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.

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...

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