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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

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April 2015

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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 black 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:71-72; OS:J; 65:J.
- Also available on.** UPA Microfilm 5322, Series I, Part 4, Reels 1-6.

This collection has been digitized in its entirety (excluding clippings and sheet music) and can be accessed online at <http://cdm16313.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/collection/p16313coll51/searchterm/William%20T.%20Johnson%20and%20family%20memorial%20papers%2C%20Mss.%20529%2C%20561%2C%20597%2C%20770%2C%20926%2C%201093%2C%20LSU%20Libraries/field/part/mod%20e/all/conn/and/display/200/order/nosort/ad/asc>. See the container list for links to specific components of the collection.

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

William T. Johnson (1809?-1851) and his sister, Adelia, were the children of Amy Johnson, a slave freed in 1814 by William Johnson, a planter of Adams County, Mississippi. 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 (born 1836), Richard (born 1837), Byron (1839-1872), Anna (1841-1922), Katharine (1842-1901), Phillip (born 1844), Eugenia (born 1845), Alice (born about 1846), Josephine (born 1849), and Clarence (born 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 1840s, 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. Byron subscribed in the survey of the proposed Natchez-Jackson Railroad in 1869 and rented Carthage Plantation (Adams Co., Miss.) from John and Katherine Minor in the same year. Byron also 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.¹ 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 (died 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.

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

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.

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 people of color. 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 whites, free people of color, and enslaved people in Natchez society 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 purchases and sales of enslaved persons, 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 mental illness; 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. Teachers 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.

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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 attending Howard University, 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),² 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: 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.

² 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, and 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, 1808-1921. (53 volumes)

Includes six bank books (1869-1871, 1906-1909),³ 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, undated. (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.

³ Dates given are inclusive and do not necessarily reflect gaps; volumes are not necessarily consecutive.

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INDEX TERMS

Johnson, William T., 1809?-1851.
African American barbers--Mississippi--Natchez.
African American businesspeople--Mississippi--Natchez.
African American children--Mississippi--Natchez.
African American families--Mississippi--Natchez.
African American schoolteachers--Mississippi--Natchez.
African American woman--Mississippi--Natchez.
African-Americans--Mississippi--Natchez.
African-Americans--Louisiana--New Orleans.
Free African Americans--Mississippi--Natchez.
Free African Americans--Louisiana--New Orleans.
Free African Americans--Violence against.
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, Ann Battles, 1815?-1866.
Johnson, Anna, 1841-1922.
Mental illness--Mississippi--Natchez.
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.
Lyric poetry.
Sheet music.
Photographs.
Letters.
Diaries.

CONTAINER LIST

This collection has been digitized in its entirety (excluding clippings and sheet music) and can be accessed online at

<http://cdm16313.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/collection/p16313coll51/searchterm/William%20T.%20Johnson%20and%20family%20memorial%20papers%2C%20Mss.%20529%2C%20561%2C%20597%2C%20770%2C%20926%2C%201093%2C%20LSU%20Libraries/field/part/mod/e/all/conn/and/display/200/order/nosort/ad/asc>. *See the links be;pw to specific components of the collection.*

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
Series I. Correspondence and Manuscript Materials, 1829-1937			
U:161	1	1	Correspondence, 1829-1853. (28 items.) View online
		2	Correspondence, 1855-1859. (25 items.) View online
		3	Correspondence, 1860-1874. (44 items.) View online
		4	Correspondence, 1875-1908. (39 items.) View online
		5	Correspondence, 1900-1937. (29 items.) View online
		6	Correspondence, approximately 1845-1929. (13 items.) View online
		7	Correspondence, approximately 1860-1934. (14 items.) View online Contains envelopes (empty) with manuscript notes.
		8	Manuscript materials, approximately 1840-1921. (16 items.) Contains manuscript notes and recipes. View online
		9	Manuscript materials, approximately 1840-1903. (7 items.) Contains literary manuscripts. View online
		10	Manuscript map, approximately 1850s. (1 map.) View online
		11	School lesson plans, approximately 1894-1895. (6 items.) View online
		12	School lesson plans, approximately 1894-1910. (20 items.) View online

Series II. Legal and financial documents, 1793-1935.

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

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<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>		
U:161	1	13	Baptismal records, 1842-1856. (8 items.) View online		
		14	1793-1795. (1 conveyance.) View online		
		15	1822-1829. (5 items.) View online		
		16	1830-1839. (17 items.) View online		
		17	1840-1848. (24 items.) View online		
		18	1843-1849. (14 items.) View online		
		19	1850-1854. (48 items.) View online		
		20	1854-1859. (50 items.) View online		
		21	1860-1866. (84 items.) View online		
		22	1867-1870. (51 items.) View online		
		23	1867-1873. (70 items.) View online		
		24	1874-1899. (84 items.) View online		
		25	1900-1935. (89 items.) View online		
		26	approximately 1850-1929. (14 items.) View online		
		27	approximately 1850-1929. (31 items.) View online		
		OS:J	1	1	1802-1836. (5 items.) View online Contains indentures conveying land, dating from 1802-1836 and a petition for the emancipation of Harriet Battles and her child, Ann Battles, by Gabriel Tichenor in the State of Mississippi, dated May 18, 1822-November 3, 1824.
		OS:J	1	2	1839-1845. (4 items.) View online Contains indentures conveying land.
		OS:J	1	3	1846-1885. (4 items.) View online Contains indentures conveying land.
		OS:J	1	4	1866-1876. (6 items.) View online Contains an oath of taxable property for the estate of William Johnson (1866 May 1); teachers certificates for Anna and Josephine

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
			Johnson (1873-1875); a map of Missouri, Kansas, and Texas railway connections (1875); and an address delivered by Theodore H. Green (1876 July 11).
OS:J	1	5	1885 October. (1 gazette.) View online Contains an issue of The North Central and South American Exposition Gazette for October 1885.
U:161	1	28	Series III. Manuscript volumes, 1808-1921. Vol. 1, Bank book, 1869 January - 1871 October. View online
		28	Vol. 2, Bank book, 1906 May 15. View online
		28	Vol. 3, Bank book, 1906 November. View online
		28	Vol. 4, Bank book, 1906 December - 1907 July. View online
		28	Vol. 5, Bank book, 1906 December - 1907 July. View online
		28	Vol. 6, Bank book, 1906 December - 1909 November. View online
O:70	--	Vol. 7 Vol. 8	N.B. For cash book entries, see also volumes 23 and 36. Cash book, 1828 November - 1834 September. View online Cash book, 1830 October - 1837 October. View online
		Vol. 9	Cash book, 1844 November - 1858 July. View online
O:70		Vol. 10	Daybook, 1822 February - June. View online
U:161	1	29-31	Vol. 11, Daybook, 1830 May - 1835 April. View online
O:70	--	Vol. 12	Daybook, October - 1840 October. View online
		Vol. 13	Daybook, 1830 October - 1844 October. View online
		Vol. 14	Daybook, 1849-1854. View online
		Vol. 15	Daybook, 1851 January - 1867 September. View online
		Vol. 16	Daybook, 1900 October - 1921 December. View online
U:161	1	32-35	N.B. For additional diary entries, see also volumes 46-47 Vol. 17, Diary, 1835-1837. View online

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>
O:70		Vol. 18	Diary, 1837. View online
		Vol. 19	Diary, 1837-1841. View online
U:161	1	36-38	Vol. 20, Diary, 1841-1843. View online
O:70	--	Vol. 21	Diary, 1843-1844. View online
O:71		Vol. 22	Diary, 1844-1845. View online
		Vol. 23	Diary, 1846 and cash book entries, 1843, 1846. View online
		Vol. 24	Diary, 1847. View online
		Vol. 25	Diary, 1842, 1847-1848. View online
		Vol. 26	Diary, 1848. View online
		Vol. 27	Diary, 1848-1850. View online
		Vol. 28	Diary, 1849 March-July. View online
		Vol. 29	Diary, 1850-1851. View online
		Vol. 30	Diary, 1851. View online
		Vol. 31	Diary, 1864-1874. View online
		Vol. 32	Ledger, 1808-1811, 1840. View online
		Vol. 33	Ledger, 1833-1837. View online
		Vol. 34	Ledger, 1835 August - 1839 November. View online
O:72		Vol. 35	Ledger, 1837 January - 1839 April. View online
U:161	1	39	Vol. 36, Ledger, 1837 February- 1867 November. View online
O:72	--	Vol. 37	Ledger, 1858 March - 1859 May. View online
		Vol. 38	Notebook, 1844 July-1857 May. View online

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
		Vol. 39	Notebook, 1846 October - 1866 August. View online
		Vol. 40	Notebook, 1848 March - 1866 December. View online
	1	Vol. 41	Notebook, 1850 March - 1861 April. View online
		Vol. 42	Notebook, 1852 March - 1859 August. View online
		Vol. 43	Notebook, 1854 January - 1866 October. View online
		Vol. 44	Notebook, 1856 January - 1863 August. View online
		Vol. 45	Notebook, 1867 October - 1868 June. View online
		Vol. 46	Notebook (Diary), 1868 January - 1868 December. View online
		Vol. 47	Notebook (Diary), 1870 January - 1871 August. View online
O:72		Vol. 48	Notebook (Diary), 1872 January - 1877 July. View online
		Vol. 49	Notebook, 1872 January - 1876 July. View online
		Vol. 50	Notebook, 1872 January - 1876 July. View online
		Vol. 51	Notebook, 1897 July - 1900 June. View online
		Vol. 52	Notebook Attendance Record, 1871 January - 1872 June. View online
	--	Vol. 53	Notebook of Verse, approximately 1863-1874. View online
			Series IV. Printed materials, 1862-1934, undated.
U:161	1	40	General printed items, approximately 1830-1950. (29 items.) View online
		41	Religious printed items, approximately 1895-1929. (19 items.) View online
OS:J	1	--	Newspaper and periodical clippings, 1860-1905, undated
O:72	--	Vol. 54	Thomas P. Dolbear's Chirographic Atlas (New Orleans, 1850) View online

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
		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).
			Series V. Printed Sheet Music, 1834-1908.
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
			Series VI. Photographs, undated.
U:161	1	42	Photographs, approximately 1895-1910. (2 items.) View online
OS:J	2	--	Photograph (group portrait), approximately 1900-1910. View online