

# A Guide to the Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, 1912, 1930-1938

Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, 1912, 1930-1938  
1912, 1930-1938

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A Collection in Special Collections and Archives 1982-20  
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2002

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## Descriptive Summary

**Collection number**

1982-20

**Language**

English

## **Abstract**

The Amaza Lee Meredith papers contain personal and business documents generated by Ms. Meredith which reflect the activities of her lifetime. Included are materials related to her career at Virginia State University, her participation in the V.S.U. Alumni Association the official records of the Azurest North Syndicate, and personal correspondence with several prominent blueprints, line drawings, and sketches of Ms. Meredith's designs which demonstrates her pursuits in architecture.

## **Physical Characteristics**

This collection contains ca. 5,000 pieces.

## **Repository**

Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University

# **Administrative Information**

## **Access**

The items in Box 29 are restricted; there are no other restrictions in this collection.

## **Publication Rights**

EDIT ME!

## **Acquisition Information**

These papers were given to the V.S.U. Archives/ Special Collections Department by decree of Ms. Meredith's Last Will and Testament.

## **Preferred Citation**

Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, 1912, 1930-1930, Accession #1982-20, Special Collections Dept., Johnson Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Va.

# **Biographical/Historical Information**

Amaza Lee Meredith was born in Lynchburg, Virginia on August 14, 1895. She was the daughter of Emma P. Kenny (Meredith) and Samuel P. Meredith. She had two sisters and one brother; the eldest child, Maude, maintained a life-long closeness with Amaza. In 1915, Meredith completed here early schooling in Lynchburg, where she graduated at the top of her class.

Her First teaching job was at a rural ungraded school called Indian Rock, located in Botetourt County, Virginia. Here, Meredith organized the Indian Rock Parent- Teacher's Association, which worked in conjunction with the Negro Organization Society of Virginia to bring improvement to the local school system. In 1918, she returned to Lynchburg, where she taught elementary school. In 1922, she served as Valedictorian for her class at the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute. This was followed by six years of teaching mathematics at Dunbar High School in Lynchburg.

Ms. Meredith enrolled in the Teacher's College of Columbia University, New York in 1928. It was there where she earned both her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Fine Arts Education.

Her career with Virginia State University began in 1930, though she took a leave of absence from 1934-35 to complete her Master's degree. In 1935, she advanced to the position of Department Chair, where she remained until her retirement in 1958. Amaza Meredith established the schools of Fine Arts department.

Beyond her career at V. S. U., Meredith's life was also rich in contributions. Her artistic self spilled over into these other facets of her life. She exhibited her art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and in galleries in New York and North Carolina. Some works were acquired by groups, such as the Gillfield Baptist Church, where they are still displayed; many others hang in the homes of area residents.

She also developed interior decorating and design skills. In the field of business, she coordinated color schemes for campus buildings. To provide for new shelving units, she created blueprints, which proposed modifications in the art department layouts.

This remarkable person also pursued architectural interests. Though she had no known formal training, Amaza Meredith fully designed her own home - both inside and out, and in 1939, it was built on Boisseau Street here in Ettrick. She named it "Azurest South." In the ensuing decades, Meredith laid out the blueprints for several homes, most notably in Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York.

In the 1950's Sag Harbor flourished as resort area for blacks. Amaza and her sister, Maude, worked together to buy, create, and develop the subdivision later called "Azurest North." They worked with others to establish the "Azurest Syndicate, Inc." Syndicate lots were sold to individual investors, who then built summer, or year-round cottages and this land. Ms. Meredith designed at least two of these residences: 1) Terry Cottage, summer home for her sister, Maude Terry; and 2) Edendot, belonging to friends Ed and Dot Spaulding.

Additionally, Meredith provided several sets of blueprints for the proposed V. S. U. Alumni House in 1949. Once these plans fell through, Amaza tried another approach: She willed her half of Azurest South to the V. S. U. Alumni Association in the hopes that the dream for which she had worked so long would become a reality. Joint ownership of Azurest South was held with Ms. Edna Colson, another retired faculty member of V. S. U. In 1985, the Alumni Association purchased the Colson's half of the house, and Azurest South is now the official V. S. U. Alumni House.

Meredith was generally active in the Alumni Association. She was an honorary member of the Gillfield Baptist Church. While she participated in several other organizations and committees, the extent of her involvement is not known.

In 1984, Amaza Lee Meredith died.

## Scope and Content Information

The Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, 1912-1983, document a slice of Virginia's history in the twentieth century. This founder of the Fine Arts Department lived a life abundant in contributions well beyond her career at Virginia State University, while some materials relate directly to her work as a faculty member. Her devotion to education spanned over four decades; these papers reflect her efforts. Born in 1895, Meredith was raised in a period which some consider the lowest point in African-American history since the antebellum era. A product of such adversity, she adjusted to work and achieve during and after a time of legal segregation. This collection speaks to her successes in overcoming the "obstacles" of both race and gender.

Beginning in 1930, Meredith corresponded frequently with family, most notably, her sister, Maude Terry. These letters reveal the depth of love and loyalty the family cultivated and nurtured for lifetime. They demonstrate the difference in women's roles between the black and white interdependent relationship with men; black women have received greater support from their peers in the arena of independence. In this vein, Meredith's family gave her nothing short of a full endorsement for her outstanding achievements. It is likely that such contributed to her ability to surmount societal resistance.

Many of Meredith's peers were educators. Her papers include correspondence with Helen Edmonds, Anne Crittendon Preston, and Jean Murrell Capers (who later made her mark in politics). The remaining correspondence comes from people of varied backgrounds, also as viable research material.

Another group of personal correspondence related to Stafford Evans, a prized student of Ms. Meredith. While there is some continuation of correspondence into the 1980s, most of these letters were written while Evans served in the navy from 1943-45. Included are copies of *The Mananan*, a WWII Black sailors' March and December of 1945. This sub-series lends expression to the ambiguity, which black soldiers felt while in fighting for a democracy to which they themselves were not privy.

Meredith's business records document the origins of the Azurest Syndicate in 1953. Ms. Meredith worked with her sister, Ms. Terry, to pioneer the development of a Black summer resort area known as the Azurest North. The Syndicate served to regulate the subdivision's lot sales. The unique aspect of this venture are numerous: the development of a black resort in this time period, the syndicate, and the project's creation and development by two Black women - whose careers were unrelated to such a field.

It appears that, from the 1950's through the 1970's some homes in Azurest North were designed by Ms. Meredith. Though she had no known formal architectural schooling, she created countless line and ink drawings as well as blueprints, which are also included in this collection. Several of these projects succeeded in being built. For many more, the end result is as yet undetermined.

Unquestionably, Meredith designed and built her own home, known as Azurest South, which she truly reflects her artistic gift. Blueprints, line drawings, and sketches of this home are available for research.

Found in another series are the plans for the proposed V. S. U. Alumni House. Beginning in 1949 and working through the next decade, Meredith was active with the Alumni House Committee in attempts to produce an Alumni House. She retained general Alumni records from as early as 1936 and ending in 1969.

Lastly, she created more than a dozen scrapbooks, devoting each to a different subject and/or person. They contain documents, photos, letters, news clippings, and ephemera, which combine to form a rich source of research on their topics. The materials cut across all the other sub-series in these collections.

Amaza Meredith maintained a life-long friendship with Edna Colson, former head of the Education Department at V. S. U. They also shared a residence and had mutual friends. Clearly, in order to research either person in- depth, it will be necessary to study the other. Some further correspondence exists in Colson/Hill the sub-series of MS. Colson's personal correspondence dating from 1905-79. This includes information of the trip to Europe made by Colson and Meredith. Some materials, however are restricted (Box 29).

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**Scrapbook - Personal Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 13:187

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 13:188

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 13:189

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 13:190

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 13:191

**Scrapbook - Family Photograph n.d.**

**Box-folder** 13:192

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 13:193

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 13:194

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 13:195

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 13:196

**Scrapbook-Personal Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:197

**Scrapbook - Personal Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:198

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:199

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:200

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:201

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:202

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:203

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:204

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:205

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

**Box-folder** 14:206

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:207

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:208

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:209

**Scrapbook - Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:210

**Scrapbook - Personal Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:211

**Scrapbook - Personal Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:212

**Scrapbook - Personal Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:213

**Scrapbook - Personal Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:214

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:215

**Scrapbook - Family Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:216

**Scrapbook n.d.**

Box-folder 14:217

**Scrapbook n.d.**

Box-folder 14:218

**Scrapbook - Personal Photographs n.d.**

Box-folder 14:219

**Scrapbook - Kersey Speech n.d.**

Box-folder 14:220

**Scrapbook - NAACP Membership Certificate n.d.**

Box-folder 14:221

**Scrapbook- Richards n.d.**

Box-folder 14:222

**Scrapbook - Meredith (Personal) n.d.**

Box-folder 14:223

**Scrapbook- Scrapbook - Report on Unrest at Kent State by Iris Richards n.d.**

Box-folder 14:224

## **Scrapbook - Meredith Historiography 1915 & A. S. 1940**

**Box-folder** 14:225

### **Scrapbook entitled "Photograph"**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 7.5 x 11.5 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

This is a collection of cards and programs. Included in this scrapbook is one of several telegrams.

### **Untitled scrapbook n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 6.5 x 10 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

This is a photographic record of Azurest South during its construction and as the home shared by Amaza Meredith and Edna Colson.

### **Scrapbook #1: Untitled n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 12.5 x 10 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

Correspondence, number of letters concerning Amamza Meredith teaching career in Lynchburg, and her being recruited to come to Virginia State by John M. Gandy. The other letters are mainly from friends concerning a variety of subjects. Included in the scrapbook is numerous of news-clippings, programs, tickets and other items collected by her long life.

### **Scrapbook #2: Art n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 10.5 x 11.5 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

Some correspondence, most of the materials consist of several programs, which were designed by Miss Meredith. Included in this book are also a number of speeches most concerning the teaching of or about art.

### **Scrapbook #3: Photographs n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 11 x 12 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

A collection of photographs covering a wide area.

### **Scrapbook #4: Poems n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 10 x 11.5 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

This scrapbook includes a number of poems and letters written by Amaza Lee Meredith. The Evening song and Alma Mater of Virginia State is embodied in this scrapbook. Other letters and poems written or given to Miss Meredith can also be found. There are newspaper-clippings of poems written by Miss Amaza and also others that she collected.

### **Scrapbook #5: My Children n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 10.5 x 11.5 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

Correspondence, photo's and newspaper-clippings from some of her former students. Included in this scrapbook are: James Gault Chander Flymn, Roderick Taylor, Fredrick F. Kersy, Reyenea Perry, Mildred Fountain, Huedillard Fitzgerald. Stanford Evens and others. There is addition some material about

Lynchberg Virginia.

### **Scrapbook # 6: A L 1895-19 -**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 11.5 x 11 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

Some correspondence, news-clipping, programs most of which document the establishment of the Meredith Art at Virginia State in 1972 Gallery.

### **Scrapbook #7: "Miss Anne" n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 9.5 x 11.5

#### **Scope and Content**

This scrapbook contains some correspondence, programs and printed articles about Anne Spencer of Lynchburg. Mrs. Spencer was a poet of the Harlem Renaissance Period. One of Miss Meredith sisters was married to Miss Spencer sons.

### **Scrapbook #8: Letters 1941-1976**

**Box** 15

#### **Scope and Content**

A Scrapbook of letters from a wide group of people dating from 1941 through 1976.

### **Scrapbook #9: Dr. I and Fred III 1980-1982**

**Box** 15

#### **Scope and Content**

Some correspondence photographs and cards of sympathy about the death of Iris Terry Richards. Dr. Richards was Miss Meredith niece.

### **Scrapbook #10: Untitled n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 10.5 x 11.5 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

News-clippings, newsletters and other material mostly about Art.

### **Scrapbook #11: Honors n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 10 x 11.5 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

A combination of items includes Miss Meredith's High School grades and diploma. There are letters of recognition and certificates.

### **Scrapbook #12: Cards n.d.**

**Box** 15

**Extent** 10.5 x 11.5 inches

#### **Scope and Content**

Most of the material document Miss Meredith involvement with the Gillfield Baptist Church in Petersburg, Va.

### **Scrapbook # 13: Amaza Lee Meredith September 1, 1958**

**Box** 15

#### **Scope and Content**

This scrapbook document Miss Meredith retirement from Virginia State University in 1958. There are cards, programs, letters and photographs.

## **SERIES VII. PHOTOS -- LOOSE**

**Aunt Bea, Miss Meredith 1980's**

Box-folder 16:226

**Eleanor (4 years) & Phalix (2 years) 1926**

Box-folder 16:227

**Angie Nicholas 1930**

Box-folder 16:228

**Chaucey Spencer 1939**

Box-folder 16:229

**Stafford Evans 1940's**

Box-folder 16:230

**Mary Moore 1942**

Box-folder 16:231

Box-folder 16:

**Stafford Evans 1943**

Box-folder 16:232

**Wayne 1960**

Box-folder 16:233

**Wm. Earl Brooks 6-6-61**

Box-folder 16:234

**Wayne, Mike 1961**

Box-folder 16:235

**Wayne 1961 or 1962**

Box-folder 16:236

**Mike 1962**

Box-folder 16:237

**Hattie Pearl Hilliard 1-25-64**

Box-folder 16:238

**Hattie Pearl in Huston 12/1964**

Box-folder 16:239

**Betty Blackburn 5/1965**

Box-folder 16:240

**Mr. & Mrs. Thadeus Boardman 11/13/65**

Box-folder 16:241

**Hitomi Young 1967**

Box-folder 16:242

**Hitomi and Warren Matthews 9/12/70**

**Box-folder** 16:243

**Hattie Pearl, others 1970's**

**Box-folder** 16:244

**Mike 1971**

**Box-folder** 16:245

**Wayne 1971**

**Box-folder** 16:246

**Wayne 1972**

**Box-folder** 16:247

**Wayne 1972**

**Box-folder** 16:248

**1972 Wayne**

**Box-folder** 16:249

**Wayne 1972**

**Box-folder** 16:250

**Dr. Colson, Miss Meredith 1973**

**Box-folder** 16:251

**Andre Wadlington 3/74**

**Box-folder** 16:252

**Orlando Dodson 1974**

**Box-folder** 16:253

**Randy Stevens 3/1/75**

**Box-folder** 16:254

**Wayne A. Stevens 3/3/75**

**Box-folder** 16:255

**Melanie Hillard, Andrea Waddlington, Teri Dawn 12/28/75**

**Box-folder** 16:256

**Dr. E. Colson, Nurse Gracie Pollard 8/8/78**

**Box-folder** 16:257

**Dr. Colson 8/8/78**

**Box-folder** 16:258

**Maisha 1979 (1 yr. Old)**

**Box-folder** 16:259

**Brenda Richards, Evelyn, Hempstead, N.Y. 5/29/80**

**Box-folder** 16:260

**Miss Amaza Meredith, Brenda Richards, Hempstead, N.Y. 5/29/80**

**Box-folder** 16:261

**Miss Meredith, S. Evan's daughter, Azurest South 8/12/80**

**Box-folder** 16:262

**Miss Meredith, S. Evans daughter, Azurest South 8/12/80**

**Box-folder** 16:263

**Miss Meredith 7/81**

**Box-folder** 16:264

**Myra Ball, Wilfred Ball n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:265

**Cornelia Brent n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:266

**James Brent Jr. n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:267

**Shirley, Clearence, Michele, Clearnecne IV, Jennifer n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:268

**The Dabneys n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:269

**Stafford Evans during WWII n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:270

**Stafford Evans n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:271

**Shirley Goode n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:272

**Meredith (Landscape) n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:273

**Miss Meredith n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:274

**Gayle Minnis n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:275

**Angelita Nicholas, Lestrita Nicholas n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:276

**Lestria Nicholas, Angelitca Nicholas n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:277

**Lestria Nicholas, Angelita Nicholas n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:278

**John Scott n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:279

**Wayne Stevens n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:280

**The Walter Pidely Family Christmas n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:281

**The Pidelys n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:282

**Elton Willis (6 yr. old) n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:283

**Grace Willis n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:284

**Ann Critendon, Preston Prairie View Texas 1965**

**Box-folder** 16:285

**Ann Critendon Preston, Prairie View Texas- Photos from Anne and Dot n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:286

**Ann Critendon Preston, Prairie View Texas- Andot n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:287

**Ann Critendon Preston, Prairie View Texas- Dog named Sherrie and Flower n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:288

**Ann Critendon Preston, Prairie View Texas 1965**

**Box-folder** 16:289

**Ann Critendon Preston, Prairie View Texas 1965**

**Box-folder** 16:290

**Ann Critendon Preston, Prairie View Texas - ducks 1965**

**Box-folder** 16:291

**Ann Critendon Preston, Prairie View Texas 1965**

**Box-folder** 16:292

**Ann Critendon Preston Prairie View Texas- Andot 8/16/57**

**Box-folder** 16:293

**Azurest South 6-2-26-28**

**Box-folder** 16:294

**Azurest South n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:295

**Azurest South n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:296

**Azurest South Dining Room n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:297

**Azurest South- Snow Winter -Furniture n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:298

**Azurest South, Dr. Colson, Miss Meredith, Nurse Pollard 7/78**

**Box-folder** 16:299

**Azurest South 1980**

**Box-folder** 16:300

**Azurest South 1980**

**Box-folder** 16:301

**Azurest South- Flowers n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:302

**Azurest South- Flowers Landscape n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:303

**Azurest n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:304

**Azurest South n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:305

**Azurest North n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:306

**Ann Spencer- Lynchburg, Va. Spencer Home n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:307

**Ann Spencer- Lynchburg, Va., Spencer Home n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:308

**Home - Lynchburg n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:309

**Anne Spencer Home n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:310

**Unidentified 1955**

**Box-folder** 16:311

**Unidentified n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:312

**Unidentified n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:313

**Unidentified n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:314

**Unidentified n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:315

**Unidentified n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:316

**Unidentified n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:317

**Unidentified n.d.**

**Box-folder** 16:318

## **SERIES VIII. PRINTED**

**Box** 17

## **SERIES IX. BLUE PRINTS, LINE DRAWINGS**

**Box** 18

## **SERIES X. OVERSIZED**

**Box** 18

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