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### BUSTILL-Bowser-Asbury Family

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Bustill-Bowser-Asbury Collection  
Collection 127-1 to 127-11

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December 1980

MANUSCRIPT DIVISION

## Scope Note

The Bustill-Bowser-Asbury Collection spans the time period of 1732-1941. The bulk of the material in this collection, however, spans the years 1840-1926. The collection measures approximately 3½ linear feet.

The collection contains genealogical, biographical, legal, and commemorative items, as well as photographs and memorabilia, belonging to Bustill, Bowser, and Asbury family members. The collection has a number of documents which are of unique historical value.

The collection contains a biographical sketch of Cyrus Bustill, one of the founders of the African Free Society (1787). The Society had as its purpose the self improvement and advancement of Black Americans. The Society had among its founding members Richard Allen and Absalom, Jones. Members of the Society in 1794 organized themselves into The St. Thomas Free African Church. This was the first Black Church incorporated in the U.S. Cyrus Bustill was the first member of the Society to transfer his accrued money from the Society to the church. Cyrus was the grandfather of Sarah Mapps Douglass, a noted Philadelphia educator and Abolitionist, and Robert Mapps Douglass, an early Afro-American artist. Cyrus was also the great- great- grandfather of Paul Robeson.

A large amount of the material in this collection concerns David Bustill Bowser, grandson of Cyrus. The activities of David, a noted pre and post civil war artist are documented in this collection by his business correspondence, newsclippings, his art: work, awards, and legal papers.

Another significant mount of material contained in this collection concerns the life and Agent of John C. Asbury.

### Scope Note continued

Asbury was married to Ida Elizabeth Bowser Asbury, daughter of David Bustill Bowser. John Asbury was a noted civil rights activist, community leader and advocate for the aged and infirm. Materials concerning Asbury include speeches, certificates, newsclippings about him and printed material concerning, his organizational affiliations.

Included in this collection are Photographs of flags designed and painted by David B. Bowser, individual members, and a group picture taken on the White House lawn. This photograph taken sometime during the Hoover administration, shows the President- surrounded by a group of prominent and nationally known Blacks. The group includes Mary Church Terrell, George Murphy, Jr and Adam Clayton Powell , Jr.

## Biographical Data

Cyrus Bustill

1732 Feb- 2 Born at Burlington, New Jersey,

1772 Married Elizabeth Murray (1747-1821)

1787 April 10 One of the founders of the African Free Society, Philadelphia, PA.

1806 Died.

### Sources of Information

Robeson, Eslanda, Goode. Paul. Robeson, Negro. New York: Harper Brothers pp. 11-16.

Robeson, Paul. *Here I Stand*. New York Beacon p. 6,7,8

Smith, Annie Bustill "The Bustill Family." *Journal of Negro History*, No. 10 (Oct, 1925): 638-644.

Additional biographical. material can be found in the collection.

David Bustill Bowser

1820 Jan. 16 Born in Philadelphia to Jeremiah and Rachel (Bustill Harding) Bowser.

1844 Charter member of Unity Lodge 711 The Grand United Order of Odd Fellows.

1849 Married Eliza Jane Bowser.

1852 Eliza Jane died.

1856 Married Elizabeth H.S. Grey

1866 Charter member of the Union League of America, Council No.35 Philadelphia, PA.

1878 Located committee of Blacks in New Orleans, Vicksburg, and Memphis, through which he distributed funds donated by the citizens Yellow Fever Relief Committee of Philadelphia.

1900 July 1 Died, Philadelphia, Pa.

### Sources of Information

Smith, Annie Bustill, "The Bustill Family." *Journal of Negro History*, No. 10 (Oct. 1925): 638-644. Additional biographical material can be found in the collection.

## Biographical Sketch

John Cornelius Asbury

1862 April. 9 Born to John and Narcissa (Adams) Asbury, in Washington County, PA.

Education in Washington County Public Schools.

1880-1882 Attended Washington-Jefferson College.

1882-1885 Attended Howard University Law School, Awarded LL.M. degree

1886-1891 District Attorney, Norfolk County, VA.

1836 Dec. 26 Married Kate E. Allen

1892 Delegate to the Republican National Convention.

1897 Admitted to the Philadelphia Bar.

1898 First wife Kate E. Allen died.

1901 June 18 Married Ida E. Bowser.

1902 President Keystone Insurance Co. Served as President Eden Cemetery.

1909 Delivered commencement address, Tuskegee Institute.

1917-1921 Appointed Assistant City Solicitor.

1921-1925 Served Pennsylvania State legislature. Served as President Keystone Cooperative Bank.

1926 Appointed Director of Negro activities, The Sesquicentennial  
International Exposition, Philadelphia, 1926.

1928 Appointed Assistant District Attorney, the first Black person to serve  
in that position in Philadelphia.

1941 Sept. Died, Philadelphia, PA, Internment Eden Cemetery.

## Biographical Sketch continued

### Sources of information

Blockson, Charles. Pennsylvania's Black History. Philadelphia: Portfolio, 1975 pp. 2,3,19,97.  
Additional Biographical materials can be found in time collection.

### Series Description

**Series A            Family Genealogical Data**

Box 127-1            This series contains a genealogical chart for the Bustill, Bowser, Asbury Family 1732-1955. The series also includes family birth, death, and reunion information (reunions for the years 1911 and 1913).

**Series B            Cyrus Bustill**

Box 127-1            This series includes a biographical sketch of Cyrus Bustill 1732-1806. Notes concerning Cyrus Bustill's employment as a baker, and his marriage in 1773, to Elizabeth Murray conclude this series.

**Series C            Jeremiah Bowser**

Box 127-1            Jeremiah Bowser was the Husband of Rachel Bustill Bowser, daughter of Cyrus Bustill. This series is composed primarily of Indentures (contracts), mortgages and deeds. Also included are Stock Certificates, Jeremiah's last will and a fire insurance policy.

**Series D            David Bustill Bowser**

Box 127-1            David B. Bowser (1820-1900) was the son of Elizabeth and Jeremiah Bowser. He to Box 127-2 was a noted emblem designer and Painter, A friend of President Lincoln, Bowser

                         painted many portraits of Lincoln, including one which the President sat for. He painted flags for many of the Black troops who participated in the Civil War. Photographs of some of these flags can be found in Series M. Bowser was an active abolitionist. He perhaps was most active as a member of the United Order of Odd Fellows. He held numerous positions in that organization. This largest series of the collection includes: obituaries, business, correspondence, letters of introduction, Indentures (contracts), mortgages, deeds, awards, leaflets, business cards are in this series also includes certificates which him as a member of several organizations such as: The Odd Fellow's Union Relief Association to The Philadelphia Amateur Orchestral Society and the Artisans Building and Loan Association. Several items included in this series appear to have belonged to some of the associates of Bowser. These items include a will, a power of attorney and mortgages. The awards, coins, and medallion listed in this series (#49, 50, 51) have been to the MSRC vault. Photographs have been used to replace the actual item.



Series Description continued

**Series E**  
Box 127-3  
devoted  
and

**Eliza Jane Bowser**  
Eliza Jane Bowser (1825-1850) was the first wife of David. This series is devoted to Built is believed to be her personal property. It consists of a beaded pouch, and a bracelet inscribed "Dave to Eliza."

**Series F**  
Box 127-3

**Elizabeth H.S. Bowser**  
Elizabeth H. S. Bowser (D. 1908) was the second wife of David Bustill Bowser. This series contains correspondence, receipts, newsclippings, Trade Catalogs, and the estate settlement papers of Mary Gray (Elizabeth's mother). Additionally this series contains a leather folder for important papers, which is inscribed "E.H.S. Important Papers." Elizabeth was a member of the Ladies Union Association. The Annual Report of this organization for the year 1865 is also included in the series.

**Series G**  
Box 127-3

**Raphael F. Bowser**  
Raphael F. Bowser (b. 1858) was the son of David and Elizabeth H.S. Bowser. This series contains a divorce decree from Nellie Bowser, and two programs, which advertise Raphael's appearance as a Musical performer.

**Series H**  
Box 127-3

**Ida Elizabeth Bowser Asbury**  
Ida E. Bowser Asbury (1869-1955) was the youngest daughter of David and Elizabeth H.S. Bowser. This series includes the estate papers of her mother Elizabeth, a commencement notice announcing, Ida's graduation from the University of Pennsylvania. Correspondence, an autograph book, a passport and travel papers.

## Series Description continued

### **Series I**

#### **John Cornelius Asbury**

Box 127-3  
prominent

John C. Asbury was the husband of Ida E. Bowser Asbury. He was a

to Box 127-4

Philadelphia lawyer, a business man, an elected official and a supporter of charitable work in Philadelphia's Black community Asbury, was also a noted lecturer who often spoke on the subject of racial uplift and equality. He was an assistant prosecutor and an early patron of the noted singer Marian Anderson. This series contains: his obituaries, a listing, of pallbearers and funeral expenses, speeches, programs, medals and certificates which testify to his religious and business interest. This series also contains evidence of his organizational affiliation with Eden Cemetery, and The none for Aged and Infirm Colored Persons. Oversized items belonging to Asbury can be found in Series N. The medal presented by the Union Baptist Church has been transferred from this collection to the MSRC vault. A photograph of medal remains in this series.

### **Series J**

#### **David Bowser Asbury**

Box 127-4

David Bowser Asbury was the son of Ida and John C. Asbury. This series consists of a Sunday School Attendance Certificate issued to David Asbury, and a news clipping about him. The news clipping indicates David, like his father was also a lawyer. Pictures of David as a child and an adult can be found in Series M.

### **Series K**

#### **Jacob C. White, Jr.**

Box 127-4

This series consists of one item, a deed belonging to Jacob C. White, Jr.

### **Series L**

#### **Memorabilia**

Box 127-4

This series consists of items which were not or could not be identified with any other series or person. These items include a musical score, a watch key, programs, and A Prayer Made by Samuel E. Mifflin. This last item is holographed. The writer of this prayer has not been determined.

### **Series M**

#### **Photographs**

Box 127-5

to Box 127-7

This series contains photographs which can be identified as family members, friends, associates, and photographs which have not been identified. It also contains photographs of flags painted by David Bustill Bowser for Black troops who fought in the Civil War. Three photographs in this series are over-sized original copies of the photographs can be found in Series N. Xerox copies of these photographs have been kept in this series. The three oversize photographs give indication and evidence of some of the activities of John C. Asbury.

Series Description continued

**Series N                      Oversized Items**

Item 127-8                      Included are oversized original photographs discussed in series M. Additional  
to item 127-11                items are certificates which concern Asbury's election to the Pennsylvania  
House

of Representatives, and a certificate of appreciation given to Asbury on his  
seventy-fifth birthday. Oversized items also include one poster which features  
Asbury as the main speaker at an equal rights rally in Philadelphia, November 15,  
1922. Also included are prints of flags painted by                David Bustill Bowser for  
the                Pennsylvania Regiments of the U.S. Colored Troops.

Container List

**Series A Family Genealogical Data**

Box Folder

- 127-1 1 Bustill , Bowser, Asbury Family Genealogical Mart.  
2 Bustill family birth and death records.  
3 Bustill family - 1917-1918.  
4 Bustill family reunion - 1911-1918.

**Series B Cyrus Bustill**

- 5 Biographical Sketch  
6 Employment and Marital information

**Series C Jeremiah Bowser**

- 7 Indenture-deed, Sarah H. Marshall, Oct. 19, 1813.  
8 Mortgage, Francis and William Perot. Nov. 12, 1829, Nov. 9, 1830, June 21, 1839  
9 Indenture-George M. Elkington - Aug. 6, 1838, Nov. 1, 1854.  
10 Indenture - John Lancaster Mar.. 3, 1325, May 5, 1831  
11 Indenture deed - Joseph Murphy. May 14, 1818.  
12 Indenture Mortgage - Thomas Norton. Oct. 14, 1813.  
13 Stock Certificate - Jan. 1, 1855.  
14 Fire Insurance Policy - Nov. 4, 1830.  
15 Last Will and Testimony

**Series D David Bustill Bowser**

- 16 In Memoriam - an obituary  
17 In Memoriam - obituary news clippings  
18 In Memoriam - United Order of Odd Fellows resolution. Sept. 19, 1900  
19 In Memoriam - memorial address. Oct. 3, 1900  
20 News clippings - organizational affiliations.  
21 Correspondence - Business A-H  
22 Correspondence - Business I-Z  
23 Correspondence - letters of Introduction  
24 Business cards belonging to David B. Bowser  
25 Copyright - chromograph July 15, 1871  
26 Art work - Pencil sketch - Chromograph

Container List

<b>Series</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>David Bustill Bowser</b> continued
Box		Folder
127-2		27 Poetry - 4 holographs
		28 Certificate - Broad Mountain mammoth view coal company. Aug.
5, 1864		29 Certificate - Union League of America. Dec. 5, 1866
		30 Certificate - Artisans' Building and Loan Assoc. of Philadelphia.
Aug. 13,		1870
		31 Certificate - Odd Fellows' Union Relief Assoc. May 29, 1877
	32	Certificate - Sumner Post, G.A.R. Sept. 5, 1883
	33	Certificate - The Philadelphia Amateur Orchestral Society. May 14, 1887
	34	Deed - William Elliot. Jan. 24, 1874
	35	Indenture, mortgage Building and Loan Assoc., July 13, 1877
	36	Indenture - Mortgage Ellwood Bonsul. Jan. 26, 1874 James Walters.
	July	
		13, 1874
	37	Indenture - Deed, Redmond Fauset Et, al. Jan. 24, 1874.
	38	Indenture - Deed, Ruth Harding, Nov. 5, 1869
	39	Indenture - mortgage - Rosa Potts. Sept. 12, 1894
	40	Indenture - mortgage - Harriet Wills Dec. 13, 1876
	41	Insurance Policy - Delaware Mutual Safety Insurance Co. Oct. 20, 1883
	42	Receipts - Insurance
	43	Receipts - general
	44	Last Will of Sarah McCrummill Jan, 29, 1880
	45	Power of Attorney - Mary Jackson. July 27, 1838
	46	Indenture, mortgage - James McCrummill. June 1, 1836
	47	Mortgage transfer - Francis Perot. Dec. 13, 1876
	48	Awards - Coins. Apr. 19, 1851, June 10, 1852 (Photograph)
	49	Coin - U.S. Dime, 1872 (photograph)
	50	Medallion - Masonic Emblem (photograph)
	51	Programs on which his name appears
	52	Programs Leaflet - Suggestions for Lent.
	54	Leaflet - The Battle Hymn of The Republic. by Mrs. Julia Ward.
	55	Leaflet (2) - The Black Regiment by George Boker. May 27, 1863
	56	Leaflet - Song of the Negro Boatman by John G. Whittier.
	57	Newspaper clippings
	58	Newspaper - <i>Philadelphia Bulletin</i> , June 4, 1881
		59 Newspaper - <i>Public Ledger</i> , July 2, 1900.

Container List

- Series D David Bustill Bowser** continued
- Box Folder
- 127-2 60 Newspaper - Odd Fellows' Journal, July 5, 1900.  
61 Newspaper - *Philadelphia Tribune* July 7, 1900  
62 Book of Common Prayers  
63 Subscribers Notebook
- Series E Eliza Jane Bowser**
- 127-3 64 Beaded pouch and inscribed bracelet
- Series F Elizabeth H.S. Bowser**
- 65 Personal correspondence  
66 Receipts  
67 Certificates - Relief Fund Bureau -1862  
68 Mary E. Gray (Elizabeth's mother) estate settlement. Feb. 6, 1896.  
69 Ladies Union Association - Annual Report, 1865.  
70 Leather Case - inscribed "Mrs. E.H.S, Bowser Important Papers."  
71 Newspaper clippings - recipes  
72 Trade cards and sales catalog.
- Series G Raphael F. Bowser**
- 73 Divorce decree - Nellie Bowser Dec. 1881.  
74 Programs on which his name appears
- Series H Ida E. Bowser**
- 75 Commencement - University of Pennsylvania 1890  
76 Correspondence - A to Z  
77 Estate papers of Elizabeth H.S. Bowser.  
78 Autograph book  
79 Passport - Travel papers

Container List

- Series I John C. Asbury**

Box	Folder	
127-3	80	Who's Who? In Philadelphia.
	81	In Memoriam - obituary newsclippings. Sept. 1961
	82	List of pallbearers and funeral expenses
	83	Newsclippings about him.
	84	Book of Common Prayer - Certificate of Marriage.
	85	Speech - Tuskegee Institute, AL. May 27, 1909.
	86	Speech - Legislative Journal Harrisburg, PA March 29, 1921 p.
1064		
	87	Correspondence - A to Z
	88	Legislative Directory - Harrisburg, PA. Feb. 21, 1921
127-4	89	Membership cards - House of Representatives, 1923-1924 Sesquicentennial International Exposition, 1926. - Republican Central Campaign Committee, 1938-1939. - Sigma. Pi Phi Fraternity, 1939
	90	Programs on - which his name appears. -Sesqui-centennial Exposition. June to Dec. 1, 1926
	91	Programs on which his name appears, Dec. 29, 1971
	92	Programs on which his name appears, April 21, 1928.
	93	Testimonials for him - Programs and Invitations.
	94	Guest Book - Staff of Bureau for Colored Children. April 9,
1937		
	95	Certificate - Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.
	96	Medal Philadelphia Autumn Fair and Negro Business Exhibit.
	97	Medal Presented by Union Baptist Church March 8, 1927
	98	Invitations - Jan. 2, 1928, May 29-30, 1928
	99	Organizational. Affiliation Eden Cemetery, Legal briefs
	100	Organizational Affiliation - Home for Aged and Infirm Colored
Persons,		
		Annual Reports. 1925, 1935.
	101	Sermon - The Ministry and the People by Henry L. Phillips
(autographed)		
<b>Series J</b>	<b>David Bowser Asbury</b>	
	102	Certificate - Sunday School Attendance June 1917
	103	Newsclippings about
<b>Series K</b>	<b>Jacob C. White, Jr.</b>	
	104	Deed-blank, no date, no signatures

Container List

**Series L Memorabilia**

Box	Folder	
127-4	105	A Prayer made by Samuel E. Mifflin(handwritten)
	106	Brochure - The Hampton Singers 1873
	107	Musical Score
	108	Watch key
	109	S. Coleridge Taylor Choral Society-Baltimore

**Series M Photographs**

127-5	110	The Bustill family Philadelphia, PA
	111	David B, Bowser (4) - (1) Woodcut
	112	Flags by David B. Bowser (See #127-11 for oversize prints)
	113	Elizabeth H.S. Bowser
	114	Ida Elizabeth Asbury
	115	J.C. Asbury
	116	J.C. Asbury
	117	J.C. Asbury - lithoplate
	118	J.C. Asbury - lithoplate
	119	David Bowser Asbury
127-6 South	120	U.S. Army Troops Colored. Co. L. 6th. Regiment, In camp at Framingham MA. 1879
	121	Will Livesey
	122	L. Mudaly
	123	George Washington Dave
	124	Mrs. Ball - Henry Ball's mother
	125	Troy Porter - Paris, IL., 1825
	126	Eleventh Convocation - Sigma Pi -Phi Columbus, Ohio. Aug. 14,15,16, 1929 (xerox copy- original see: Item127-9)
	127	Group Photo - Black Republicans in front of the White House with President Hoover [1932] (xerox copy) original see: Item 127-9
Legislative Joint	128	House of Representatives and Senators of Pennsylvania Session 1923. (xerox) original see Item 127-8
	129	Unidentified young girl
	130	Unidentified Voting woman
	131	Unidentified young woman
	132	Unidentified young woman



Container List

**Series M Photographs continued**

Box	Folder	
127-6	133	Unidentified young woman
	134	Unidentified young woman
	135	Unidentified young woman
	136	Unidentified young woman
	137	Unidentified man and child
127-7	138	Unidentified male
	139	Unidentified male
	140	Unidentified male
	141	Unidentified male
	142	Engraved newspaper plate "That Old White Hat"

**Series N Oversize Items**

Item 127-8 Legislative	Photographs House of Representatives and Senators of Pennsylvania  Joint Session, 1923.(original)
Item 127-9	Eleventh Convocation- Sigma Pi Phi, Columbus, Ohio, Aug. 14 ,15, 16, 1929. (original)  Group photo - Black Republicans on the lawn of the White House with President H. Hoover. [1932]
Item 127-10	Poster A MASS Meeting - North Philadelphia Anti-lynching Crusaders. Hon. John C. Asbury, father of "The Equal Rights" Bill will Speak on the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. At Union A.M.E. Church Nov. 15, 1922  Certificates John C. Asbury, of the county of Philadelphia.  Representative in the  Pennsylvania.  General Assembly of The Commonwealth of  Dec. 1, 1920.  Certificates John C. Asbury of the County of Philadelphia. Representative  in  Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.  Dec. 1, 1922.  John C. Asbury of the County of Pennsylvania John C. Asbury, November15, 1922. Sir : At election held November 7, 1922, you were duly elected REPRESENTATIVE in the General Assembly

of Pennsylvania from the Seventh Representative District of Philadelphia.

Container List

**Series N      Oversize Items** continued

Item 127-10      Expression of Appreciation from the Staff of the Bureau for Colored Children to John C. Asbury Esq. upon the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday

April 9,

1937.

Appointment of J.C. Asbury as Commissioner to visit and receive the

votes of the  
Oct. 29, 1917.

Electors of the Pennsylvania Commonwealth, etc.

Item 127-11      Prints of Flags (U.S. Colored Troops, Pennsylvania Regiments) by David Bustill

Bowser.      See also Photographs, #127-5, Folder 112.