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Fletcher and Martin families papers

Title: Fletcher and Martin families papers

Collection No: MSS.199

Extent: 1 cubic foot

Inclusive Dates: 1909-1958

Abstract: The collection comprises the papers of two Black families in Memphis, Tennessee, the Fletchers and Martins, comprising correspondence, Freemason documents and other printed items, for the first half of the twentieth century.

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Scope and contents

The papers of the Harry and Hattie Fletcher family and the William R. and Estella Martin family contain letters, papers and printed items reflecting the lives of African Americans in Memphis and Chicago in the first half of the twentieth century. Hattie Fletcher and Estella Martin appear to have been sisters. Other Fletchers mentioned include Sallie (Sally) and Romeo Fletcher. The earlier letters of Harry Fletcher illuminate social relationships and courtship among young people in the early years of the twentieth century. Letters from Chicago indicate living conditions, social activities and the effects of relocation there. A few letters in the collection touch on the Great Migration during World War I. The Martin papers, especially those of Estella Martin, show something of the internal organization of the Black Masonic groups in Memphis and Tennessee. There is also some correspondence of the Christian family.

Many of the letters and papers contain references to church activities and suggest the important role church membership played in the Black community. Several of the letters, tickets and other printed items shed light on other social groups and activities. A few items, those pertaining to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and to the shoeshine business in Memphis, relate to labor conditions. A number of the business cards in the collection come from black-owned businesses in Memphis and elsewhere.

Subject terms

African American freemasons—Tennessee.
Fletcher, Harry.
Martin, Estella.
Martin, William R.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder

Correspondence:

Fletcher family:

- 1 1909-1913. Letters from Chicago, Jackson, Mississippi, Rogersville and Oakville, Tennessee, Birmingham, Alabama. Several letters pertain to courtship.
November 24, 1910, very small photo of two young girls.
July 22, 1912, Jackson, Mississippi, a woman's reaction to breaking an engagement. "I am no professional man's daughter.... I have had as good school advantages as most colored girls receive "
November 30, 1912, letter from American Institute of Mentalism, Los Angeles,

- California.
- 2 1914. Letters from Memphis, Chicago and Jackson, Mississippi. Several refer to courtship, one is invitation to Crystal Social Club.
March 23, refers to Easter rallies and fund raising for church.
November 1, woman describes play "Today" and gives her reaction to it.
- 3 1915. Letters from Memphis, Chicago, Jackson, Mississippi.
January 31, Loveday alludes to her work as a teacher in Jackson and refers to events in the black community there - a program by the Williams' Singers and conviction of Dr. C.N. Miller for embezzlement.
April 6, Chicago, Cousin Marie mentions the Jack Johnson versus Willard fight. She states that Johnson lost in a fake fight. Also refers to church rallies and a wedding.
August 27, Minnette Setturs (?) in Chicago writes about going to Michigan City and South Bend, Indiana. She liked the trip but commented on how few black people there were there, "not over a hundred in the hole [sic] city."
- 4 1916-1917. Letters from Memphis, Chicago, Jackson, Mississippi, Hazlehurst, Mississippi.
March 28, 1916, Irene Winrow at Collins Chapel Hospital mentions her dislike of talking on the telephone, she prefers to write.
March 31, 1916, Chicago, contains church news and references to black employees.
March 25, 1917, Lovedae writes about the relationships between men and women and job prospects in the North. "I read where the colored are fairing [sic] poorly in the North. Some write not to come unless you already have money and a job in view.... The soldiers are here and I am so afraid. Don't think they will be here very long. I hope not."
- 5 Lovedae (Loveday) Winfrey Fletcher, 1918-1919.
- 6 1920-1922.
March 15, 1922, Essay for the U.S. Civil Service Commission on "Good Roads to Farmers."
April 23, 1922, Memphis, draft of essay to Porter School, "Corn is More Beneficial to the United States than Cotton."
- 7 1924-1928.
March 8, 1924, letter of reference for Harry Fletcher from Commercial Appeal.
June 20, 1924, Israel Peres states that he has written Fletcher a letter of recommendation to the Civil Service.
April 29, 1927, Obituary of Mrs. Sally Fletcher, Chicago. Born in Brownsville, Tennessee, and widow of Romeo Fletcher.
- 8 1931-1935.
- 9 1947-1949.
1949, form letters from Metropolitan Baptist Church, YWCA, Vance Avenue branch.
- 10 1950-1951.
- 11 1952- 1958.
December 4, 1952, Cornelia Hunter, Chicago, comments on the presidential election, "We didn't want Ike but, we stuck to the Republicans, and neither did we want Stevenson, knowing he didn't do any thing as governor of Chicago."
- Martin family:**
- 12 1920-1929.
May 21, 1920, Memphis, a complaint about the conduct of a Mason who drinks and

abuses his family.

July 27, 1920, Memphis, By-laws of Eunice Chapter, Order of Eastern Star.

March 1, 1927, Memphis, Estella Martin writes regarding the Memphis Court, Daughters of Isis.

August 19, 1928, St. Louis, Estella Martin describes Eastern Star conference to husband William R. Martin.

13 1930-1932. Correspondence concerning the Daughters of Isis. Estella Martin comments on some of her organization's activities to her husband.

14 1934-1938.

August 8, 1934, Jackson, Tennessee, Minutes of Eureka Grand Court, Heroines of Jericho.

September 25, 1937, Ada Christian, Providence, Rhode Island, comments that "Times are hard everywhere, so when cotton is too cheap, the South is hard up also."

July 28, 1938, letter from Fred Jones, Tennessee State Penitentiary, to Aunt Estella.

15 1948-1950.

1949 list of members of Rebecca Chapter No. 100, Order of Eastern Star, East Memphis.

October 1949, handwritten "Official Circular of Eureka Grand Court, Heroines of Jericho, OES."

16 1952-1954.

Minutes of the 1952 Order of the Eastern Star, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Christian family:

17 Lula, Chicago, to Alex Christian, Memphis, 1919.

January 25, description of living conditions.

May 6, "That's one thing about Chicago the people don't medel you bisiniss. Every body try to make a living and thay have not got time [sic]."

18 Lula, Chicago, to Alex Christian, Memphis, 1920-1921.

March 19, 1920, Black businesses in Chicago are "picking up" and wages are also rising.

19 W.C. Christian, 1920-1921.

March 1, 1921, Memphis, state and county license to shine shoes.

Other papers:

20 Incomplete letters and notes, essay on disease.

21 Song lyrics, speech, papers relating to the Eastern Star, notice from Colored Masonic Temple, Memphis.

"Walking Up the King's Highway", "Jesus Knows All About It", "Traveling On", "Until I Found the Lord", 'Soldiers' Cause', Address to Grand Army of the Republic, Spanish American War Veterans, Eastern Star obituary, 'Paper for the Chapter of Sorrow'

22 Fletcher business papers, 1919-1952.

Includes Civil Service examination application, invoices, bills, several of which pertain to a shoeshine stand for Al or A.D. Fletcher.

23 Martin business papers, 1942.

24 Advertising mail, 1.

Insurance ads, coupons, Clay Burton Vance on Life Readings (c. 1911) (Large Vance advertisement in OS1).

25 Advertising mail, 2.

Magic Moving Picture Postcard - Our Next President from Merrimac Clothes, 1913; finance ads, appliance ads, insurance ads, ad from Father Flanagan's Boys' Town with

- drawing of school on back, furniture ads.
- 26 Printed items, 1920-1951 and undated.
 Postcard - Morris Memorial Building, Nashville.
 Cotton Belt Café, Memphis, card.
 Booklet from Paracamph Co., Louisville, Ky.
 "Mississippi A'Roll", 16:8, published on board the "Know Mississippi Better Train",
 1940 July 22.
 Memphis Labor Conference program, Beale Avenue Baptist Church, 1947.
 "Catechism of Mattos" by William Eason, Memphis, Tennessee, 1920.
 Flyer to Pullman Porters, by R.G. Fowler, aimed at black porters on unionization.
 "Southern Churchman" magazine, 105:23. June 10, 1939.
 Program - Scottish Rite Masons, Washington, D.C., 1922.
 Program: Greater White Stone Baptist Church, Memphis, City Ushers' Association of
 Baptist Pastors' Alliance, 1951.
- OS1 "Olivet Baptist Church Herald", 27:43, Chicago, 1939. Annotated by Marie Carlisle.
- 27 Notebooks (2). Contain notes on math, grammar, geography.
- 28 Wedding invitations. Hawkins-Taylor, Chicago, 1916 September 7; Woodruff-Jackson,
 Memphis, 19?? June 20.
- 29 Thank you notes. For gifts and for expressions of sympathy.
- 30 Thank you notes. Includes an invitation from the Social Clubs of Memphis for a "Tete-a-
 Tete" at which Mrs. Portia Washington Pittman, Booker Washington's daughter, is the
 guest of honor.
- 31 Personal calling cards.
- 32 Business cards, Memphis.
- 33 Business cards, places other than Memphis. Folder
- 34 Membership cards, tickets, invitations.
 Includes tickets pertaining to church events, Parkview Colored Employees Dance, 1937,
 Benefit Entertainment to Buy Shoes for Poor Colored Children sponsored by Colored
 Employees of Goldsmiths', 1932, and an application card for Seminole Social Club.
- OS1 Advertisement. Linen picture of Buster Brown, Buster Brown Shoes.
- Addition:**
- 35 Moolah Temple No. 54 Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine of North and
 South America
- 36 Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons
- 37 Rising Star Chapter; Lodge of Sorrow; Knights of Pythias; Colored Masonic Temple;
 Knight Templars.
- 38 Grand United Order of Odd Fellows
- 39 Emancipated Knights Sunday School and Church Union
- 40 Daughters of Isis of North and South America
- 41 Heroines of Jericho (Estella Martin).
- 42 Excelsior Grand Chapter Order of Eastern Star (Estella Martin).
- 43 Colored M.E. Church in America - Minutes of the 32nd Annual West Tennessee
 Conference, Jackson, Tennessee, 1913.
- 44 The Horseman Club; Railroad Boosters Club; Hotel Men's Improvement Club; Douglas
 Social Club. 1910-1958.
- 45 Politics, 1928-1952.

- 46 Entertainment handbills, 1921 and undated.
- 47 Religion, 1936-1950.
- 48 Miscellaneous correspondence, 1925-1951.
- 49 Miscellaneous documents, 1911-1955.
- OS2 Newspaper: "The Eastern Arkansas World", Earle, Arkansas, 1:8, 1940 August 31.