



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

Guide to the

**Arthur Alfonso Schomburg collection**

1874-2014 [bulk 1920-1938]

SC MG 41

Home to Harlem Project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Processed by Allison Hughes in 2018.

## Summary

**Creator:** Schomburg, Arthur Alfonso, 1874-1938

**Title:** Arthur Alfonso Schomburg collection

**Date:** 1874-2014 [bulk 1920-1938]

**Size:** 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** The typescripts were purchased in 2005. The family background information was acquired during the preparation of the 1986 exhibit "The Legacy of Arthur Alfonso Schomburg: a celebration of the past, a vision for the future," with later accruals from Dolores Schomburg Thomas in 1991 and Susan Schomburg in 2014.

**Abstract:** Arthur (originally Arturo) Alfonso Schomburg was a collector of books and manuscripts pertaining to black history and culture, whose collection formed the basis for the Schomburg Center for Black Culture. This collection includes typewritten manuscripts written by Schomburg, a memorial tribute by Alain Locke, and genealogical research conducted by his descendants.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Arthur Alfonso Schomburg collection, SC MG 41, 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 Allison Hughes in 2018.

## Creator History

Arthur (originally Arturo) Alfonso Schomburg (1874-1938) was a collector of books and manuscripts pertaining to black history and culture whose collection formed the basis for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Schomburg moved to New York City in 1891, settling in Harlem and later, Brooklyn. As a young man, he was an active supporter of Cuban and

Puerto Rican independence, cofounding the political club Las Dos Antillas; later, he was involved in several organizations devoted to promoting African American research and scholarship, including the Negro Society for Historical Research and the American Negro Academy. Drawing on his extensive collection of books and historical documents, Schomburg wrote articles on the history of the African diaspora for major black periodicals including *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, *Negro World*, and *The New York Amsterdam News*. In 1926, Schomburg sold his collection to the New York Public Library, and served as curator of the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints from 1932 until his death in 1938.

For a timeline of Schomburg's life, see the Arthur Alfonso Schomburg Papers.

## Scope and Content Note

The Arthur Alfonso Schomburg Collection consists of nine typescripts authored by Schomburg as well as biographical material about Schomburg collected by the New York Public Library.

The manuscripts by Schomburg, dating from approximately 1920-1938, are typewritten articles, some annotated, primarily concerned with the history of Africans and people of African descent. The articles discuss various aspects of the African diaspora across history and geography: from ancient Egypt to pre-Columbian Central America to seventeenth-century Spain to Jazz Age Harlem nightlife. Two of the articles—"The Negro Brotherhood of Sevilla" and "Negroes in Sevilla"—were published in *Opportunity* magazine. Versions of "Cardinal Ximinez and Bishop Las Casas" and "The Romance of Corn" are also present in the Arthur Alfonso Schomburg Papers.

The material about Schomburg contains papers relating to Schomburg's life and family background. There is a corrected typescript of Alain Locke's memorial essay on Schomburg, written as a foreword to "Negro History in Outline," Schomburg's unpublished contribution to Locke's Bronze Booklet series, which Schomburg was working on when he died. This is filed with a brief biography of Schomburg and a list of Schomburg's memberships in various organizations. The file of family background information includes documents such as Schomburg's baptismal and death certificates, a Prince Hall Mason membership certificate, and a copy of a questionnaire completed by Schomburg concerning his family background. There is also genealogical research on the Schomburg family conducted by historian Herman Reichard on behalf of Susan Schomburg, a paternal relation of Arthur Schomburg; as well as correspondence from Arthur Schomburg's daughter, Dolores Schomburg Thomas, discussing her family history. Also present are two bookplates used by Arthur Schomburg featuring a Patrick Reason engraving, and a photocopy of a letter to Schomburg from British writer and activist Nancy Cunard discussing her book *Negro: An Anthology*.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African diaspora  
Africans -- Central America  
Africans -- Spain  
Black author  
Puerto Ricans -- New York (State) -- New York -- Biography

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Baptismal certificates  
Bookplates

Correspondence  
Death certificates  
Marriage certificates  
Typescripts

**Occupations**

Book collectors -- United States -- Biography  
Historians -- United States -- Biography  
Librarians -- United States -- Biography

**Geographic Names**

Central America -- Civilization -- African influences  
Central America -- History -- To 1821  
Egypt -- Civilization -- African influences  
Latin America -- African influences  
Spain -- History -- 711-1516

**Names**

Cunard, Nancy, 1896-1965  
Locke, Alain, 1885-1954  
Schomburg, Arthur Alfonso, 1874-1938

## Container List

- I. Manuscripts by Schomburg circa 1920-1938 (9 folders 0.11 linear feet)
  - b. 1 f. 1 "Cardinal Ximinez and Bishop Las Casas"
  - b. 1 f. 2 "The Negro Brotherhood of Sevilla"
  - b. 1 f. 3 "Negroes in Sevilla"
  - b. 1 f. 4 "Night Life in Harlem"
  - b. 1 f. 5 "The Romance of Corn"
  - b. 1 f. 6 "Vestiges of the Negro in Central America Before the Arrival of Columbus"
  - b. 1 f. 7 Untitled Manuscript on Ancient Egypt
  - b. 1 f. 8 Untitled Manuscript on the History of Africans in the Americas Under Spanish Rule
  - b. 1 f. 9 Fragments
- II. Material about Schomburg 1874-2014 (2 folders 0.1 linear feet)
  - b. 1 f. 10 "In Memoriam: Arthur Alfonso Schomburg" by Alain Locke with Related Biographical Material 1938
  - b. 1 f. 11 Family Background Information 1874-2014