



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

Summary

Creator: Revels, Hiram Rhoades, 1827?-1901

Title: Hiram Revels Collection

Date: 1870-1948

Size: 1 linear foot

Source: Gift, Cayton, Horace in 02/--/51, 12/01/77

Abstract: Hiram Rhoades Revels served as a clergyman, first African American appointed to become a United States senator from a southern state during Reconstruction, and 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' birth date is unclear as published sources indicate 1821 while his daughter's autobiography of him gives the year 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.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Hiram Revels Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Revels began his political career as an alderman in Natchez, Miss. 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 seated him to fill the expired term of Jefferson Davis, and 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 1870's Revels was named the first president of Alcorn College, a black school, in Rodney, Mississippi, but he was not an adept administrator and 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

Hiram Rhoades Revels served as a clergyman, first African American appointed to become a United States senator from a southern state during Reconstruction, and 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' birth date is unclear as published sources indicate 1821 while his daughter's autobiography of him gives the year 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. The Hiram Revels Collection consists principally of a scrapbook of news clippings in addition to biographical articles about 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 -- Mississippi
African American legislators -- Mississippi

Titles

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

Names

Revels, Hiram Rhoades, 1827?-1901
Cayton, Susie Revels, 1870-1943
Muelder, Hermann R. (Hermann Richard), 1905-
Alcorn University