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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

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Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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Proper acknowledgment of LLMVC materials must be made in any resulting writing or publications. The correct form of citation for this manuscript group is given on the summary page. Copies of scholarly publications based on research in the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections are welcomed.

SUMMARY

- Size.** 3.5 linear ft., 59 volumes, 2 OS boxes, 1 OS folder
- Geographic Locations.** Mississippi, Louisiana.
- Inclusive Dates.** 1793-1951, undated.
- 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 Papers, Mss. 529, 561, 597, etc., Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries Special Collections, Baton Rouge, La.
- Stack Locations.** U:161; O:70-72; 65:100; OS:J
- Also available on.** UPA Microfilm 5322, Series I, Part 4, Reels 1-6.
This collection has also been digitized in its entirety (excluding clippings and sheet music) and can be accessed online through the [Louisiana Digital Library](#).

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

William T. Johnson (1809?-1851) and his sister, Adelia, were the children of Amy Johnson, an enslaved woman 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 man from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. 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 the formerly enslaved 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.

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

Henry Lewis Bailey. Johnston practiced medicine in Natchez until his death in 1938.

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 people who frequented his barber shop.

Among the early papers are records of land sales and transfers, including one in Spanish signed by Manual 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 lawsuit 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. Teacher's 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. 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), 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 Newspaper 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 for the following:

Demorest's Monthly Magazine, month, 1869, incomplete issue.
Fireside Gem, Waterside Maine, Oct. 1898, Vol. 8, No. 6.
Harper's Weekly, September 1860, Vol. IV, No. 192, incomplete issue.
Home & Farmer, Louisville, Ky., Aug. 15, 1895, incomplete issue.
The Home Treasury, October 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.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**Series I. Correspondence and Manuscript Materials, 1829-1937.**

Includes personal and business correspondence. Manuscript materials include recipes, essays, a speech, lesson plans, an undated property map, and miscellaneous manuscript notes.

Series II. Legal and Financial Documents, 1793-1936.

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 lawsuits.

Series III. Manuscript Volumes, 1808-1921.

The manuscript volumes in the Johnson Papers encompass 53 volumes. Included are six bank books (1869-1871, 1906-1909), three cash books (1928-1858), seven daybooks (1822-1854), fifteen diaries (1835-1874), six ledgers (1808-1859); and sixteen notebooks (1844-1900).

Series IV. Printed Materials, 1830-1951, undated.

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). Thomas P. Dolbear's *Chirographic Atlas* (New Orleans, 1850) can be found among the two printed volumes in this series. Also included are a few newspaper issues, some incomplete, 1860-1905, and clippings.

Series V. Printed Music, 1834-1908, undated.

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.

Series VI. Photographs, circa 1895-1910.

Three photographs: one identified as Dr. Bailey, one unidentified portrait of a man in uniform, and a group portrait of Johnson family members.

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

<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.)	
		2	Correspondence, 1855-1859. (25 items.)	
		3	Correspondence, 1860-1874. (44 items.)	
		4	Correspondence, 1875-1908. (39 items.)	
		5	Correspondence, 1900-1937. (29 items.)	
		6	Correspondence, approximately 1845-1929. (13 items.)	
		7	Correspondence, approximately 1860-1934. (14 items.) Contains envelopes (empty) with manuscript notes.	
		8	Manuscript materials, approximately 1840-1921. (16 items.) Contains manuscript notes and recipes.	
		9	Manuscript materials, approximately 1840-1903. (7 items.) Contains literary manuscripts.	
		10	Manuscript map, approximately 1850s. (1 map.)	
		11	School lesson plans, approximately 1894-1895. (6 items.)	
		12	School lesson plans, approximately 1894-1910. (20 items.)	
Series II. Legal and financial documents, 1793-1936.				
		13	Baptismal records, 1842-1856. (8 items.)	
		14	1793-1795. (1 conveyance.)	
		15	1822-1829. (5 items.)	
		16	1830-1839. (17 items.)	
		17	1840-1848. (24 items.)	
		18	1843-1849. (14 items.)	
		19	1850-1854. (48 items.)	
		20	1854-1859. (50 items.)	
		21	1860-1866. (84 items.)	
		22	1867-1870. (51 items.)	
		23	1867-1873. (70 items.)	
		24	1874-1899. (84 items.)	
		25	1900-1935. (89 items.)	
		26	approximately 1850-1929. (14 items.)	
		27	approximately 1850-1929. (31 items.)	
OS:J	2	1	1802-1836. (5 items.) 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 1	1803. (1 item) Contains indenture conveying land. [oversize]
		2	2	1839-1845. (4 items.) Contains indentures conveying land.
		3	3	1846-1885. (4 items.) Contains indentures conveying land.

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
OS:J	2	4	1866-1876. (6 items.) Contains an oath of taxable property for the estate of William Johnson (1866 May 1); teacher's certificates for Anna and Josephine Johnson (1873-1875); a map of Missouri, Kansas, and Texas railway connections (1875); and an address delivered by Theodore H. Green (July 11, 1876).	
		5	1885 October. (1 item.) Contains an issue of <i>The North Central and South American Exposition Gazette</i> for October 1885.	
Series III. Manuscript volumes, 1808-1921.				
U:161	1	28	Vol. 1, Bank book, January 1869 – October 1871 Vol. 2, Bank book, May 15, 1906 Vol. 3, Bank book, November 1906 Vol. 4, Bank book, December 1906 - July 1907. Vol. 5, Bank book, December 1906 - July 1907. Vol. 6, Bank book, December 1906 – November 1909.	
		O:70	--	Vol. 7 Cash book, November 1828 - September 1834.
		--	Vol. 8 Cash book, October 1830 - October 1837.	
		--	Vol. 9 Cash book, November 1844 – July 1858.	
		--	Vol. 10 Daybook, February – June 1822.	
		U:161	1	29-31
O:70	--	Vol. 12	Daybook, October 1830 - October 1840.	
		Vol. 13	Daybook, October 1830 - October 1844.	
O:72	11	--	Vol. 14, Daybook, 1849-1854.	
O:70	--	Vol. 15	Daybook, January 1851 - September 1867.	
		Vol. 16	Daybook, October 1900 - December 1921.	
U:161	1	32-35	Vol. 17, Diary, 1835-1837.	
		O:70	--	Vol. 18 Diary, 1837.
U:161	1	--	Vol. 19 Diary, 1837-1841.	
		O:70	--	Vol. 20, Diary, 1841-1843.
		O:70	--	Vol. 21 Diary, 1843-1844.
		O:71	--	Vol. 22 Diary, 1844-1845.
		--	Vol. 23 Diary, 1846 and cash book entries, 1843, 1846.	
		--	Vol. 24 Diary, 1847.	
		--	Vol. 25 Diary, 1842, 1847-1848.	
		--	Vol. 26 Diary and cash book entries, 1848	
		--	Vol. 27 Diary, 1848-1850.	
		O:72	11	--
O:71	--	Vol. 29	Diary, 1850-1851.	
		Vol. 30	Diary, 1851.	
		Vol. 31	Diary, 1864-1874.	
		Vol. 32	Ledger, 1808-1811, 1840.	

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
O:71	--	Vol. 33	Ledger, 1833-1837.
	--	Vol. 34	Ledger, August 1835 - November 1839.
O:72	--	Vol. 35	Ledger, January 1837 - April 1839.
U:161	1	39	Vol. 36, Ledger, February 1837 - November 1867.
O:72	--	Vol. 37	Ledger, March 1858 - May 1859.
U:161	1	40	Vol. 38, Notebook, July 1844 - May 1857.
O:72	--	Vol. 39	Notebook, October 1846 - August 1866.
	11	--	Vol. 40, Notebook, March 1848 - December 1866.
		--	Vol. 41, Notebook, March 1850 - April 1861.
	--	Vol. 42	Notebook, March 1852 - August 1859.
	--	Vol. 43	Notebook, January 1854 - October 1866.
	11	--	Vol. 44, Notebook, January 1856 - August 1863.
		--	Vol. 45, Notebook, October 1867 - June 1868.
		--	Vol. 46, Notebook (Diary), January 1868 - December 1868.
		--	Vol. 47, Notebook (Diary), January 1870 - August 1871.
		--	Vol. 48, Notebook (Diary), January 1872 - July 1877.
	--	Vol. 49	Notebook, January 1872 - July 1876.
	11	--	Vol. 50, Notebook, January 1872 - July 1876.
		--	Vol. 51, Notebook, July 1897 - June 1900.
		--	Vol. 52, Notebook Attendance Record, January 1871 - June 1872.
	--	Vol. 53	Notebook of Verse, approximately 1863-1874.
Series IV. Printed materials, 1830-1951, undated.			
U:161	1	41	General printed items, approximately 1830-1950. (29 items.)
		42	Religious printed items, approximately 1895-1929. (19 items.)
OS:J	2	6	Newspaper and periodical clippings, 1860-1905, undated
O:72	--	Vol. 54	<i>Thomas P. Dolbear's Chirographic Atlas</i> (New Orleans, 1850)
	--	Vol. 55	<i>William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro</i> (LSU Press, 1951). William Ransom Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis, editors.
Series V. Printed Sheet Music, 1834-1908, undated.			
65:100	4	1-13	Sheet music, 1834-1859
	5	1-10	Sheet music, 1860-1869.
	6	1-24	Sheet music, 1871-1908
	7	1-9	Sheet music, undated
	8	1-9	Sheet music, undated
	9	--	Sheet music, undated
	10	1-2	Sheet music from <i>Waverly Magazine</i> (1863, 1865), <i>The New York Musical Era</i> (1890), <i>The Natchez Banner Music Supplement</i> (1894), and <i>Comfort</i> magazine (1895-1908, undated)
	--	Vols. 56-58	Bound sheet music, undated

JOHNSON (WILLIAM T. AND FAMILY) PAPERS

1793-1951, undated

Mss. 529**LSU LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
65:100	--	Vol. 59	<i>Bertini's Piano Method Complete</i> [pages missing], undated
			Series VI. Photographs, circa 1895-1910.
U:161	1	43	Photographs, approximately 1895-1910. (2 items.)
OS:J	3	--	Photograph (group portrait), approximately 1900-1910.