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John Mercer Langston Collection
Collection 60-1 to 60-2

Prepared and Revised by:
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June 1980

Manuscript Division

Scope Note

John Mercer Langston was an outstanding author, lawyer, politician and diplomat. The Langston collection consists of four scrapbooks of clippings on race relations and politics from 1870 to 1891. Printed material such as broadsides, programs and invitations are also included in the wrapped scrapbooks.

John Mercer Langston assisted in the establishment of the law department at Howard University and eventually became its Dean in 1869. On December 1, 1873 the Board of Trustees of Howard University appointed Langston the Acting President of the University. The Board, at that time, granted O.O. Howard (the incumbent) an extended leave of absence instead of accepting his resignation.

Langston served as Acting President of Howard University until June 30, 1875. Since Langston was not eventually elevated to the position of Presidency of Howard University, he left the university and entered political life.

From 1885 to 1888, Langston served as President of Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, now named Virginia State University in Petersburg, VA. John Mercer Langston was then elected to the United States House of Representatives from the Fourth Congressional District of Virginia Hon. Langston congressional tenure was from 1890 to 1891.

Biographical Sketch

- 1829 December 14 Born in Louisa County, Virginia, son of a slave master, Ralph Quarles and Lucy Langston.
- 1849 Graduate from Oberlin College in Ohio with honors.
- 1854 Admitted to the Ohio bar.
- 1854 Married Caroline M. Wall.
- 1855 October 25 Elected clerk of Brown Helm Township in Ohio.
- 1857 First elected to the city council of Oberlin, Ohio.
- 1860-1871 Elected member of the Board of Education of Oberlin, Ohio.
- 1863 Recruiter of colored soldiers for the 54th & 55th Massachusetts Regiments & the 5th Ohio.
- 1867 Appointed General Inspector of the Freedmen's Bureau; Admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of the U.S.
- 1869-1875 Dean of the Law Department of Howard University.
- 1873-1875 Acting-President of Howard University.
- 1871-1877 Appointed by President Grant a member of the Board of Health of the District of Columbia.
- 1877-1885 Appointed by President Hayes as Minister-resident of Haiti and Consul-General to Haiti.
- 1885-1888 President of Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (now Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.)
- 1890-1891 Served in the House of Representatives from the State of VA.
- 1897 November 15 Died.

Series Description

Series A Scrapbooks

Box 60-1
to Box 60-2

Four scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings, broadsides, programs, and invitations, dating from ca. 1870 to 1894. Most of the items relate to race relations and politics. Also includes information about the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (now Virginia State University) in Petersburg, Virginia, and the John Whittier Historical Association in Memphis, Tennessee.

Container List

Series A Scrapbooks

Box 60-1

Scrapbook 1

Clippings, broadsides, programs, and invitations relating to race relations and politics, dating from 1870 to 1891.

Scrapbook 2

Clippings about race relations and politics, dating from ca. 1882 to 1891. Includes information about Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute in Petersburg, Virginia (now Virginia State University).

Box 60-2

Scrapbook 3

Clippings about race relations and politics, dating from 1888 to 1894.

Scrapbook 4

Clippings about race relations and politics, dating from ca. 1890 to 1894. Includes information about the John G. Whittier Historical Association in Memphis Tennessee.