

Tinsley, Edwards, and Rich family papers

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1870-1988

Title Statement

Tinsley, Edwards, and Rich family papersTinsley, Edwards, and Rich family papers MSS 16920

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Notes

Orange slip for Preservation. KA. review of scrapbook.

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-03-05 17:47:09 +0000.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16920

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1822

Unit Date

1870-1988

Unit Date

1819-1820

Language

English

source

Primary Sources, Uncharted Americana (Ann Arbor, MI)

Creator

Rich, William George, Jr., 1905-1988

Extent

.9 Cubic Feet 1 document box (letter) and 1 medium flat box

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was a purchase by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 18 July 2025.

Preferred Citation

MSS 16920, Tinsley, Edwards, and Rich family papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

Biographical / Historical

The collection (MSS 16920) contains the Tinsley, Edwards, and Rich family history (1820-1978) of Amherst, Virginia written and compiled by William George Rich III (1905-1988) and his family about his great-great grandfather who called himself William Tinsley (born into enslavery in 1795, and freed in 1820), his great grandparents Nelson and Lauren (Broady) Tinsley – and his grandparents Charles Robert Tinsley (1851-1919) and Betty Edwards Tinsley (1855-1924) (daughter of Malinda Edwards, an indigenous woman) and their eight grandchildren (William George Rich III and his cousins.) The eight grandchildren, called the cousins of Amherst, (many of them earning college and post college degrees) were - Vernon Allan Rich (1902-1985), William George Rich III (1904-1988), Celestine Rich Arnold (1915-?) - born to Bessie Tinsley 1877-1951 and William George Rich II who was Deaf; Alma Brown (1902-1926), Charles "Son" Brown (1904-1959), Hausie Brown (1910-1934) who were the children of Lillie Tinsley (1879-1922) and Charles Brown; Constance Thomas Parker (1917-1981) was the daughter of Hariette "Hattie" Tinsley (1881-1949) and Richard Gates Thomas; and Dorothy Massie Christian (1904-1966) was the daughter of Signora Tinsley (1885-1940) and Hugh Massie (1883-1980).

Content Description

The collection MSS 16920 contains the Tinsley, Edwards, Rich family history (1795; 1820-1978) written by William George Rich III (1905-1988) about his great-great grandfather who called himself William Tinsley (born into enslavery in 1795, and freed in 1820), his great grandparents Nelson and Lauren Broady Tinsley, (an indigenous woman) and his grandparents Charles Robert Tinsley (1851-1919) and Betty Edwards Tinsley (1855-1924) (daughter of an indigenous woman Malinda Edwards) and their eight grandchildren (William George Rich III and his 7 cousins) who lived on their own land in Amherst, Virginia. The collection is remarkable in the amount of detail that is provided about a prosperous African American family living during Jim Crow laws. Charles Robert Tinsley was the owner of a livery stable and built a house for his children, grandchildren and his parents, Nelson and Lauren Tinsley.

Betty Edwards Tinsley (wife of Charles Robert Tinsley) inherited land from her parents, Washington Edwards and Malinda Edwards (an indigenous woman.) Her father was a minister and may have been white or mixed race. Charles Robert Tinsley sold part of that land and built a farm and successful livery business in Amherst, near Lynchburg, where several generations of the family lived a comfortable life on 64 Depot Road.

There are typed family histories in homemade scrapbooks documenting multiple generations of the Tinsley-Rich-Edwards family, self-described as a prosperous and "happy" African American family and with deep roots in Virginia and highly respected by other African American and white families.

The collection contains a photocopy of an 1819 Notice of Sale of six enslaved men of which one man (William Tinsley) was freed and saved his own for sale notice. Jacob and Isaac Tinsley, son and heirs of the white William Tinsley, created the for-sale notice "Six Lively Young Negroes". The white heirs made enough money from the sale to free the seventh person, who decided to call himself William Tinsley. The name of William Tinsley's wife is unknown. They had a son named Nelson Tinsley, born in 1823 who married Lauren Broady in 1850.

The Tinsley, Edwards, Rich family collection is a rich resource which details their family life and describes family members and their close relationships. It contains family photographs with compelling clarity from the 1890s to the 1950s, that bring this family to life.

There are documents including news clippings, ephemera, genealogical charts, certificates, military separation papers, a manuscript plan map of the Tinsley "Homestead" and its plot in Amherst, a genealogical

essay on family history, including personal recollections, noting that Rich II was born deaf and was sent for schooling at the Kendall School (Gadaulet College) in Washington DC.

There are two homemade scrapbooks and two albums with nearly 400 mounted photographs of various sizes and formats, as well as nearly 200 loose photographs in and out of albums. There are carte-de-visites, cabinet card photographs, negatives, and photo postcards.

One includes Bessie Tinsley Rich's album, which contains 117 mounted and approximately 50 loose photographs, all dating from about 1870-1950, and with ink text annotations written directly on pages.

One includes Celestine Rich's album containing 173 mounted photographs, approximately 35 loose, mostly from the 1930s.

Keywords

African American families

African Americans -- Virginia

Deafness

African Americans -- Photographs

genealogies (histories)

Primary Sources, Uncharted Americana (Ann Arbor, MI)

Description of Subordinate Components

Tinsley-Edwards Legacy history and photographs (homemade scrapbook)

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/282582

Unit Date 1819-1978

Mixed Materials [X032784978] 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Rich-Tinsley legacy history and photographs (homemade scrapbook)

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/282583

Unit Date 1832-1978

Mixed Materials [X032784978] 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Photographs, documents, ephemera including military service papers

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/282584

Unit Date 1932-1988

Mixed Materials [X032784978] 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Photograph negatives

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/282585

Unit Date 1906-1956

Mixed Materials [X032784978] 1 (box)

Container 4-6 (folder)

Photographs and greeting cards

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/282586

Unit Date 1920-1945

Mixed Materials [X032784978] 1 (box)

Container 7 (Folder)

Photo Albums of Bessie Edwards Tinsley and Celestine Rich Arnold

Unit ID [Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID /repositories/3/archival_objects/282587

Unit Date 1870-1950

Mixed Materials [X006178828] 1 (Flat_Box)