in Boston, Chicago, New York, and Clyde, Ohio.

After the Civil War and with the rise of variety shows, musical comedy, and vaudeville, minstrel shows declined in popularity. By 1919, only three troupes remained in the United States. Minstrels continued to be shown in the cinema and on television until the 1950s.

## Scope and Content Note

The Minstrel collection consists of various published minstrel books from an assortment of publishing series. All of the publishing series within the collection are incomplete. The majority of the collection comes from the De Witt's Ethiopian and Comic Drama publishing series, which was published by Robert M. De Witt and the De Witt Publishing House in New York City. Other series include the Ames' Series of Standard and Minor Drama, Baker's Darkey Plays, Denison's Black-Face Series, Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation, the Comic Drama, the Darkey and Comic Drama, and the Ethiopian Dram. The books are organized alphabetically by publishing series and title. It also consists of works written by Frank Dumont, G. W. H. Griffin, A. J. Leavitt, J. C. Stewart, and Charles White.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American entertainers  
Blackface entertainers  
Drama -- Stage scripts

Minstrel shows

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 *Alta Series. Down in Dixie: A Drama in Four Acts*  
Ames' Series of Standard and Minor Drama
- b. 1 f. 2 *Black Shoemaker: A Negro Farce, #172*
- b. 1 f. 3 *Chops: An Ethiopian Farce, #214* 1886
- b. 1 f. 4 *The Coming Man: A Farce, #101* 1879
- b. 1 f. 5 *Cuff's Luck, an Ethiopian Sketch* 1883
- b. 1 f. 6 *Dutchy vs. Nigger: An Original Farce, #220* 1887
- b. 1 f. 7 *Gittin' 'Sperience in a Doctor's Office: An Ethiopian Farce, #378* 1896
- b. 1 f. 8 *How Sister Paxey Got Her Child Baptised: An Ethiopian Sketch, #103* 1880
- b. 1 f. 9 *In for It: An Ethiopian Farce, #319* 1893
- b. 1 f. 10 *The Intelligence Office: An Ethiopian Sketch, #282*
- b. 1 f. 11 *Jes' Like White Folks: An Ethiopian Farce, #444* 1903
- b. 1 f. 12 *Old Black Joe: A Drama, #435* 1902
- b. 1 f. 13 *Old Dad's Cabin: A Negro Farce, #234*
- b. 1 f. 14 *Othello: An Ethiopian Burlesque, #246*
- b. 1 f. 15 *Pomp Green's Snakes: An Ethiopian Farce, #297* 1891
- b. 1 f. 16 *Snow Ball, a Colored Valet: A Farce, #358* 1895
- Baker's Darkey Plays
  - b. 1 f. 17 *Black Blunderers: An Ethiopian Farce* 1893
  - b. 1 f. 18 *Careless Cupid: A Negro Farce* 1896
  - b. 1 f. 19 *Everyday Occurrences: A Finale to the "First Part" of a Negro Minstrel Entertainment* 1893
  - b. 1 f. 20 *The Man about Town: A Negro Farce* 1894
  - b. 1 f. 21 *Mistaken Identity: An Ethiopian Farce* 1893
  - b. 1 f. 22 *Sublime and Ridiculous: A Negro Act* 1893
  - b. 1 f. 23 *That Dorg: A Black Tragedy* 1893
- Baker's Edition of Plays
  - b. 1 f. 24 *Aboard a Slow Train in Mizzoury: A Farcical Entertainment* 1920
  - b. 1 f. 25 *Black Magic: A Burlesque Negro Sketch* 1900
  - b. 1 f. 26 *A Black Trump: A Negro Comedy* 1889
  - b. 1 f. 27 *Daughter of the Regiment: A Drama* 1889
  - b. 1 f. 28 *The Government Detective: A Play* 1910
  - b. 1 f. 29 *Love in a Lighthouse* 1896
  - b. 1 f. 30 *Money in the Movies: A Husky Dusky Mellow-Dramer* 1917
  - b. 1 f. 31 *Plantation Bitters: A Colored Fantasy* 1889
  - b. 1 f. 32 *Sam Bo-Jam and His African Colony: A Negro Farce* 1916
- Baker's Novelty Plays
  - b. 1 f. 33 *In Old Virginny: An Old Plantation Novelty* 1923
  - b. 1 f. 34 *The King of the Cannibal Islands: An Eccentric Entertainment* 1902
  - b. 1 f. 35 *Beadle and Adams. Beadle's the Dime*

- b. 1 f. 36 *Bugbee's Popular Monologues. The Dark Side of Life* 1925
- b. 1 f. 37 *Bugbee's Popular Plays. The Coonville 'Ristocrat Club* 1916
- The Comic Drama
- b. 1 f. 38 *The African Box: A Burlesque on Box Mystery* 1875
- b. 1 f. 39 *The Baby Elephant: A Negro Sketch* 1875
- b. 1 f. 40 *The Black Bachelor: A Negro Farce* 1898
- b. 1 f. 41 *The Black Chap from Whitechapel: An Eccentric Negro Piece* 1871
- b. 1 f. 42 *Christmas Eve in the South: An Ethiopian Farce* 1882
- b. 1 f. 43 *Coalheaver's Revenge: A Negro Sketch* 1874
- b. 1 f. 44 *The Darkies' Stratagem: A Negro Sketch* 1875
- b. 1 f. 45 *Fisherman's Luck: An Ethiopian Sketch* 1875
- b. 1 f. 46 *Gentlemen Coons' Parade: A Musical Sketch* 1885
- b. 1 f. 47 *Ghost in a Pawn Shop: An Ethiopian Sketch* 1875
- b. 1 f. 48 *Glycerine Oil: An Ethiopian Sketch* 1874
- b. 1 f. 49 *Guide to the Stage* 1874
- b. 1 f. 50 *Happy Uncle Rufus: A Musical Sketch* 1881
- b. 1 f. 51 *A Lucky Job: A Negro Farce* 1875
- b. 1 f. 52 *A Night in a Strange Hotel: A Laughable Negro Sketch* 1865-1874
- b. 1 f. 53 *One Night in a Medical College: An Ethiopian Sketch* 1876-1877
- b. 1 f. 54 *Out's Inn: A Black-face Sketch* 1902
- b. 1 f. 55 *The Rival Barber Shops: An Ethiopian Farce* 1880
- b. 1 f. 56 *Uncle Eph's Dream: An Original Negro Sketch* 1874
- b. 1 f. 57 *Wrong Woman in the Right Place: A Negro Sketch* 1876
- The Darkey and Comic Drama
- b. 2 f. 1 *Blinks and Jinks: An Ethiopian Sketch*
- b. 2 f. 2 *The Coontown Musketeers: A Minstrel Sketch*
- b. 2 f. 3 *De Black Magician: An Ethiopian Comicality* 1876
- b. 2 f. 4 *The Demon Phonograph: A Negro Farce* 1898
- b. 2 f. 5 *Gentlemen Coons' Parade: A Musical Sketch* 1885
- b. 2 f. 6 *Get-Rich-Quick Society: A Farce* 1898
- b. 2 f. 7 *The Lime-Kiln Club in an Uproar: An Ethiopian Drollery* 1891
- b. 2 f. 8 *The Midnight Intruder: An Ethiopian Farce* 1875
- b. 2 f. 9 *No Pay No Cure: A Sketch* 1882
- b. 2 f. 10 *Obeying Orders: An Ethiopian Military Sketch* 1866-1870
- b. 2 f. 11 *Pete and the Peddler: A Negro and Irish Sketch* 1863
- b. 2 f. 12 *Rival Tenants: A Negro Sketch* 1870
- b. 2 f. 13 *The Serenade Party: A Black Sketch* 1897
- b. 2 f. 14 *Simon Says "Wig Wag": A Negro Comedy* 1901
- b. 2 f. 15 *The Two Awfuls: A Negro Sketch* 1874
- b. 2 f. 16 *Whose Baby Is It? An Ethiopian Sketch* 1880
- Denison's Black-Face Series

Denison's Black-Face Series (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 17 *The African Golf Club: A Blackface Farce* 1921
- b. 2 f. 18 *The Battle of Roaring-Bull: A Black and Copper-Colored Massacre* 1921
- b. 2 f. 19 *Cash Money: A Minstrel Spree for Three*
- b. 2 f. 20 *The Coming Champion: A Colored Sketch* 1910
- b. 2 f. 21 *The Coon at the Door* 1921
- b. 2 f. 22 *A Dark Secret: A Colored Farce of Mystery* 1921
- b. 2 f. 23 *The Darktown Fire Brigade: A Minstrel Afterpiece* 1915
- b. 2 f. 24 *Fu'st Aid to Cupid: A Minstrel Absurdity* 1921
- b. 2 f. 25 *Get Off the Track: A Comedy Sketch* 1928
- b. 2 f. 26 *Hungry: A Comedy La Mode* 1917
- b. 2 f. 27 *Kiss Me, Camille! A Blackface Novelty* 1921

De Witt's Ethiopian and Comic Drama

- b. 2 f. 28 *Africanus Bluebeard: A Musical Ethiopian Burlesque, #107* 1876
- b. 2 f. 29 *Ambition: A Pleasing Farce, #113* 1877
- b. 2 f. 30 *The Black Chemist: An Ethiopian Sketch, #10* 1874
- b. 2 f. 31 *Black Ey'd William: An Ethiopian Sketch, #11*
- b. 2 f. 32 *The Black Forrest: An Ethiopian Farce* 1882
- b. 2 f. 33 *The Body Snatchers: A Negro Sketch, #120* 1879
- b. 2 f. 34 *The Bogus Injun: A Very Laughable Sketch, #78* 1875
- b. 2 f. 35 *The Coming Man: An Ethiopian Sketch, #112* 1877
- b. 2 f. 36 *Cremation: An Ethiopian Sketch, #41* 1875
- b. 2 f. 37 *The Darkey Sleep-Walker: An Original Nigger Act, #131* 1880
- b. 2 f. 38 *The Darkey's Stratagem: A Negro Sketch in One Act, #33* 1874
- b. 2 f. 39 *The Darkies' Stratagem: A Negro Sketch, #63*
- b. 2 f. 40 *De Black Magician: An Ethiopian Comicality in One Scene* 1876
- b. 2 f. 41 *Deeds of Darkness: An Intellectual, Farcical Musical, #111* 1876
- b. 2 f. 42 *The Draft: A Negro Sketch, #50* 1875
- b. 2 f. 43 *Eh? What Is It? An Ethiopian Sketch, #4* 1871
- b. 2 f. 44 *Election Day: An Ethiopian Farce, #136* 1880
- b. 2 f. 45 *Excise Trials: A Burlesque Negro Sketch, #52* 1875
- b. 2 f. 46 *Fun in a Cooper's Shop: An Original Ethiopian Sketch, #152*
- b. 2 f. 47 *Gambrinus, King of Lager Beer: A Diabolical, Musical, Comical and Nonsensical Ethiopian Burlesque, #106* 1876
- b. 2 f. 48 *Ghost in a Pawnshop: An Ethiopian Sketch, #58* 1875
- b. 2 f. 49 *Go and Get Tight: An Ethiopian Farce, #130* 1880
- b. 2 f. 50 *Good Night's Rest: A Sketch, #82* 1876
- b. 2 f. 51 *Hard Times: A Negro Extravaganza, #23* 1874
- b. 2 f. 52 *Helen's Funny Babies: An Ethiopian Burlesque, #118* 1878
- b. 2 f. 53 *Hemmed In: An Ethiopian Sketch, #3* 1871
- b. 2 f. 54 *Hippotheatron: An Extravagant Funny Sketch, #68* 1875
- b. 2 f. 55 *Julius the Snoozer: An Ethiopian Burlesque, #94* 1876

De Witt's Ethiopian and Comic Drama (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 56 *The Last of the Mohicans: An Ethiopian Sketch, #1* 1870
- b. 2 f. 57 *Laughing Gas: A Negro Burlesque Sketch, #36* 1874
- b. 2 f. 58 *Love and Lockjaw: A Black-face Farce* 1895
- b. 2 f. 59 *Making a Hit: An Ethiopian Farce, #109* 1876
- b. 2 f. 60 *The Milliner's Shop: An Ethiopian Sketch, #147* 1882
- b. 2 f. 61 *The Moko Marionettes: An Ethiopian* 1880
- b. 2 f. 62 *The Mutton Trial: An Ethiopian Sketch, #8* 1874
- b. 3 f. 1 *The Noble Savage: A Comic Ethiopian Farce, #132* 1880
- b. 3 f. 2 *Oh Hush! An Operatic Olio, #125*
- b. 3 f. 3 *One, Two, Three: A Negro Sketch, #76* 1875
- b. 3 f. 4 *Pleasant Companions: An Ethiopian Sketch, #135* 1880
- b. 3 f. 5 *The Polar Bear: An Ethiopian Farce, #92* 1876
- b. 3 f. 6 *The Policy Players: An Ethiopian Sketch, #9* 1874
- b. 3 f. 7 *A Remittance from Home: An Ethiopian Sketch, #45* 1875
- b. 3 f. 8 *Rigging a Purchase: A Negro Farce, #55* 1875
- b. 3 f. 9 *Rival Artists: A Negro Sketch, #81* 1876
- b. 3 f. 10 *The Sausage Makers: A Negro Burlesque Sketch, #59* 1875
- b. 3 f. 11 *Scampini: An Anti-Tragical, Comical, Magical and Laughable Pantomime*  
1874
- b. 3 f. 12 *The Serenade: A Negro Sketch, #84* 1876
- b. 3 f. 13 *Siamese Twins: A Negro Burlesque Sketch, #38* 1874
- b. 3 f. 14 *Squire for a Day: A Negro Sketch, #69* 1875
- b. 3 f. 15 *Storming the Fort: A Burlesque Ethiopian Sketch, #16* 1874
- b. 3 f. 16 *The Streets of New York: An Ethiopian Sketch, #13* 1874
- b. 3 f. 17 *Three Strings to One Bow: An Ethiopian Sketch, #34* 1874
- b. 3 f. 18 *The Ticket-Taker: An Ethiopian Farce*
- b. 3 f. 19 *The Two Black Roses: An Ethiopian Sketch, #5* 1871
- b. 3 f. 20 *Vinegar Bitters: A Negro Sketch, #62* 1875
- b. 3 f. 21 *The Wonderful Telephone: A Black Sketch, #143*
- b. 3 f. 22 *100th Night of Hamlet: A Negro Sketch, #27* 1874
- b. 3 f. 23 *Eldridge Black Face Sketches. Ghoses Er Not Ghoese: A Negro Debate* 1916
- The Ethiopian Drama
- b. 3 f. 24 *The Arrival of Dickens: An Ethiopian Sketch*
- b. 3 f. 25 *Actor and Singer*
- b. 3 f. 26 *The Baby Coach Parade: A Sketch* 1894
- b. 3 f. 27 *Back from Californy: An Original Darky Eccentricity*
- b. 3 f. 28 *Bone Squash: A Comic Opera*
- b. 3 f. 29-30 *Camille: An Ethiopian Interlude*
- b. 3 f. 31 *Gettin' de Bag to Hold: An Ethiopian Farce*
- b. 3 f. 32 *Hamlet the Dainty: An Ethiopian Burlesque*
- b. 3 f. 33 *The Joke on Squinim* 1883
- b. 3 f. 34 *Love and a Carving Knife: A Negro Farce* 1901

The Ethiopian Drama (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 35 *Mr. Badger's Uppers: A Negro Farce* 1901
- b. 3 f. 36 *Old Hunks, the Miser: An Ethiopian Comicality*
- b. 3 f. 37 *Othello: A Burlesque*
- b. 3 f. 38 *Prof. Black's Funnygraph: A Colored Burlesque on the Phonograph*
- b. 3 f. 39 *Tricks: An Ethiopian Sketch*
- b. 3 f. 40 *The Two Pompeys: An Ethiopian Sketch*
- b. 3 f. 41 *An Unhappy Pair: An Ethiopian Farce*
- b. 3 f. 42 *The Upper Ten: An Ethiopian Farce*
- b. 3 f. 43 *Villiken and His Dinah: A Negro Farce*
- b. 3 f. 44 *The Wax Works at Play* 1894
- b. 3 f. 45 *Who Gits de Reward? A Negro Farce* 1901
- b. 3 f. 46 *William Tell: An Ethiopian Interlude*

Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation

- b. 3 f. 47 *The Coon and the Chink: A Vaudeville Sketch* 1912
- b. 3 f. 48 *Darkey Breach of Promise Case: A Nigger Mock Trial* 1898
- b. 3 f. 49 *De Darky Tragedian: An Ethiopian Sketch*
- b. 3 f. 50 *De Trouble Begins at Nine: A Darkey Interlude*
- b. 3 f. 51 *Doctor Snowball: A Negro Farce* 1897
- b. 3 f. 52 *An Elephant on Ice: An Ethiopian Interlude*
- b. 3 f. 53 *Gallus Jake An Ethiopian Comicality*
- b. 3 f. 54 *Jumbo Jum: A Roaring Farce*
- b. 3 f. 55 *The Mischievous Nigger: A Negro Farce*
- b. 3 f. 56 *Nigger Night School: A Farce* 1896
- b. 3 f. 57 *The Poisoned Darkys: A Temperance Interlude* 1877
- b. 3 f. 58 *Three Black Smiths: An Original Ethiopian Eccentricity*
- b. 3 f. 59 *The Troublesome Servant: An Ethiopian Interlude*
- b. 3 f. 60 *16,000 Years Ago: An Ethiopian Act*
- b. 4 f. 1 *French Acting Edition (Late Lacy's). The Rival Lovers: A Negro Farce*
- b. 4 f. 2 *French's American Drama. The Aethiop*
- b. 4 f. 3 *French's Standard Drama. Stanley's Dwarfs: An Original Entertainment for Male Characters* 1888
- b. 4 f. 4 *Negro Dialect Monologues. The Viney Sketches*
- b. 4 f. 5 *Roorbach's Acting Drama. Uncle Jeff: A Negro Farce* 1891
- b. 4 f. 6 *The Seymour S. Tibbals Monologues. Waiting for the "Alabama Lou"*

The Vaudeville Stage

- b. 4 f. 7 *Ebony Flats and Black Sharps: A Nonsensical Black-Face Melange* 1897
- b. 4 f. 8 *Mrs. Didymus' Party: A Negro Sketch* 1893

Unknown publishers

- b. 4 f. 9 *Christy's Panorama Songster*
- b. 4 f. 10 *A Dark-Brown Diplomat: A Monologue* 1903
- b. 4 f. 11 *Darkey Plays*



Unknown publishers (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 12     *The Darktown Literary Society Meets* 1922
- b. 4 f. 13     *Dat Famous Chicken Debate* 1915
- b. 4 f. 14     *Dat Watermillun: For Eight Boys* 1916
- b. 4 f. 15     *De Scrumscious Weddin': Negro Dialect Monologue for Woman* 1916
- b. 4 f. 16     *The Dispelling of Big Jim* 1905
- b. 4 f. 17     *Ghoses Er Not Ghose: A Negro Debate*
- b. 4 f. 18     *The Irishman and the Coon: A Vaudeville Act* 1922
- b. 4 f. 19     *Let's Put on a Minstrel Show*
- b. 4 f. 20     *Mandy's Lost Opportunity: A Negro Monologue* 1913
- b. 4 f. 21     *Uncle Jeff: A Negro Farce*
- b. 4 f. 22     *The Great Moral Dime Show: An Entertainment in One Scene (title page only)*
- b. 4 f. 23     Miscellaneous covers