Robert H. Terrell Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2009

Contact information:
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

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http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010253

LC Online Catalog record:
http://lccn.loc.gov/mm76042556

Prepared by Allan Teichroew

Collection Summary

Title: Robert H. Terrell Papers
Span Dates: 1870-1954
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1884-1925)
ID No.: MSS42556
Creator: Terrell, Robert H. (Robert Heberton), 1857-1925
Extent: 2,750 items ; 9 containers plus 1 oversize ; 3.6 linear feet ; 4 microfilm reels
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: Teacher, lawyer, and judge. Correspondence, speeches and writings, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and other papers relating to Terrell's interest in African-American education and welfare, courts and schools in Washington, D.C., Republican politics, and the Washington Board of Trade.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Anderson, Charles William, 1866-1938.
Bruce, Roscoe Conkling, 1879-1950.
Clarkson, James Sullivan, 1842-1918.
Higginson, Thomas Wentworth, 1823-1911.
Lodge, Henry Cabot, 1850-1924.
Lynch, John Roy, 1847-1939.
Mattingly, Robert.
McKinley, William, 1843-1901.
Purvis, Charles Burleigh, 1842-1929.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919.
Root, Elihu, 1845-1937.
Scott, Emmett J. (Emmett Jay), 1873-1957.
Taft, William H. (William Howard), 1857-1930.
Terrell, Robert H. (Robert Heberton), 1857-1925.
Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915.
Wilson, Woodrow, 1856-1924.

Organizations
Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-)
Washington Board of Trade.

Subjects
African Americans--Education.
African Americans--Social conditions.
Courts--Washington (D.C.)
Schools--Washington (D.C.)
Social work with African Americans.

Occupations
Educators.
Jurists.
Lawyers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Robert H. Terrell, teacher, lawyer, and judge, were given to the Library of Congress in 1957 by his daughter, Phyllis Terrell Langston.

Processing History

The papers of Robert H. Terrell were arranged and described in 1976. The finding aid was revised in 2009.

Related Material

Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the papers of Terrell's wife, Mary Church Terrell, which contain their family correspondence.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Robert H. Terrell in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Robert H. Terrell are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of these papers is available on four reels. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Robert H. Terrell Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	*Event*
1857, Nov. 27	Born, Orange, Va.
1865	Moved with family to Washington, D.C.
1884	A.B., with honors, Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass.
1884-1889	Taught, M Street High School, Washington, D.C. Studied law, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
1889	LL.B., Howard University, Washington, D.C. Appointed chief of division, Office of the Fourth Auditor, U.S. Treasury Department
1891	Married Mary Eliza Church (died 1954)
1893	LL.M., Howard University, Washington, D.C. Admitted to the bar Joined in partnership with John R. Lynch to form the law firm of Lynch and Terrell

1897	Elected to Washington Board of Trade, Washington, D.C.
1899-1901	Promoted to principal, M Street High School, Washington, D.C.
1902-1925	Judge, municipal court of the District of Columbia (known as Justice of the Peace Courts, 1901-1909
1911-1925	Instructor in law, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
1925, Dec. 20	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Robert Heberton Terrell (1857-1925) span the years 1870-1954, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1884-1925. The collection consists mainly of correspondence, speeches and writings, clippings, printed matter, and miscellaneous items.

Robert H. Terrell was a distinguished educator and jurist in an age when few blacks had access to academic or professional training. Recipient of degrees from Groton Academy and Harvard College, Terrell began his career in 1884 by teaching in the old M Street High School in Washington, D.C., before taking up study of law and eventually serving nearly twenty-five years as judge of the Municipal Court of the District of Columbia. As a Republican and a judicial appointee of four presidents, including Woodrow Wilson, Terrell was one among a select group of African Americans nominated for government office in the period of reaction following Reconstruction. His papers show a man of wealth and position whose rarity in the black community made him a prominent spokesman for the Republican Party and for black advancement in government and in education. Among the topics in his numerous speeches and writings were the Monroe Doctrine, the relationship of law to business, the development of African-American education, and the history and status of black people in America.

The correspondence in this collection is comprised primarily of letters received during Terrell's reappointments to the bench from 1902 to 1925. Included are greetings, letters of recommendation, and missives congratulating the jurist upon each renewal of his tenure. Copies of Terrell's own letters are usually absent from the collection, although the incoming correspondence gives indirect evidence of his thought by registering the reactions of his acquaintances. Three men whose exchanges stand out for the information they convey about Terrell and about the black professional elite are the letters of Charles William Anderson, a collector of the Internal Revenue Service under William H. Taft; and John Roy Lynch, a former congressman and Terrell's law partner.

Other significant correspondence includes the letters of support sent to Terrell when Senator James K. Vardaman fought to block his reappointment by President Wilson in 1914. Prior to Wilson's election, Terrell had relied on his Republican connection to retain his office, but in this case a Democratic president acted contrary to the wishes of a member of his own party in keeping Terrell on the bench. That other African Americans were less successful in securing federal appointments, even under more favorable circumstances, is revealed by a reply President Taft gave to Terrell's request for the placement of an additional jobholder. "I have not done all I ought to do or all I hope to do in the matter of recognition of colored men, but positions are very hard to find," wrote Taft in explanation of his inaction. "Nobody dies and nobody resigns."

In addition to the correspondence of Anderson, Lynch, and Taft, some of the individuals represented in this collection include Roscoe Conkling Bruce, James Sullivan Clarkson, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Henry Cabot Lodge, Robert Mattingly, William McKinley, Charles Burleigh Purvis, Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), Elihu Root, Emmett J. Scott, Booker T. Washington, and Woodrow Wilson.

With the exception of a few law notes, the Robert H. Terrell Papers do not include materials derived from his private law practice, from his professorship on the law faculty of Howard University (1911-1925), or from his family life. For the latter, the reader should consult the papers of his wife, Mary Church Terrell, whose collection is also in the Manuscript Division of the Library and whose papers contain all of the family correspondence.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- Correspondence, 1884-1925
- Speeches and Writings File, 1880-1920
- Clippings, 1880-1954
- Printed Matter, 1877-1947
- Miscellany, 1870-1925
- Oversize, 1897-1922

Description of Series

Container	*Series*
BOX 1-3 **REEL** 1-2	**Correspondence, 1884-1925** Mainly letters received. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 3-5 **REEL** 2-3	**Speeches and Writings File, 1880-1920** Holograph, typewritten, and published copies of speeches and articles. Arranged chronologically when dated and alphabetically when not.
BOX 6-7 **REEL** 3	**Clippings, 1880-1954** Newspaper clippings and memorabilia. Arranged as bound by Terrell. Unbound clippings not arranged.
BOX 8 **REEL** 4	**Printed Matter. 1877-1947** Pamphlets, books, directories, and souvenir documents. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 9 **REEL** 4	**Miscellany, 1870-1925** Appointment certificates, tax receipts, and lecture schedules; biographical sketches; legal notes and papers; programs, announcements, and cards; testimonials on Terrell's death; and other items. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX OV 1	**Oversize, 1897-1922** Certificates arranged and described according to the series, folder, and container from which they were removed.

Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 17,902

Container	*Contents*
BOX 1-3 **REEL** 1-2	**Correspondence, 1884-1925**
	Mainly letters received. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1 **REEL** 1	1884-1912
	(9 folders)
BOX 2 **REEL** 1-2	1913-1919
	(13 folders)
BOX 3 **REEL** 1-2	1920-1925
	(5 folders)
BOX 3-5 **REEL** 2-3	**Speeches and Writings File, 1880-1920**
	Holograph, typewritten, and published copies of speeches and articles. Arranged chronologically when dated and alphabetically when not.
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	"The Ancient Greeks," *The Student's Aid*, Lawrence Academy, Groton, Mass., 1880, Mar. 9
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	"The Negro as a Soldier in the Late Rebellion," 1885, Apr. 20
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[Participating Remarks on Behalf of the Class of 1889, Howard University Law School, Washington, D.C.]
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[In Support of the Republican Party and the Lodge Bill], circa 1890
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[Republican Campaign Speech] 1892
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	"The Peerless Douglas," 1895, Apr. 2
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[President Grover Cleveland's Venezuelan Message], circa 1895
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Address to the pupils of Sumner School, Washington, D.C., 1896, Feb. 22
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	"What of the Future? In Honor of Judson W. Lyons," 1898, May 19
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	"Frederick Barbadoes—Memorial Meeting," 1899, May 14
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Banquet address, 1899, Jun. 12
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Address as Grand Master of Masons at celebration of St. John's Day, 1899, Jun. 26

Container	*Contents*
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Address before Zion Conference, 1900, May 2
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Address delivered at Geneva, N.Y., 1900, Aug. 1
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[Address to Masonic banquet, Eureka Lodge], 1900, Nov. 30
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[Address at William McKinley Memorial Meeting], 1901, Sept. 19
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Address at Odd Fellows Lyceum, concerning James A. Garfield, 1902, Mar. 30
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Address before the graduating class of the Nurses School, Howard University, Washington, D.C., 1902, May 5
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	"A Tribute to Laura F. Barney...," 1903, Feb. 6
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	*A Glance at the Past and Present of the Negro; an Address by Robert H. Terrell* (Washington: Press of L. R. Pendleton), delivered at Church's Auditorium before the Citizen's Industrial League of Memphis, Tenn, 1903, Sept. 22
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Address at banquet in honor of Booker T. Washington, 1904, Mar. 17
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	"The Virginia Constitution Before the Supreme Court," 1904, May 25
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	"Theodore Roosevelt," *The Colored American Magazine*, 1904, Aug.
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Address at farewell reception to Rev. Owen M. Waller, 1904, Oct. 7
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Response to banquet in Terrell's honor, 1906, Feb. 5
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[Address to St. Luke's Club], 1906, Oct. 29
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Address before the Cleveland Association of Colored Man, Cleveland, Ohio, 1910, Aug. 1
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Welcome address to convention of National Medical Association, 1910, Aug. 23
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[Memorial to Justice John Marshall Harlan], 1911, Dec. 11
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[Address to Howard University Law School, Washington, D.C.], circa 1912
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	Welcome address to Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Washington, D.C., 1913, Sept. 10-12
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[Remarks at Meeting Honoring Terrell] 1914, May 29
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	[Speech at Meeting Honoring Terrell], circa 1915
BOX 3 **REEL** 2	"A Brief Retrospect," circa 1915
BOX 4 **REEL** 2	Remarks at memorial meeting in honor of Booker T. Washington, 1916, Jan. 16
BOX 4 **REEL** 2	Address to the graduating class of Hampton Institute, Hampton, Va., 1919, May 28
BOX 4	[Testimonial to Theodore Roosevelt], circa 1919

Container	*Contents*
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[The Negro's Progress and His Future], circa 1919
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	Address at [Roscoe] Bruce's banquet
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Address before a Women's Group Honoring Mary Church Terrell]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Address to Boys' Church Group]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Address to a Masonic Gathering]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	Address to Grand United Order of Galilean Fisherman
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Address to Howard University Law Students, Washington, D.C.]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	Address to Prince Hall Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Address to the Free Grace Lodge]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Address to the Order of the Eastern Star]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Address to the Odd Fellows of D.C.]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Address to the University Park Temple Church]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	"Beginning of Colored Schools in Washington, D.C."
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	"The Colored Volunteer"
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Dr. Oswaldo Kruze]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	"Education and Character"
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Frederick Douglass]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	"The Future of the Negro-American in Politics"
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	"General Grant"
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	"George Boyer Vashum"
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Inferior Courts and the Importance of Legal Training]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	"The Lawyer's Relationship to Business Development"
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	[Liberal Education]
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	"Lincoln as an Orator"
REEL 2 **BOX** 4	"The Monroe Doctrine and Its Enforcement"

Container	*Contents*
REEL 2	
BOX 4	"The Negro and His Schools"
REEL 2	
BOX 4	[The Negro and Political Progress]
REEL 2	
BOX 5	"The Negro in the Schools"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"The Negro Race in America Since Emancipation"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"Negro Statesman"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"The Negro Today"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"The New Era Woman"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"Our Women"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"President Roosevelt and Northern Colored Men in Office"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"Reconstruction"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	Remarks at banquet of Harvard men
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	Remarks at the dinner of the Harvard class of 1884
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	Remarks on President William H. Taft's appointment of William H. Lewis as Assistant
REEL 2-3	Attorney General
BOX 5	"R. H. Terrell on Civil Service Reform"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"R. H. Terrell on Civil Service Reform"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"Shall We Have Only One Sunday School Union in the D. C.?"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	[Testimonial to John M. Langston]
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	[Why Abolitionists Should Be Honored in Public Schools]
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"A Word About Frederick Douglass, the Orator"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	"A Word to the Negro American on Civil Service Reform"
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	[Year End Speech to Lodge Brothers]
REEL 2-3	
BOX 5	Fragments and miscellaneous
REEL 2-3	
BOX 6-7	**Clippings, 1880-1954**
REEL 3	
	Newspaper clippings and memorabilia.
	Arranged as bound by Terrell. Unbound clippings not arranged.

Container	*Contents*
BOX 6-7 **REEL** 3	Bound
BOX 6-7 **REEL** 3	1880-1899
BOX 6-7 **REEL** 3	1899-1904
BOX 6-7 **REEL** 3	1901-1914
BOX 6-7 **REEL** 3	1909-1923
BOX 6-7 **REEL** 3	Unbound, circa 1900-1954
	(5 folders)
BOX 8 **REEL** 4	**Printed Matter. 1877-1947**
	Pamphlets, books, directories, and souvenir documents. Arranged by type of material.
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BOX 9 **REEL** 4	**Miscellany, 1870-1925**
	Appointment certificates, tax receipts, and lecture schedules; biographical sketches; legal notes and papers; programs, announcements, and cards; testimonials on Terrell's death; and other items. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 9 **REEL** 4	Appointment certificates, tax receipts, lecture schedules, and related matter, 1870-1918 *See also Oversize*
BOX 9 **REEL** 4	Biographical sketches
BOX 9 **REEL** 4	Legal notes and papers
BOX 9 **REEL** 4	Programs, announcements, and cards, 1880-1922
BOX 9 **REEL** 4	Testimonials on Terrell's death, 1925
BOX OV 1	**Oversize, 1897-1922**
	Certificates arranged and described according to the series, folder, and container from which they were removed.
BOX OV 1	Appointment certificates, 1897-1922 (Container 9)