

A Guide to the Personal Papers of Robert N. Branch, 1919-1964

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Title Statement

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Author: Heather Crocetto

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

RG 164

Language

English

Creator

Branch, Robert N. (Robert Nathaniel), 1885-1970

Extent

1 box.

Repository

Arlington Public Library, Center for Local History

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Donated by Judy L. Branch on July 26, 2006.

Preferred Citation

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Researchers can find related information on Arlington's Volunteer Fire Departments in [RG 4, Records of the Arlington Volunteer Fire Department](#). This collection contains materials on Arlington's Volunteer Fire Departments #1-7. [RG 82, Personal Papers of Herb and Mayme Smith](#) contains information on Herb's involvement with the Clarendon Volunteer Fire Department #3. Researchers should also see [RG 32, County Manager's Library](#), Subgroup 2, Fire Department, for more information on the County's official Fire Department.

Researchers can find more information on the John M. Langston Citizens Association in [RG 349, Dorothy M. Hamm Papers](#).

Biographical Information

Robert Nathaniel Branch was born on April 22, 1885, in Washington, DC, to Edward Branch and Jane Hunter. For most his childhood, Branch lived with his father in Arlington, Virginia, his mother having passed away prior to his fourteenth birthday. Branch attended two years of college and worked as a Porter for the Virginia State A.B.C. He was married to Claretha (Clara) Grey and passed away on March 19, 1970.

Present-day Arlington Fire Station No. 8, also known as the Hall's Hill Volunteer Fire Department (HHVFD), was organized in 1918 by the Black residents of Hall's Hill as a volunteer unit. It was Arlington County's first Black-operated fire station. Barred from joining the Arlington County Fireman's Association, the firemen of East Arlington and Hall's Hill united to form the Arlington County Colored Fireman's Association (originally named the East Arlington and Hall's Hill Fireman's Association) on July 14, 1938. Robert Branch was elected the association's first president.

Robert Branch was also a member and president of the John. M. Langston Citizens Association (also known as the Hall's Hill Citizen Association). The organization was founded in 1924 and still runs to this day.

Scope and Content

This collection contains materials relating to various Arlington organizations with which Robert Branch was involved, including the Arlington County Volunteer Fire Department #8, the Arlington Community War Fund Campaign, the J. M. Langston Citizens Association, and the Arlington Tuberculosis Association. Robert N. Branch's personal papers cover the years 1919 to 1958, but the bulk date from 1939 to 1945. The collection is small and only contains a few materials per topic area. The entire collection currently measures .2 linear feet.

File 1, Poll Tax and General Tax Materials, contains a copy of H.R. 7534 outlawing poll taxes, two Congressional Record broadsides arguing against poll taxes, and a list of Arlington male and female colored voters who paid the poll tax in 1937, 1938, and 1939. It also includes Robert's and Carletha's 1943 tax bills, blank tax forms, and Arlington County finance reports.

File 5, Ration Books, 1943, contains four ration books; two War Ration Book No. 3 and two War Ration Book No. 4, one of each issued to Robert and Clara, respectively. They are all housed within a Washington D.C. souvenir case.

File 9, Miscellaneous Materials, 1919, 1939, 1940, 1943, 1952, 1964, contains Dunbar High School's May 1919 *Crimson & Black*, a program to the 73rd Anniversary of the Mt. Salvation Baptist Church, and a program from Albert Branch's (Robert Branch's son) graduation from Washington Lee High School, among other items.

It is unclear why Branch had the May 1919 *Crimson & Black*. Dunbar High School was the first black public high school in America, and in the first half of the twentieth century, it was considered an academically elite public school. As of May 1919, Branch would have been 35 and therefore the program is not from his time at the school. It is possible Branch is an alumnus of the school or knew a student who attended in 1919 or admired the school and therefore purchased and kept the program.

There are a small number of photographs in this collection containing images of Branch's all-black baseball team, Volunteer Fire Department #8, and a few personal photos. There are two photos of the same twelve children, one on the front steps of Branch's home and one at a dining room table eating dinner. It is likely that these children were Robert and Carletha's, but there is no archival evidence that they had any children beyond Albert and Arthur (born 1945).

Index Terms

Subjects:

Fire stations
Taxation.
Arlington (Va.)
Arlington County (Va.)

Arrangement

Materials are arranged by topic area, with one folder containing miscellaneous material that did not fit within the scope of another folder nor warrant its own folder. Material within the folders is arranged by original order. All folder titles were created by the archivist. Folders containing photographs have an asterisk [*] after the file name.

Contents List

Box 1

File 1: Poll Tax and General Tax Materials, 1939, 1940, 1943, 1944, 1958

File 2: Arlington County Tuberculosis Association, 1940 , n.d.

File 3: Arlington County Fire Department Engine Company No. 8, 1919, 1936, 1945, 1947

File 4: J. M. Langston Citizens Association, 1939, 1940

File 5: Arlington Community War Fund Campaign, 1945, 1946

File 6: Ration Books, 1943

File 7: Washington and Vicinity Sightseeing Tours, n.d.

File 8: Arlington County Department of Public Welfare Annual Report, 1945

File 9: Miscellaneous Materials, 1919, 1939, 1940, 1943, 1952, 1964

File 10: Photographs, n.d.*