

A Guide to the James Hugo Johnston Papers 1865-1914

James Hugo Johnston, Sr. Papers, 1865-1914
1865-1914

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

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Abstract

The James Hugo Johnston, Sr. papers do not contain any correspondence of a personal nature. Although there is very little correspondence, there are several notebooks maintained by Mr. Johnston; during his lifetime. Several books document the early proceedings of the Peabody Reading Circle and there are some early notes of the formation of the Virginia Teachers Association. There are also a number of notebooks documenting the Johnston household expenses, and a number of speeches. James Hugo Johnston, Sr. was the second President of Virginia State University from 1887-1914.

Repository

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

Administrative Information

Access

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

A gift to Virginia State University in 1963.

Preferred Citation

James Hugo Johnston, Sr., 1865-1914 , Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

Biographical/Historical Information

James Hugo Johnston was born in Richmond, Virginia., July 29, 1858. Not much is known about his parents. He graduated from the Richmond Normal School in Richmond, in 1876, and that Fall he was elected a teacher in the public schools of his native city. He began in the lowest grade of the system and made his way upward until he was elected principal of the Baker Street group of schools, having twelve teachers under him.

Because of his work at the Baker Street School the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, John L. Buchanan, made him conductor of the Peabody Institute for "colored" teachers held at Lynchburg, Virginia. This was one of the largest and most successful institutes ever held in the state. Here was organized the Virginia Teachers' Reading Circle, and the conductor of the Institute was elected President.

In 1886, Governor Fitzbush Lee, appointed him a member of the Board of Vistors of the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute. He was also elected Secretay of the Board because of his record at the Baker Street School. Mr. Johnston would also tahe under his administration a three year; Course of study was approved by the State Superintendent and begun in the Institute in June 1889.

In addition to serving as President, he ws professor of Philosopohy, Moral Philosphy, and Political Economy. It was in recognition of his ability and worth that Shaw University, as its commencement held on May 23, 1889, conferred on him the degree of A.M.; and in 1882, the Ph. D.

For three years he was corresponding secretary of the Virginia Baptist Sunday School Convention. Mr. Johnston was an active Mason and has worked his way to the highest level in that order. He served two terms each as Grand Master and Grand Commander of the State.

As a member of the chapter, he attended the National Masonic convention held at Chicago in 1887. Here he delivered the opening address, "The True Status of Negro Masonry in America."

Scope and Content Information

The records of the Peabody Reading Circle and the "Virginia Teachers Reading" document the development of profesionalism of Africn american Teachers in Virginia. Minutes, reports and programs covering the period is all that remains of what would become the largest African American profesional organization in Virginia. The record books which were used to keep an account of the family's household expense are also useful for social and family history.

Series Description

Series I. Correspondence, 1865, 1908 Two letters, One of which is a letter of introduction for a former slave.

Series II. Legal Documents Several items, a teaching contract for the city of Richmond, Court documents

concerning a will, an indenture and a petition.

Series III. Printed. Subseries A. Newspaper and Journals. Two African American Newspapers from the 1880's and 1895, V.A. & C.I. Journal. Subseries B. Flyers and Invitations. Flyers and invitation from various schools in and outside of Virginia. Included are items from the Richmond Normal School and the Peabody Normal Institute. Subseries C. Catalogs. Two items, documenting programs conducted at Howard and the Lynchburg Seminary. Subseries D. Awards, Commissions, and Degrees. some of the honors and awards given to James hugo Johnston, Sr. during his life.

Series IV. Minutes and Reports Minutes and Reports documenting some of the educational activities in Virginia regarding the education of African Americans, most of the material is about V.N. & C.I.

Series V. Ledgers and Account Books A. V.T.A. Record Books, the minutes of the Virginia Teachers Association documenting formation of this group in the 1880's. B. Johnston Home, records, Johnston family record books documenting their day to day activities and expenses.

Series VI. Literary, Speeches Speeches delivered by James Hugo Johnston. The speeches are ranging and provide some information about current issues of the day. The speeches are arranged chronologically, those without dates may be found at the end of the series.

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