

Colored National Press, Letter by William Murrell A&M 4397

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June 26, 1884



Title Statement

Colored National Press, Letter by William Murrell A&M 4397

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Publication Statement

Publisher: West Virginia and Regional History Center

1549 University Ave.
P.O. Box 6069
Morgantown, WV 26506-6069
Business Number: 304-293-3536
wvrhcref@westvirginia.libanswers.com
URL: <https://wvrhc.lib.wvu.edu>



2019/02/05

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/repositories/2/resources/6490

Unit Date

June 26, 1884

Language

English

Creator

Murrell, William, fl. 1884

Extent

.01 Linear Feet 4 leaves (1 folder)

Physical Location

West Virginia and Regional History Center / West Virginia University / 1549 University Avenue / P.O. Box 6069 / Morgantown, WV 26506-6069 / Phone: 304-293-3536 / URL: <https://wvrhc.lib.wvu.edu/>

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Scope and Contents

A four-page letter from the general manager of the Colored National Associated Press (CNAP), William Murrell, to Stephen B. Elkins, on CNAP letterhead, which sheds light on the political mobilization of African Americans in the 1884 election. According to I. Garland Penn's *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Willey & Co., 1891), Colonel William Murrell was born enslaved in Georgia, fought for the Confederacy, served in the Louisiana State National Guard, founded an African-American newspaper in New Jersey, and, per this letter, was a Republican political operative. Elkins was Republican James Blaine's presidential campaign manager and was a former Congressman and future Senator and Secretary of War. The CNAP letterhead states that it offers "The Latest news furnished by telegraph to weekly papers. Telegraph communication with every State and Territory."

In the letter, Murrell describes a trip to West Virginia in which he writes, in part: "During my sojourn in that State I was surprised to see that there were hundreds of colored people who have never registered or taken any part whatever in politics. From the best information I could gain the defeat of our friend Mason was caused by the fact that a great number of the colored people were not registered." He writes that he thinks they could win the state by registering more African-American voters and says, "I would like to go over in West Virginia quietly and organize the colored people of that state." A postscript written by a mutual friend, Major A. H. S. Davis, states "I have no doubt he will make himself a power among his race for our cause."

Murrell also writes of infiltrating a secret organization known as the American Union and also called the Free School Alliance, apparently an anti-Catholic wing of the Republican party that he deemed a "dangerous institution."

Keywords

Elkins, Stephen B. (Stephen Benton), 1841-1911