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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Joseph A. Boromé papers**

1952-2002

Sc MG 714

Processed by Miranda Mims.

## Summary

**Creator:** Borome\_, Joseph Alfred, 1919-2002

**Title:** Joseph A. Boromé papers

**Date:** 1952-2002

**Source:** Joseph Alfred Boromé, 2002.

**Abstract:** The Joseph A. Boromé papers consists of his published and unpublished writings on Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian revolution, the island of Dominica, the English and African-American abolitionists John Candler and Robert Purvis, the Underground Railroad, the First Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia, and the African-American spiritualist lecturer and trance medium Paschal Beverly Randolph. The collection also includes research correspondence, notes, copies of historical documents and scrapbooks. One of the scrapbooks contains news clippings about Boromé's early career as a librarian at Columbia University and as the recipient of two research fellowships (1943-1953), as well as reviews he wrote for library journals. The other scrapbook documents his research trip to Dominica in 1953. Additional material in this collection include lists of Dominican and Barbadian organizations in New York City, his doctoral dissertation *The Life and Letters of Justin Winsor*, letters written to his mother Edith Boromé from 1947 to 1971, several drawings by Boromé, and family memorabilia including materials pertaining to the Dominica Benevolent Association and to his father Louis J. Boromé (1888-1922).

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**Preferred citation:** Joseph Alfred Boromé Papers, Sc MG 714. Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

**Processing note:** Processed by Miranda Mims; Machine-readable finding aid created by Miranda Mims.

## Creator History

Joseph Alfred Boromé was an historian who compiled and edited the correspondence of diverse figures, from librarian and scholar Justin Winsor and Reconstruction Senator Hiram Revels to English

abolitionist John Candler and Haitian historical figure Toussaint Louverture. A native New Yorker of West Indian descent, Boromé's parents were from the island of Dominica. He began his career as a librarian followed by a long tenure as a professor of history at The City College of New York (1950-1984). Boromé received his Associates degree from City College in 1942, and later matriculated in Columbia's School of Library Service on a library fellowship from City College. He obtained his Masters degree (1945) and Ph.D. in history (ca. 1950) from Columbia University.

While a student at Columbia, Boromé was selected to be a research specialist under the dean in the History Department. He assisted with two publications on the Fair Employment Practices Committee legislation. During this period, he also occupied positions in various libraries including the New York Public Library and Columbia University Library (1943-1950). At Columbia he was first appointed head of the circulation department and then reference librarian. As reference librarian Boromé designed exhibits that highlighted materials on the life and cultures of many different races which proved to be very successful. His accomplishments in this post led to his appointment as head of the Burgess Library at Columbia University (1949-1950) which served the social science departments.

Boromé's service to professional library associations included membership in the New York Library Club, assistant editor of *Columbia Library World Magazine*, and reviewer for *Library Journal* and *New York History Magazine* for which he wrote reviews on novels and history books. He was also a member of the American Historical Association and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In the late 1940's he was awarded fellowships from the Julius Rosenwald Fund (1946-1947) and the American Council of Learned Societies to undertake research on the nineteenth century librarian and historian Justin Winsor, the research topic of his Ph.D. dissertation.

Subsequent to receiving his doctorate in 1950, Boromé joined the faculty of The City College of New York. As a professor of history his main areas of concentration were Haitian history, the Underground Railroad and Dominica, and he wrote extensively on these subjects. As the recipient of a Social Science Research Council grant and a Ford Foundation fellowship (1953-1954), he produced one of his earliest works on the history of Dominica, although it was never completed. In addition, Boromé received a grant from the American Philosophical Society in 1953 to travel to the Caribbean to conduct research on Dominica. Boromé authored two books, *Charles Coffin Jewett* (1951) and *Toussaint Louverture, A Life with Letters* (1984) and numerous articles. He died in 2002.

## Scope and Content Note

The Joseph A. Boromé Papers consist of his published and unpublished writings, scrapbooks, research correspondence, notes, and copies of historical documents. The collection is arranged into two series: Family Memorabilia and Writing and Research.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American abolitionists  
African American librarians -- New York (State) -- New York  
African Americans -- Intellectual life  
Black author  
Librarians -- New York (State) -- New York

Rosicrucians  
Spiritualism

### **Geographic Names**

Dominica -- History  
Haiti -- History -- Revolution, 1791-1804

### **Names**

Borome\_, Joseph Alfred, 1919-2002  
Candler, John, 1787-1869  
Purvis, Robert, 1810-1898  
Randolph, Paschal Beverly, 1825-1875  
Toussaint Louverture, 1743-1803  
Winsor, Justin, 1831-1897  
Dominica Benevolent Association (New York, N.Y.)  
Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia

## Container List

### Series I. FAMILY MEMORABILIA, 1959-2006 1 lin. ft. (1 lin. ft.)

This series contains mostly letters and postcards written by Boromé to his mother, Edith Boromé (1890-1971), during his travels abroad from 1952 to 1969. The letters discuss family matters, his research and publications. There are condolence letters and cards written to Boromé in English and Italian, after the passing of his mother in 1971. A scrapbook holds news clippings about Boromé's early career as a librarian at Columbia University and as the recipient of two research fellowships (1943-1953), as well as reviews he wrote for library journals. There are miscellaneous personal items such as a 2002 diary/journal, account books, and several drawings by Boromé. Also represented are items pertaining to his father, Louis J. Boromé (1888-1922) and mother, Edith Boromé, as well as other family memorabilia including membership ribbons and pins from the Dominica Benevolent Society, Daughters of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World (IBPOE-of-W), and the Mayflower Juvenile of the Dominica Benevolent Society.

### Series II. WRITING AND RESEARCH 3 lin. ft. (3 lin. ft.)

This series consists of writings on Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian revolution, the island of Dominica, the English and African-American abolitionists John Candler and Robert Purvis, the Underground Railroad, the First Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia, and the African-American spiritualist lecturer and trance medium Paschal Beverly Randolph. Also included is his doctoral dissertation *The Life and Letters of Justin Winsor*. This series has five sub-series: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution, Dominica, Robert Purvis, Paschal Beverly Randolph, and Justin Winsor.

#### Sub-series 1. Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution 1 lin. foot (1 lin. foot)

This sub-series contains two annotated versions of Boromé's manuscript entitled *Toussaint Louverture: A Finding of His Letters and Documents in Archives and Collections (Public and Private) of Europe and America* (one draft is complete with an introduction). In the Historical Research folders there are photocopies of documents from repositories outside of the U.S. which include diplomatic correspondence of General Dupuy, Haitian Chargé d'Affaires in Great Britain (1860-1862) (originals in the London Public Record Office); letters of Toussaint Louverture to Henri Christophe and to General Moyse (1798-1801); correspondence and other documents pertaining to the Bureau of Haytian Emigration and to a colonization project in Haiti for African Americans (1863); a letter from Antonio Maceo (1879) to General Lamothe, member of the Provisional Government in Haiti, requesting assistance for the Cuban rebel forces and suggesting an alliance between Haiti and independent Cuba; and French government documents relating to the indemnity paid by Haiti to France in compensation for the losses suffered by French settlers who were dispossessed as a result of Haiti's war of independence, entitled "Commission chargée de répartir l'indemnité -- Etat détaillé des liquidations."

- b. 2 f. 1-4      *Toussaint Louverture: A Finding of His Letters and Documents in Archives and Collections (Public and Private) of Europe and America*  
Manuscript - Annotated Draft
- b. 2 f. 5      *Toussaint Louverture - Printed Matter and Notes*  
In Creole, English, French and German
- b. 2 f. 6      *Haitian History - Bibliography*  
Haiti
- b. 2 f. 7      - Autographs Catalogues
- b. 2 f. 8      - Catalogues
- b. 2 f. 9-10    - Historical Research  
(Photocopies)
- b. 2 f. 11    - Historical Research - Etat détaillé des liquidations 1828-1830  
(Photocopies)
- b. 2 f. 12    - Historical Research - Etat détaillé des liquidations 1831-1833  
(Photocopies)

Series II. WRITING AND RESEARCH 3 lin. ft. (cont.)

Sub-series 1. Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution 1 lin. foot (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 13 - Historical Research - Etat détaillé des liquidations 1834-  
(Photocopies)
- b. 2 f. 14 Programs

Sub-series 2. Dominica 1 lin. ft. (1 lin. ft.)

The Dominica sub-series contains research materials, notes and correspondence relating to John Candler (including the manuscript) and Joseph John Gurney. There is a scrapbook of a trip to Venezuela and the Caribbean (summer 1953) funded by the American Philosophical Society that contains correspondence, itineraries, visa documentation, receipts, brochures, cards, and photographs among other items. There are photocopies from the library of the Society of Friends (Quakers) on British abolitionism in the Caribbean and on Joseph John Gurney's activities in North America and the Caribbean in the late 1830s, including letters by John Candler and Edward Candler, compiled by Boromé in 1967.

- b. 3 f. 1-4 *"John Candler, Journal of a Voyage to the West Indies and North America, 1849-1850"*  
Manuscript - Drafts
- b. 3 f. 5 John Candler - Notes  
Dominica
- b. 3 f. 6 - Research Trip Scrapbook 1953
- b. 3 f. 7 - Miscellaneous 1990-1994
- b. 3 f. 8 - Printed Matter 1881-1975
- b. 3 f. 9 - Printed Matter 1972-1977
- b. 3 f. 10 Dutch West Indies 1969-1973
- b. 3 f. 11 Library of the Society of Friends - Historical Records  
(Photocopies)

Sub-series 3. Robert Purvis .6 lin. ft. (.6 lin. ft.)

The Purvis sub-series contains Boromé's drafts of articles, correspondence and research notes on the African-American abolitionist Robert Purvis, the Underground Railroad, and the First Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia. The correspondence include a letter from Sadie T. M. Alexander the granddaughter of Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner, and letters to and from editors, among them Russell F. Weigley of the *Quarterly Journal of the Pennsylvania Historical Association* and Nicholas Wainwright of *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. Boromé's articles include: "Robert Purvis and His Early Challenges to American Racism," "Some Light on the Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," "Robert Purvis: Passport Holder and Passenger," and "Robert Purvis: the Underground Railroad and the Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia". Along with the drafts are a few reprints of the published articles.

Boromé kept detailed records citing newspaper articles on Purvis, both hand written and typed. The newspapers referenced include: *The American Anti-Slave Society, Massachusetts Anti-Slave Society, New York Anti-Slave Society, The Liberator, The Pennsylvania Freeman, The Revolution, The Washington Bee, and The National Anti-Slavery Standard*. There are a set of index cards and call slips, some of which are illegible; however, they do provide insight into the research Boromé conducted and point to the various repositories and research centers where he found his primary and secondary materials on Purvis and the Underground Railroad.

- b. 4 f. 1 Correspondence 1957-1992
- b. 4 f. 2 Drafts
- b. 4 f. 3 Published Articles 1957, 1967
- b. 5 f. 4 Citation Notes
- b. 4 f. 5-6 Handwritten and Typed Notes from Newspapers
- b. 4 f. 7-9 Handwritten Notes  
(Index Cards and Call Slips)

Series II. WRITING AND RESEARCH 3 lin. ft. (cont.)

Sub-series 4. Paschal Beverly Randolph .3 lin. ft. (.3 lin. ft.)

This sub-series consists of research correspondence relating to the African-American Rosicrucian and Freedmen's Bureau agent Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825-1875) who traveled throughout Europe as a trance medium and spiritualist lecturer. Most notes are hand written by Boromé and are difficult to read.

Research Correspondence

b. 4 f. 10 - December 1978-February 1979

b. 4 f. 11 - March 1979-November 1979

b. 4 f. 12 Notes

Sub-series 5. Justin Winsor .3 lin. ft. (.3 lin. ft.)

The final sub-series consists of one draft of Boromé's dissertation *The Life and Letters of Justin Winsor*.

b. 4 f. 13-14 *The Life and Letters of Justin Winsor* 1950  
Doctoral dissertation