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THOMAS AND WILLIAM DORSEY COLLECTION
Collection 132-1 to 132-2

Prepared by:
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June 1983

Scope Note

The Thomas and William Dorsey Collection spans the time period of the mid 1850's to the early 1900's, and the collection measures 1 linear foot. The collection contains autographs, correspondence, photographs, news clippings, scrapbooks, and several notable engravings. The collection was donated to the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center in 1980, by Mrs. Ruth L. Ramsey, in memory of her husband, James Ramsey, who was the great, great-grandson of Thomas Dorsey.

Thomas Dorsey (b.1812-d. Feb. 17, 1875), and his son William Henry Dorsey (b. Oct. 23, 1837 - d.?) were prominent 19th century Black Philadelphians. Thomas Dorsey escaped from slavery in 1836 and settled in Philadelphia, where he became one of that city's most distinguished and successful caterers. He also became widely known for the large assemblage of books, memorabilia and other items, he collected during his lifetime. This collection was displayed in Dorsey's "museum," and was one of the earliest efforts to document the accomplishments and achievements of Black Americans by placing them in a museum setting.

Thomas Dorsey's pioneering work as a collector was continued after his death by his son, William. William H. Dorsey distinguished himself as an artist, Black Americana collector, and civil servant. The present collection is a surviving fragment of the collecting efforts of the two Dorseys. Among the items of interest in the collection are: An engraving of the Rev. Peter Williams by Patrick Reason; a photograph of Robert W. Adger noted Black Philadelphia collector and bibliophile; and news clippings on selected 19th century achievers such as Rev. Augustine Tolton, first African-American Roman Catholic Priest ordained in the United States.

* Biographical information obtained from materials within the collection.

Series Description

Series A Dorsey Family

Box 132-1 This series contains biographical information on Thomas and William Dorsey, as well as other members of the Dorsey family.

Series B Other Individuals

Box 132-1
to Box 132-2 This series contains materials which document the lives, occupations, and accomplishments of various individuals: Including Robert W. Adger, noted Black Philadelphia collector and bibliophile; C.A. Fleetwood, Congressional Medal of Honor winner; E.B. Tompkins and John F. Brown, both nineteenth century Black artist; and Rev. Augustine Tolton, first African-American Roman Catholic priest ordained in the United States.

Series C Scrapbooks

Box 132-2 This series contains xerox copies of two scrapbooks of news clippings. The clippings are primarily of Black related subjects and document occurrences during the late 1890's. The original scrapbooks are fragile and have been isolated in series D.

Series D Fragile Items DO NOT CIRCULATE

Box 132-2 Material in this series are extremely fragile, and therefore not available for general research use. These materials have been duplicated, and copies of each appear elsewhere in the collection.

Container List

Series A Dorsey Family

Box

Folder

132-1

- 1 Dorsey Family - biographical information
- 2 Thomas and William Dorsey - biographical information (Xerox copy-original located in 132-2 # 29)
- 3 Thomas, J. Dorsey - biographical information
- 4 William H. Dorsey - Photograph
- 5 Thomas Dorsey Jr. (?) - Photograph
- 6 Van Dyke Dorsey - Photograph

Series B Other Individuals

- 7 John E. Addicks
- 8 D. Palmetto Adger
- 9 Robert W. Adger - Photograph
- 10 William C. Bolivar
- 11 E.A. Bouchet
- 12 John H. Brackett
- 13 Joseph Brister
- 14 Raymond J. Burr
- 15 Guy M. Burton
- 16 Richard H. Cain
- 17 Herschel V. Cashin
- 18 Jos W. Cassey
- 19 J.W. Cromwell
- 20 Thos. Graham Dorsey
- 21 Charles A. Dorsey
- 22 Charles R. Douglass
- 23 H. Ford Douglass
- 24 Joseph H. Doyer
- 25 Moses A. Dropsie
- 26 J.A. Emerson
- 27 C.A. Fleetwood
- 28 Horace B. Fry
- 29 Dr. Thos. Goodman
- 30 John Grigg
- 31 Dr. J.W. Hacks
- 32 Jesper Harding
- 33 Isaac Hazzard
- 34 Wm. P. Hibberd
- 35 Henry Johnson
- 36 Robert Jones, Sr.
- 37 Joseph Klapp M.D.
- 38 Samuel Lee

Container List

Series B	Other Individuals continued
Box	Folder
132-1	39 John D. Lewis 40 Isaac Meyers 41 J. Fields Needham 42 Peter P. O'Fake 43 T.H. Sands Pennington 44 Elias Polk 45 James R. Priest - Photograph
132-2	1 Charles Lennox Redmond 2 Robert Ritchie 3 Rev. S.T. Scott 4 Thos. A. Scott 5 Hans Shadd 6 Chas. S. Smith 7 John H. Smith 8 John Strahan, Jacob Ballenger 9 John Thompson 10 Rev. Augustus Tolton - Photograph 11 E.B. Tompkins and John F. Brown - Photographs 12 James M. Trotter 13 U.B. Vidal 14 Henry O Wagoner Jr. 15 A.G. Waterman 16 Isiah C. Wears 17 Horace Weston 18 Francis Wood 19 Judge J.J. Wright 20 R.F. Wayman 21 Prof. William J. Wilson 22 Jacob C. White Jr. 23 Rev. Geo. G. Whitfield 24 Rev. Peter Williams - engraved print 25 Photograph - unidentified woman

Container List

Series C

Scrapbooks

Box

Folder

132-2

26 Scrapbook #1 xerox copy

27 Scrapbook #2 xerox copy

Series D

Fragile Items DO NOT CIRCULATE

132-2

28 Scrapbook #1 (original)

29 Scrapbook #2 (original)

30 Thomas and William Dorsey - Biographical information (original)