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### DAVIDSON, Shelby Jeames

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SHELBY JEAMES DAVIDSON PAPERS  
Collection 25-1 to 25-4

Prepared & Revised by:  
Greta S. Wilson  
January 1981  
Container List Revised  
by: Karen L. Jefferson  
January 1988

## Scope Note

This collection, composed of 174 items and contained in two boxes, measuring 1 linear foot, along with two individually wrapped items, spans the period from 1893 to 1918. Basically, these papers consist of sketches, patent references and other such data related to Davidson's inventions during this employment in the United States Government. There are also included items such as clippings, a biographic sketch, obituaries, certificates, correspondences, information regarding his law career and organizational affiliations, plus some prints and photographs.

## Biographical Sketch

- 1868 Born to Shelby J. and Amelia Scott Davidson in Lexington, Kentucky, May 10.
- 1893 Received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Howard University. Began a clerkship with the United States government in Washington, D. C.
- 1894 Married Leonora Coates of Massponax, Va., Feb. 1.
- 1899 Admitted to the bar in Kentucky.
- 1900 Admitted to the bar in the District of Columbia.
- 1906 Commissioned by the United States Treasury Department to study the mechanics of adding machines.
- 1911 Invented a "Rewind device", for the adding machine.
- 1912 Admitted to the bar of the United States Supreme Court. Resigned from government service.
- 1916-17 President of the General Alumni Association of Howard University.  
Executive Secretary of the District of Columbia N.A.A.C.P.
- 1930 Died in Washington, D. C. December 7.

## Series Description

- Series A**  
Box 25-1  
**Biographical Material**  
Typescripts and newspaper clippings on life and death of Lenora and Shelby Davidson.
- Series B**  
Box 25-1  
**Records, Reports, Statements**  
Employment records, statement of appeal from Howard University and report of averages from the Civil Service Commission, correspondence to property owners - from House of Davidson.
- Series C**  
Box 25-1  
**Certificates**  
Includes certificates of law apprenticeship, honorable discharge from the U.S. Army, commendations and certificates of appointment as officer in NAACP.
- Series D**  
Box 25-1  
**Correspondence**  
Primarily business correspondence relating to his invention.
- Series E**  
Box 25-1  
**Patent References**  
Papers, a letter, a drawing and a cardboard model pertaining to the patenting of his invention, a rewind device for the adding machine.
- Series F**  
Box 25-1  
**Organizational Affiliations**  
Minutes of meetings, certificates, papers, stationary, official publications of the following organizations: Bethel Literary and Historical Association, Mu-So-Lit-Club, Washington, D.C., and Howard University Alumni Association.
- Series G**  
Box 25-1  
**Printed Material**  
Printed stationary of his law practice, and a program from memorial service in honor of Justice John Marshall Harlan, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court
- Series H**  
Box 25-2  
Item 25-3  
**Photographs and Prints**  
Individual and group photographs plus seven photographs of his invention, two to drawings and one oversized photographs of an office (one with employees, one office empty - both show adding machines).
- Series I**  
Item 25-4  
**Diploma and Awards**  
A.B. from Howard University issued in 1896; commendation of "Friends"; and Ten and Pencil Club commission.

## Container List

### **Series A Biographical materials**

Box Folder

- 25-1 1 Shelby Davidson - biographical sketch (typescript)  
2 Shelby Davidson - biographical sketch (news articles)  
3 Shelby Davidson - obituaries (news articles)  
4 Lenora Davidson - obituary (typescript)

### **Series B Records, Reports, Statements**

- 5 Employment records, U.S. Treasury Dept. 1893-1911  
6 Statement of Fact and Appeal From Howard University Faculty Against Davidson  
7 U.S. Civil Service Commission Report of Averages - Sept. 6, 1894  
8 House of Davidson - correspondence to property owners

### **Series C Certificates**

- 9 Certificate of Law Apprenticeship June 11, 1896  
10 Certificate of Honor on Discharge from Service of the U.S. 1917-1918  
11 Certificate of Appointment as Colonel in NAACP Washington Branch, November 1, 1921  
12 Commendation of "Friends" autographed (xerox copy)  
13 Commission as Colonel in Pen and Pencil Club, Washington, D.C. March 4, 1905 (xerox copy)

### **Series D Correspondence**

- 14 Correspondence - B to L  
15 Correspondence - M to R  
16 Correspondence - S to V  
17 Correspondence - incomplete

### **Series E Patent References**

- 18 Statement of purpose  
19 Preliminary statements/hand drawn sketch/handwritten statement/tally sheets  
20 Chronological statement about the development of the invention/tally sheets  
21 Cardboard model  
22 Drawings April 7, 1911  
23 Patent No. 884721 April 14, 1908  
24 Briefs - U.S. Patent office

## Container List

### Series F Organizational Affiliations

Box

Folder

25-1

Bethel Literary and Historical Association

25 "The Bethel Literary in a New Role"

26 Certificate of Incorporation

27 Minutes, May 2, 1905

28 Minutes, May 15, 1906

29 Minutes and Roster April 1906

30 Stationary

31 Howard University Record Alumni number, April 1916

32 Mu-So-Lit-Club, Washington, D.C. Constitution, n.d.

### Series G Printed Material

33 Stationary

34 Program re: memorial for Justice John Marshall Harlan

### Series H Photographs and Prints

25-2

1 Photographs - Shelby Davidson

2 Photographs - Shelby Davidson

3 Photographs - Shelby Davidson

4 Photographs - Shelby Davidson

5 Photographs - Shelby Davidson

6 Photographs - Shelby Davidson

7 Photographs - Shelby Davidson

8 Unidentified girl

9 Photographs - Invention

10 Print - Cartoon "Not Playing Possum"

11 Print Silhouette of Davidson

Item 25-3

Oversize photographs (2)

- office with furniture

- office with employees at furniture

### Series I Diploma

Item 25-4

- Howard University, A.B., 1896

- Commendation of "Friends' autographed

- Commission as Colonel in The Pen and Pencil Club, Washington, D.C. March 4, 1905.