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Recommended Citation

Staff, MSRC, "WRIGHT, Richard Robert" (2015). *Manuscript Division Finding Aids*. 219.
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Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. Family Papers
and
National Freedom Day Collection
SCOPE NOTE

The papers of the Major R.R. Wright, Sr. Family comprise 1.5 linear ft. They consist of photographs, clippings, and reports of Major Wright's business ventures, including the Citizens and Southern Bank and Trust Company and the Haitian Coffee and Products Trading Company. Of particular interest is the documentation surrounding the 1939 Goodwill Flight to Haiti, as well as a recording titled "Tell Them We Are Rising," a biography of Major R.R. Wright, Sr.

Also included are photographs and various items documenting the achievements and contributions of several prominent members of his family, including his sons, Bishop R.R. Wright, Jr. and E.C. Wright. There are books in the collection written by and about the Wright family. Eighty-Seven Years behind the Black Curtain (1965) by R.R. Wright, Jr. is a compelling account of his life as a banker, Wilberforce University president, and official of the A.M.E. church.

The Records of the National Freedom Day Association comprise 10 linear ft. One of the largest components of the collection consists of proclamations received from more than 40 states and the city of Philadelphia over a period of 35 years. Printed programs from annual celebrations, spanning the period 1942 to 1993, represent another significant component. The photographs are the highlight of the collection. Spanning the years 1942 to 1986, they illustrate the various National Freedom Day activities, and serve to underline the significance of the day by the important personages who are depicted. For example, in 1945, some Tuskegee Airmen are pictured receiving an award; in 1949, Eleanor Roosevelt is pictured with E.C. Wright; Coretta Scott King is seen speaking at the 1957 event. There are also photos of Martin Luther King, Jr., Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Jersey Joe Walcott, Joe Louis, Elder Lightfoot Michaux, Benjamin Mays, Father Divine, Julian Bond and many others.

The collection was donated in 1977 by E.C. Wright.

MAJOR RICHARD R. WRIGHT, SR.

Richard Robert Wright, Sr. [1855?-1947], educator, businessman and activist, was born a slave on a plantation near Dalton, Georgia. After the end of the Civil War, his mother, Harriet Wright, sent him to the Storrs School, a school for Blacks in Atlanta operated by the American Missionary Association. In 1876 he earned his B.A. from Atlanta University, and was the valedictorian of the university's first graduating class. He became a university trustee in 1887 and remained on the board until 1929.

After graduation he was selected principal of a local school and began his life-long work as a community organizer. He published a newspaper; founded and became the first president of the black Georgia State Teachers' Association; and became the first president of the Georgia State Industrial College for Colored Youth in Savannah (now Savannah State College) in 1891. Also active in politics, Wright was named delegate to the National Republican Convention for presidential elections eight times between 1880 and 1916. When McKinley was elected president in 1896, Wright was offered the position of minister to Liberia. He accepted the post of special paymaster and the rank of major in the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War.

In 1921 he left Georgia State Industrial College and moved to Philadelphia, where he opened the Citizens and Southern Bank. He also founded and became president of the National Negro Bankers' Association. Citizens and Southern was one of the few banks that remained solvent during the Great Depression. Seeking to expand his business horizons, Wright in 1935 organized the Haitian Coffee and Products Trading Company. He helped obtain an appropriation of \$250,000 for the Semi-Centennial Emancipation Exhibition in 1913, and lobbied persistently for the issuance of a Booker T. Washington postage stamp. This occurred in 1940, and was the first postage stamp to depict an African American.

Major R.R. Wright, Sr. died July 2, 1947, in Philadelphia.

NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY

National Freedom Day as conceived by Major Richard R. Wright, Sr. is an observance and celebration of the day, February 1, 1865, on which Abraham Lincoln signed the joint resolution adopted by the Senate and the House of Representatives that proposed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. The 13th Amendment, ratified in December 1865, abolished slavery in all the states and territories of the U.S. (While the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Lincoln had freed slaves in much of the U.S., it had not addressed slavery in the non-seceding states).

On February 1, 1941, Major Wright invited national and local leaders to meet in Philadelphia to propose a plan to set aside February 1st of each year to commemorate the signing of that seminal document. One year after his death in 1947, President Harry Truman signed the bill proclaiming February 1st as National Freedom Day. In subsequent years, 40 governors and all mayors of Philadelphia have issued proclamations designating February 1st as National Freedom Day in their respective jurisdictions. The purpose of the annual observance is to rededicate the nation to the ideal of

freedom. In the words of Major R.R. Wright, Sr:

"The National Freedom Day Celebration will strive to promote goodwill and harmonious cooperation among all citizens of our land. Our eagerness for National Freedom should warrant equal opportunity to all citizens. The protagonists for human freedom and program as represented herein regard their duty to promote the cause of national citizenship, fair play, peace, and happiness as dynamic and not static. Our purpose is to constantly and forcibly bring to the attention of the nation this objective. We have organized to celebrate annually National Freedom Day, February 1, on the anniversary of the adoption of the 13th Amendment to our Constitution, guaranteeing the enjoyment of equal freedom to all men."

Major R.R. Wright, Sr.

President, National Freedom Day Association

1943

Container Listing

R. R. Wright, Sr. Personal Papers

Obituary

Memorial Calendar

Correspondence, Booker T. Washington, 1899, 1904-1906

Articles about Wright, n.d., 1926, 1944, 1970

Programs

1914 16th Annual Farmers' Conference, Ga. State Industrial College

1933 70th Anniversary Celebration of Negro Progress

1934 71st Anniversary Celebration of Emancipation Proclamation

1939 Mass meeting, "How Can We Increase Business among Colored People?", Philadelphia

Clippings about Wright

Calendar

Wright Family Papers

Mrs. R.R. Wright (wife) - Calling Card

Edwina Matilda Mitchell (daughter)- Funeral Program, Scholarship Brochure, Preliminary Inventory for the papers
of Joseph E. Mitchell at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center

Emanuel Crogman Wright (son)

Funeral Program and Obituary, 1983

Bio-sketches

Correspondence

Speeches and writings by E.C. Wright

Clippings about E.C. Wright, 1948, 1968, n.d.

Certificates and Awards 1950, 1952, 1962, 1980-1981

Programs

World Emancipation Exposition (see also Oversize)

Charter

Agreement

Advertisements

Brochure

Color Me Brown Pageant

Clippings, 1964

Correspondence, 1964-1965

Fact Sheet and Personnel List

Programs and Invitation

Century Mark Association of America

Harriet Wright Hines (daughter) - Funeral Program and Obituary, 1990

Julia Ophelia Wright (daughter)- Obituary, 1961

Lillian Wright Clayton (daughter)- Funeral Program, 1967

Richard Robert Wright, Jr. (son) - Article, Funeral Program, 1967, n.d.

Whittier Howard Wright (son)- Funeral Program, 1976

Chambers Cassius Clayton (brother-in-law)- Funeral Program, 1959

Ashley A. Hines (son-in-law)- Funeral Program, 1975

Joseph Everett Mitchell (son-in-law)- Funeral Program, 1952
Dorothy Wright (daughter-in-law)-
Clipping, 1986
Sympathy Cards
Greeting Cards and Letter, 1991-1992, n.d.
Wright Family Reunion Booklet

Organizations

Citizens and Southern Bank

Clippings, 1922. 1931. 1933, 1947, 1952, 1956-1957
Programs, 1930, 1945
Statement of Condition, 1922, 1951-1952
Report, 1928

Haitian Coffee and Products Trading Company

Advertisements

Clippings

Goodwill Flight

Clippings, 1939, n.d.
Flight Log, 1939
Letter (E.C. Wright), 1939
Proclamation (?) in Spanish, 1939
Programs, 1939
Speech (In Spanish), Baylles R. Lovio

National Bank Association

Clippings, 1980, n.d.
Programs, 1931, 1948

Photographs

R.R. Wright, Sr. (see also Oversize and NFD photographs)

R.R. Wright, Sr. and family

Log Cabin of R.R. Wright, Sr.'s birth

Mrs. R. R. Wright, Sr. (see also Oversize)

Edwina Wright Mitchell

E.C. Wright (2 folders) (see also Oversize and NFD photographs)

Crogman, W.H.

Citizens & Southern Bank (7 folders)

Goodwill Flight

World Emancipation Exposition

Opportunities, Inc.

YWCA Pan Hellenic Council, 1936

Books by and about the Wright Family

The Black Boy of Atlanta by Elizabeth Ross Haynes

The Negro in Pennsylvania by R.R. Wright, Jr.

Eighty-Seven Years behind the Black Curtain by R.R. Wright, Jr.

The Teachings of Jesus by R.R. Wright, Jr.

The Crusading Black Journalist by Joseph Everett Wright

Beneath The Southern Cross by Charlotte Crogman Wright

Writings about Others

Chipman, Charles H.

Leonard, Walter J.

Wilson, Wade (Scholarship Fund)

Recordings

"Tell Them We Are Rising": A Biography of: Major Richard Robert Wright (6 copies)

"Adventures in Negro History: The Douglass Years", Vol. II

"The Crowning Experience," Moral Re-Armament
"Something Within/Wings Overhead"
"Liberty Bell" (2 records)
Rabbi Finescriber (3 records)
Dr. Rayford Logan, Freedom Day, 1951
Untitled (5 records)

Films
"Dr. J. W. Bundrumt, Great Barrington", 16 mm, color, picture only, n.d. [1960s or 1907s]
 Container Listing
 National Freedom Day

Proclamations
1958
State of Michigan
1960
State of Nevada
1961
State of Missouri
1966
State of Colorado
State of Minnesota
State of Nebraska
State of New Jersey
1967
State of Rhode Island
1968
City of Philadelphia
State of Connecticut
State of Florida
State of Indiana
State of Maryland
State of Nebraska
State of Nevada
State of New Hampshire
State of New Mexico
State of Vermont
1969
State of Alaska
State of Missouri
State of New Jersey
1970
State of Florida
State of Illinois
State of Kansas
1971
City of Philadelphia*
State of Illinois
State of Kentucky
State of Missouri
State of Rhode Island*
State of Tennessee
State of Virginia
1972

City of Philadelphia
State of Delaware
State of Hawaii
State of Illinois
State of Kansas
State of Nebraska
State of Ohio
State of Pennsylvania
State of South Carolina
State of Virginia

1973

City of Philadelphia
State of Arkansas
State of Colorado
State of Florida
State of Georgia
State of Hawaii
State of Illinois
State of Maryland
State of New York
State of Pennsylvania
State of West Virginia

1974

State of Illinois
State of Kansas
State of Nebraska
State of New Jersey
State of Ohio
State of Pennsylvania
State of Vermont

1975

City of Philadelphia
State of Colorado
State of Connecticut
State of Florida
State of Kansas
State of Michigan
State of New Mexico
State of Virginia

1976

City of Philadelphia
State of Pennsylvania

1977

City of Philadelphia
State of Hawaii
State of Kansas
State of Michigan
State of New Hampshire
State of New Mexico
State of Oklahoma
State of Pennsylvania
State of Tennessee
State of Virginia

1978

Puerto Rico
1980
State of Louisiana
1982
City of Philadelphia
State of Arkansas
State of Connecticut
State of Hawaii
State of Illinois
State of Kansas
State of Louisiana
State of Massachusetts
State of Minnesota
State of New Hampshire
State of New Jersey
State of New York
State of Rhode Island
State of Tennessee
State of Texas
State of Virginia
State of West Virginia

1983
City of Philadelphia
State of California
State of Connecticut
State of Georgia
State of Hawaii
State of Illinois
State of Kansas
State of Louisiana
State of New Jersey
State of New Mexico
State of New York
State of Pennsylvania
State of Rhode Island
State of Tennessee
State of Texas
State of Virginia
State of West Virginia

1984
City of Philadelphia
State of Alabama
State of Delaware
State of Georgia
State of Hawaii
State of Illinois
State of Kansas
State of New Jersey
State of New Mexico
State of New York
State of Ohio
State of Pennsylvania
State of Rhode Island
State of Tennessee

State of Texas
State of West Virginia
Puerto Rico
1985
State of California
State of Hawaii
State of Illinois
State of Kansas
State of Louisiana
State of Nebraska
State of New Jersey
State of New York
State of Pennsylvania
State of South Dakota
State of Tennessee
State of Texas
State of Virginia
letter only

Dated Photographs

1942
1944
1945 - William L. Dawson
- Tuskegee Airmen, Col. Herbert - Carter, et al.
1946
1947
1948 - President Harry S. Truman
1949 - - Eleanor Roosevelt, et al.
1950
1951
1952
1953
1954
1957 - Coretta Scott King
1960
1962
1963
1964
1966
1968
1969
1970
1971
1972
1973
1975 - Walter Fauntroy
1976
1977
1978
1979
1980
1981
1982
1983

1984
1985
1986

Undated Identified Photographs

Julian Bond, et al.
Father Divine, R.R. Wright, Sr., et al.
W.C. Handy
Judge William Hastie
Joe Louis, R.R. Wright, Sr., et al.
Martin Luther King, Jr., John W. Davis, Benjamin E. Mays, et al.
Benjamin E. Mays, et al.
Elder Lightfoot Michaux, et al.
Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., et al.
Jersey Joe Walcott and E. C. Wright
Franklin H. Williams

Michael R. Winston

NFD Archives Installation at Howard University

NFD Award presentations

NFD Women's Committee

R.R. Wright Public School Youth Choir

Undated Photographs of NFD Events and Individuals

National Freedom Day Events (21 folders)

Individual Participants (3 folders)

Programs (includes invitations/fliers for selected years)

1942 1950 1961 1970 1980 1990

1943 1951 1962 1971 1981 1991

1944 1952 1963 1972 1982 1992

1945 1953 1964 1973 1983 1993

1946 1954 1965 1974 1984

1947 1955 1966 1975 1985

1948 1956 1967 1976 1986

1949 1957 1968 1977 1987

1958 1969 1978 1988

1959 1979 1989

Speeches and Writings

1968 P. Jay Sidney

1978 Michael R. Winston

James G. Spady, "Tell Them We're Rising"

Excerpts from Significant NFD Addresses, 1941-1985

Background information on selected NFD speakers

National Freedom Day Association Records

Constitution and By-Laws

Correspondence

History - NFD

NFD Bill, 1948

Newsclippings

Minutes, 1969, 1989

Writings about NFD, 1969

Edwina Wright Mitchell Memorial Scholarship

Rules for scholarship contest, 1952

List of Board of Directors, 1983

List of Executive Committee

Certificate of Membership

Button

Council against Communist Aggression

Other Ephemera (Oversize Items)

Mounted newsclippings of NFD events, Wright family obituaries

Wright Family Photographs

Elks pictorial supplement (Quaker City #720) in The Philadelphia Tribune, 1929

Audiocassettes

Freedom Day Program, 1986

Freedom Day Program, 1987