

A Guide to the Robert Prentiss Daniel Papers 1920-1966

Robert Prentiss Daniel 1920-1966

1920-1966

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

1920-1966

Language

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Abstract

Personal and business correspondence of the fifth President of Virginia State University. Robert P. Daniel was one of the movers in establishing what is now Norfolk State University. He was also very involved in efforts to integrate the institutions of higher learning in Virginia. Acc.#1976-16

Creator

Robert Printiss Daniel

Physical Characteristics

5,000 items

Repository

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

Administrative Information

Access

Additional information about Robert P. Daniels may be found in the Virginia State University Archives.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

A gift from the Daniel Family.

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Robert Prentiss Daniel Papers, Accession # 1976-16, Special Collections and University Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

Biographical/Historical Information

Robert P. Daniel was elected to become the fifth president of Virginia State University(then Virginia State College)in December of 1949. He assumed his duties in February of 1950. Mr. Daniel however was not a stranger to Virginia State, having been born on the campus in 1902. This strange twist of fate makes Robert P. Daniel the only President of a state-supported institution who was born on the campus, which he would later serve as chief administrator.

The historical background, which explains, this unusual occurrence lay in the origins of the Daniel Family. The roots of this family began in Louisa County Virginia, with Lucy Langston, Robert Daniel's great great grandmother, who was described as being of African and Virginia Indian origins.

Lucy langston lived as the only wife of Ralph Quarles, a white farmer and landholder in Louisa County. Although this was not a legal union(black-white marriages had been outlawed in Virginia in 1692), the two lived as man and wife for more than thirty years.

From this union came four children: Maria (Daniel's great grandmother), Gideon, Charles and John Mercer Langston (who become the first president of Virginia State in 1886-1887. Ralph Quarles had given his common law wife her freedom earlier and all four of these children were born free between the years of 1800-1829.

Maria Langston married early and her proud father gave her a section of his farm as a wedding gift and also from her father she recieved as her personal property her husband Joseph Powell, who was a slave belonging to Ralph Quarles. Maria Langston like other free blacks, (men and women) around the state of Virginia were forced to hold their husbands and or wives as their personal property in order to keep the family unit together.

From this union came Robert Daniel's grandmother Lucinda, who like her mother also married a slave and was forced to hold him as her enslaved property. Charles Daniel, father of Robert Daniel was born in 1845 in Louisa and until around 1870 lived with his father and learned his trade in shoemaking.

In 1871 he entered the Richmond Institute graduating from the Normal Department in 1877 and its Academic Department in 1878. He studied law for one year at Howard University and then accepted a teaching position in Danville, Virginia.

In 1888 he was invited to become the Secretary of Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute. It was here in the old Virginia hall that Robert Daniel and all but one of the eight Daniel children were born.

Robert P. Daniel graduated from Virginia Union University in 1924. Later, he obtained his MA and his doctorate at Teachers College. He also completed a post doctoral study in Bible at the Union Theological Seminary in New York during the summers of 1943 and 1946.

Robert Daniel began his career in higher education at Virginia Union University in Richmond as an instructor in mathematics in 1924. Concurrently, Dr. Daniel supervised the establishment of the Norfolk division of Virginia Union University which later became the Norfolk division of Virginia State College. He was named president of Shaw University in 1936 until 1950.

Dr. Daniel was elected president of Virginia State College by the State Board of Education on December 15th 1949 following the death of Luther H. Foster.

Dr. Daniel was an active member of several state and national professional organizations.

Scope and Content Information

The Daniel Papers document primarily his becoming the President of Shaw University in 1936 and Virginia State University in 1950. There is also correspondence concerning his activities with a national radio program "Wings over Jordan" and with Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. In the Daniel papers are also some very interesting newsletters printed by the "Political Action Committee" of the Petersburg Improvement Association. These newsletters address the attempts to desegregate public facilities in Petersburg.

Series Description

Series I. Correspondences 1926-1960 Some personal and business correspondence of Robert P. Daniel. Most of the correspondences has to do with Mr. Daniel's leaving Shaw University to become the fifth President of Virginia State College in 1949-1950. sub-series A. Personal Correspondence. sub-series B. Business Correspondence

Series II. Organizations and Affiliations Sub-series A. Alpha Phi Alpha Sub-Series B. Virginia Union Alumni Association Sub-Series C. Class (1924) Reunions

Series III. Literary Speeches, Sermons and radio addresses made by Robert P. Daniel from 1936-1966. speeches are arranged by subject and location. Writings State Teachers Report. sub-series A. speeches. sub-series B. Sermons. sub-series C. writings.

Series IV. Photographs. Sub-series A. Personal Sub-series B. The International advisory Board on Liberia Sub-series C. The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

Series V. Printed. Sub-Series A. Programs and Flyers with Meetings Attended by Robert Daniel. Sub-Series B. Awards and Certificates Presented by Robert Daniel over a period of years documenting his involvement in a number of organizations. Sub-Series C. Virginia Union University Printed Items generated by Virginia Union University which includes programs, bulletins, and a short history of Virginia Union University. D. Shaw Printed Items such as Bulletins, and other programs E. The Sphinx F. Degrees and Appointments. Earned degrees for Robert Daniel and members of the Daniel and Taylor Families. Included are appointments for Robert Daniel for several commissions G. Newspapers. Several issues of Black owned newspapers, which were published in North Carolina, Virginia, Massachusetts, and New York. H. Newsclippings. Newsclippings from a number of Newspaper mostly from Virginia I. Civil Rights in Petersburg. Newsletters and Flyers concerning some of the civil rights issues in Petersburg during the 1960's

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