

**See also UPA Microfilm**

MF 5322, Series I, Part 4, Reels 1-6

**WILLIAM T. JOHNSON AND FAMILY PAPERS**

(Mss 529, 561, 597, 770, 926, 1093)

**Inventory**

Compiled by

Elaine B. Smyth

January 1990

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections  
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library  
Louisiana State University Libraries  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Revised 2009

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**SUMMARY**

- Size.** 6 linear feet (including 54 volumes).
- Geographic Locations.** Mississippi, Louisiana.
- Inclusive Dates.** 1793-1937.
- Bulk Dates.** 1830-1870.
- Languages.** English, French, Spanish.
- Summary.** Personal and business correspondence, legal and financial documents, diaries, daybooks, and other manuscript volumes pertaining to William T. Johnson (1809?-1851), a free African-American barber in Natchez, Mississippi, and to his wife, mother-in-law, and descendants. The diaries (1835-1851) kept by Johnson give details of contemporary life in Natchez. A collection of sheet music (1839-1909) belonging to the family is included.
- Access.** No restrictions.
- Reproduction note.** Copies must be made from microfilm.
- Copyright.** Physical rights are retained by the LSU Libraries. Copyright of the edited diaries is retained by LSU Press (1951). Copyright of the original materials is retained by descendants of the writers of the materials in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
- Citation.** William T. Johnson and Family Memorial Papers, Mss. 529, 561, 597, 770, 926, 1093, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge.
- Stack Locations.** U:161; O:24; OS:J; 65:J.  
Please consult the Container List for specific locations when requesting materials.
- Also available on.** UPA Microfilm 5322, Series I, Part 4, Reels 1-6.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE**

William T. Johnson (1809?-1851) and his sister, Adelia, were the children of Amy Johnson, a slave freed in 1814 by a planter of Adams County, Mississippi, William Johnson. William T. and Adelia were freed in 1820 and 1818, respectively. In 1820, Adelia married James Miller, a free African-American from Philadelphia. Miller was a barber and a respected businessman in Natchez, Mississippi, and he trained his brother-in-law, William T. Johnson to become a barber. In 1830, William T. Johnson moved from Port Gibson to Natchez to pursue the trade, having purchased Miller's unexpired lease. Five years later, William married a former slave, Ann Battles (1815?-1866). In 1822, she and her mother, Harriet Battles, had been freed by Gabriel Tichenor of Natchez. William T. and Ann Johnson had ten children: William (b. 1836), Richard (b. 1837), Byron (1839-1872), Anna (1841-1922), Katharine (1842-1901), Phillip (1844), Eugenia (b. 1845), Alice (b. ca. 1846), Josephine (b. 1849), and Clarence (b. 1851). Between 1835 and 1850, Johnson acquired three barber shops, a bath house in Natchez, and a plantation; he also maintained business connections in New Orleans.

In the late 1840's, Johnson became involved in a dispute with Baylor Winn and Benjamin Wade, regarding a property line on his plantation. In May, 1851, after the circuit court ordered a survey, the dispute was settled out of court. However, on June 16, 1851, Johnson was fatally wounded in an ambush, and before his death on the morning of June 17, he named Winn as his assassin. At the time of his death he owned more than 2,000 acres of land in Adams County.

On Johnson's death, his son Byron became head of the family. William Johnson, Jr., suffered from mental illness, and by 1866 he was confined in a New Orleans asylum. In 1865, Byron enlisted in the Mississippi Federal Colored Militia. Other male members of the family were exempted from service due to health problems. Following the war, Byron leased St. Genevieve Plantation (Concordia Parish, La.) from Ayers P. Merrill, Jr.; subscribed in the survey of the proposed Natchez-Jackson Railroad in 1869; rented Carthage Plantation (Adams Co., Miss.) from John and Katherine Minor in the same year; and leased Black Lake Plantation (Concordia Parish, La.) from Lucien Malus for three years in 1870. Anna L. Johnson, Juanito Garrus, Carlito Garrus, and Byron Johnson contracted with freedmen to work Carthage Plantation. Black Lake Plantation was worked by freedmen in accordance with an agreement signed by the Garruses, Anna L. and Katharine G. Johnson. In 1871, Byron received a judgment for \$2,000 in a suit against Stephen Duncan involving a mortgage of Magnolia Plantation, a case begun in 1862.

After the death of Byron Johnson in 1872, Anna L. Johnson was the most prominent figure in the family. Anna, Alice, Josephine, and Katharine taught in the Natchez primary

schools.<sup>1</sup> Richard Johnson worked his family's Peachland Plantation (Adams County) in the 1890s. Anna lived at Peachland during the period 1912 through 1920. Their nephew William R. Johnston (d. 1938) received his undergraduate degree from Wilberforce University (Ohio) in 1897 and earned a medical degree from Howard University. While studying at Howard, he boarded with Dr. & Mrs. Henry Lewis Bailey. Johnston practiced medicine in Natchez until his death in 1938.

William T. Johnson's diaries were edited for publication by William Ransom Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis, and appeared under the title *William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro* (LSU Press, 1951). This work provides additional information about the family.

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<sup>1</sup> At about this time, the spelling of the family name was changed to Johnston. Both forms appear in contemporary documents.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The manuscript group consists of diaries, personal and business papers, account books, bound and sheet music, and newspapers and other printed items of a Natchez family of free African-Americans. The diaries of William Johnson cover the period 1835 to 1851, and the early volumes are illustrated with small drawings of incidents mentioned in the diary. The entries concern both blacks and whites, and describe a wide range of events, from theatrical performances, political campaigns, and horse races, to steamboat explosions, yellow fever epidemics, and the effects of the Panic of 1837. Entries reflect Johnson's role as a confidant for many prominent persons who frequented his barber shop.

Among the early papers are records of land sales and transfers, including one in Spanish signed by Manuel Gayoso de Lemos (1793), manumission documents for Ann and Harriet Battles (Johnson's wife and mother-in-law), attestations of free status, records of land and slave purchases and sales, property tax receipts, sales receipts, promissory notes, a marriage license (1835), insurance policies issued by the Natchez Insurance Company (1837, 1839), a stock certificate for the Mississippi Rail Road Company (1839). The papers of the later antebellum period include tax receipts, indentures, detailed specifications for a house to be built for Mrs. Anna Johnson, and other business records. A deposition, surveyor's certificate, and other papers document the law suit of Winn and Wade versus Johnson. Official copies of baptismal records (1842, 1856) are present for eight of Johnson's children.

Correspondents during the antebellum period include members of the Johnson family, James and Adelia Miller, their son William and their daughters Lavinia Miller McCrary and Octavia Miller, William and Emma Hoggatt, Victoir Brustie, Richard Johnson, William Moseby, and Lawrence Minor. From 1852 to 1855, almost all the correspondence is addressed to Mrs. Anna Johnson.

After 1855, Byron and his sister Anna received most of the correspondence, chiefly from friends and relatives in New Orleans. Correspondents include A. L. Bingaman, who wrote concerning William Jr.'s insanity; Alphonse Garrus, writing in French to Juanito and Carlito Garrus, care of Byron Johnson; Lavinia Miller, who sent her aunt calico cloth samples preserved with the letter; and Wetherell & McDowell, with regard to shipping supplies via the "Mollie Able." Letters of the early Reconstruction period contain material on the social relationships of black and white people in New Orleans society. Indentures document the lease and working of Black Lake Plantation.

After the death of Byron Johnson in 1872, Anna L. Johnson was the recipient of most of the family correspondence. Teacher's certificates, lesson plans, contracts, and other manuscripts relating to her and her sisters' teaching careers are present, in addition to legal and financial documents relating to property owned by Anna and her sisters, including Peachland Plantation. There are also stock certificates for the Black Rock Gold Mining Company (1896) and the Iron Hope Mining and Milling Company (1896). Later papers include some

correspondence of Dr. William R. Johnson: a letter from him while at Howard, and letters to him from Major John R. Lynch of Chicago, and Dr. Henry Lewis Bailey, for whom a printed eulogy is also preserved.

In addition to William T. Johnson's fourteen-volume diary, bound volumes include six bank books (1869-1871, 1906-1909),<sup>2</sup> three cash books (1928-1858), seven daybooks (1822-1854), a diary kept by Katharine Johnson (1864-1874), six ledgers (1808-1859); sixteen notebooks (1844-1900); and Thomas P. Dolbear's *Chirographic Atlas* (New Orleans, 1850). Two volumes of bound newspapers have been transferred to the Louisiana Collection: the *Orleans Gazette and Commercial Advertiser*, 1816-1819; and the *Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Daily Gazette*, 1838-1841. In addition, the group contains clippings and sections or complete issues:

*Demorest's Monthly Magazine*, month, 1869, incomplete issue.

*Fireside Gem*, Waterside Maine, Oct. 1898, Vol. 8, No. 6.

*Harper's Weekly*, Sept., 1860, Vol. IV, No. 192, incomplete issue.

*Home & Farmer*, Louisville, Ky., Aug. 15, 1895, incomplete issue.

*The Home Treasury*, Oct., 1897, Vol. IV, No. 12; June, 1898, Vol. V., No. 8.

*Memphis News-Scimitar*, July 23, 1905, comics.

*The Preacher and Teacher*, Kosciusko, Miss., Feb. 15, 1896, Vol. III, No. ? (torn).

*St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 23, 1905, Vol. 31, No. 65, comics printed in color.

*St. Louis Republic*, July 30, 1899.

*Weekly Brotherhood*, Natchez, Miss., Oct. 5, 1895, Vol. V, No. 11.

A collection of music, consisting of short pieces for piano and for piano and voice, dates mostly from the period 1850 to 1900, and includes music published in Louisiana, New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere. There are also two incomplete copies of *Bertini's Piano Method* (undated), with text in English and French.

Three photographs are found in the group: one identified as Dr. Bailey, one unidentified portrait of a man in uniform, and a group portrait of three men and a woman, with "John L. Johnson, William R. Johnson" written on the back.

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<sup>2</sup> Dates given are inclusive and do not necessarily reflect gaps; volumes are not necessarily consecutive. See Container List for more detail.

## **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

### **I. Correspondence and manuscript materials, 1829-1937 (.3 linear ft.)**

Includes personal and business correspondence. Manuscript materials include recipes, essays, a speech, lesson plans, an undated property map, miscellaneous manuscript notes.

### **II. Legal and financial documents, 1793-1935 (.3 linear ft.)**

Includes baptismal records, records of land sales and transfers, manumission documents, tax receipts, promissory notes, indentures, receipts for goods and services, dog and marriage licenses, and documentation pertaining to various law suits.

### **III. Manuscript volumes, 1808-1909 (53 volumes)**

Includes six bank books (1869-1871, 1906-1909),<sup>3</sup> three cash books (1928-1858), seven daybooks (1822-1854), fifteen diaries (1835-1874), six ledgers (1808-1859); sixteen notebooks (1844-1900).

### **IV. Printed materials, 1862-1934 (72 items and 1 volume)**

Printed ephemera includes business cards, advertising and religious materials. Two copies of a prospectus for the Iron Hope Mining and Milling Company (1896) are included, as well as the *Prospectus of the Cotton Seed Oil Mill ... Mound Bayou, Miss. fostered by Mississippi Negro Business League* (1907). The volume is Thomas P. Dolbear's *Chirographic Atlas* (New Orleans, 1850). Also included are a few newspaper issues, some incomplete, 1860-1905, and clippings.

### **V. Printed music, 1834-1908 (4 linear feet)**

Sheet music includes primarily short pieces for piano forte or piano and voice. There are also four volumes of bound sheet music comprised of a variety of collected works.

### **VI. Photographs, undated (3 items)**

Three photographs: one identified as Dr. Bailey, one unidentified portrait of a man in uniform, and a group portrait of Johnson family members.

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<sup>3</sup> Dates given are inclusive and do not necessarily reflect gaps; volumes are not necessarily consecutive.

**INDEX TERMS**

Johnson, William, 1809-1851.  
African-Americans--Mississippi--Natchez.  
African-Americans--Louisiana--New Orleans.  
Natchez (Miss.)--Social life and customs.  
Natchez (Miss.)--Race relations  
New Orleans (La.)--Social life and customs.  
Slaves--Emancipation--United States.  
Johnson, Byron, 1839-1872.  
Johnson, Anna, 1841-1922.  
Miller, James.  
Miller, Adelia.  
Miller, William.  
Miller, Octavia.  
Hoggatt, William.  
Hoggatt, Emma.  
Brustie, Victoir.  
Johnson, Moseby  
Minor, Lawrence.  
Peachland Plantation (Miss.)  
Black Lake Plantation (Miss.)  
Iron Hope Mining and Milling Company.  
Natchez Insurance Company.  
Black Rock Gold Mining and Milling Company.  
Photoprints.  
Letters.

**CONTAINER LIST**

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>		
U:161	1	1-6	<b>Series I, Correspondence and Manuscript Materials, 1829-1937</b> Correspondence, 1829-1937, undated		
		7	Envelopes (empty) with manuscript notes.		
		8	Manuscript notes & recipes, 1921, 1924, undated		
		9	Literary manuscripts, 1903, undated		
		10	Manuscript map, undated		
		11-12	School lesson plans, undated		
		U:161	1	13	<b>Series II, Legal and financial documents, 1793-1935</b> Baptismal records, 1842, 1856
14-16	Legal and financial papers, 1793-1839				
17-27	Legal & financial papers, 1840-1935, undated				
OS:J	--	--	Indenture conveying land, 1802		
OS:J	--	--	Land sale & transfer documents, 1805-1866; manumission document, 1824; teacher's certificates, 1873-1875; Broadside, 1876; Map Missouri RR, undated		
U:161	1	28	<b>Series III, Manuscript volumes, 1808-1909</b> Vol. 1, Bank book, Jan. 1869 - Oct. 1871 Vol. 2, Bank book, May 1906 Vol. 3, Bank book, Nov. 1906 Vol. 4, Bank book, Dec. 1906 - July 1907 Vol. 5, Bank book, Dec. 1906 - July 1907 Vol. 6, Bank book, Dec. 1906 - Nov. 1909		
			<b>N.B. For cash book entries, see also volumes 23 and 36.</b> Vol. 7 Cash book, Nov. 1828 - Sept. 1834		
			Vol. 8 Cash book, Oct. 1830 - Oct. 1837		
			Vol. 9 Cash book, Nov. 1844 - July 1858		
			O:24	--	Vol. 7 Cash book, Nov. 1828 - Sept. 1834
					Vol. 8 Cash book, Oct. 1830 - Oct. 1837
		Vol. 9 Cash book, Nov. 1844 - July 1858			

**Johnson (William T.) and Family Papers**  
1793-1937 (bulk 1830-1870)

**Mss 529**

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
		Vol. 10	Daybook, Feb. - June, 1822
U:161	1	29-31	Vol. 11, Daybook, May 1830 - April 1835.
O:24	--	Vol. 12	Daybook, October 1830 - October 1840
		Vol. 13	Daybook, October 1830 - October 1844
		Vol. 14	Daybook, 1849-1854
		Vol. 15	Daybook, Jan. 1851 - Sept. 1867
		Vol. 16	Daybook, Oct. 1900 - Dec. 1921
<b>N.B. For additional diary entries, see also volumes 46-47</b>			
U:161	1	32-35	Vol. 17, Diary, 1835-1837
O:24		Vol. 18	Diary, 1837
		Vol. 19	Diary, 1837-1841
U:161	1	36-38	Vol. 20, Diary, 1841-1843
O:24	--	Vol. 21	Diary, 1843-1844
		Vol. 22	Diary, 1844-1845
		Vol. 23	Diary, 1846 and cash book entries, 1843, 1846
		Vol. 24	Diary, 1847
		Vol. 25	Diary, 1842, 1847-1848
		Vol. 26	Diary, 1848
		Vol. 27	Diary, 1848-1850
		Vol. 28	Diary, March 1849 - July 1849
		Vol. 29	Diary, 1850-1851
		Vol. 30	Diary, 1851
		Vol. 31	Diary, 1864-1874
O:24		Vol. 32	Ledger, 1808-1811; Aug. 1840 - Sept. 1840
		Vol. 33	Ledger, 1833-1837
		Vol. 34	Ledger, Aug. 1835 - Nov. 1839
		Vol. 35	Ledger, Jan. 1837 - April 1839
U:161	1	39	Vol. 36, Ledger, Feb. 1837-Oct. 1841, and cash book entries, Jan. 1866 - Nov. 1867
O:24	--	Vol. 37	Ledger, March 1858 - May 1859
		Vol. 38	Notebook, July 1844 - May 1857
		Vol. 39	Notebook, Oct. 1846 - Aug. 1866
		Vol. 40	Notebook, March 1848 - Dec. 1866
	1	Vol. 41	Notebook, March 1850 - April 1861
		Vol. 42	Notebook, March 1852 - Aug. 1859
		Vol. 43	Notebook, Jan. 1854 - Oct. 1866
		Vol. 44	Notebook, Jan. 1856 - Aug. 1863
		Vol. 45	Notebook, Oct. 1867 - June 1868.
		Vol. 46	Notebook (Diary), Jan. 1868 - Dec. 1868

**Johnson (William T.) and Family Papers**  
1793-1937 (bulk 1830-1870)

**Mss 529**

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
		Vol. 47	Notebook (Diary), Jan. 1870 - Aug. 1871
		Vol. 48	Notebook (Diary), Jan. 1872 - July 1877
		Vol. 49	Notebook, Jan. 1872 - July 1876
		Vol. 50	Notebook, Jan. 1872 - July 1876
		Vol. 51	Notebook, July 1897 - June 1900
		Vol. 52	Notebook Attendance Record, Jan. 1871 - June 1872
	--	Vol. 53	Notebook of Verse, undated
			<b>Series IV, Printed materials, 1862-1934</b>
U:161	1	40	General printed items, 1862-1934, undated
		41	Religious printed items, 1910-1920, undated
OS:J	2	--	Newspaper and periodical clippings, 1860-1905, undated
O:24	--	Vol. 54	Thomas P. Dolbear's <i>Chirographic Atlas</i> (New Orleans, 1850)
		Vol. 55	William Ransom Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis, editors. <i>William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro</i> (LSU Press, 1951).
			<b>Series V, Printed Sheet Music, 1834-1908</b>
65:	1	1-13	Sheet music, 1834-1859
	2	1-10	Sheet music, 1860-1869.
	3	1-24	Sheet music, 1871-1908
	4	1-9	Sheet music, undated
	5	1-9	Sheet music, undated
	6	--	Sheet music, undated
	7	1	Sheet music, undated, Waverly Magazine (1865), Comfort Magazine (undated), Banner Music Supplement (1894)
		Vols. 1-4	Bound sheet music, undated
			<b>Series VI, Photographs, undated</b>
U:161	1	42	Photographs, undated
OS:J	2	--	Photograph (group portrait), undated