



Smithsonian  
*Anacostia Community Museum*

Col. West A. Hamilton papers, circa 1887-1991

Kim L. Dixon

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Anacostia Community Museum Archives  
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<http://www.anacostia.si.edu/Collections/ArchiveCollection>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Anacostia Community Museum Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Col. West A. Hamilton papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	ACMA.06-006
<b>Date:</b>	1887-1991 (bulk 1937-1978)
<b>Extent:</b>	4.5 Linear feet (9 boxes; 1 folder oversize)
<b>Creator:</b>	Hamilton, West A., Col.
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Summary:</b>	The Col. West A. Hamilton papers, which dates from 1887 to 1991 and measures 4.50 linear feet, are the personal papers of West A. Hamilton most noted for his service on the Board of Education for Washington, D.C. The papers comprise books, certificates, correspondence, photographs, and scrapbooks.

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## Administrative Information

### Provenance

The Col. West A. Hamilton papers were donated to the Anacostia Community Museum in [1994].

### Processing Information

Finding aid prepared by Kim L. Dixon, 2010-05. Finding aid encoded by Elizabeth Bauerle, 2011-12.

### Preferred Citation

The Col. West A. Hamilton papers, Anacostia Community Museum, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Col. West A. Hamilton estate.

### Restrictions

Use of the materials requires an appointment. Please contact the archivist to make an appointment: [ACMarchives@si.edu](mailto:ACMarchives@si.edu).

### Ownership and Literary Rights

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## Biographical Note

Col. West A. Hamilton was born in 1886 to John A. Hamilton, a missionary and social worker, and Julia West Hamilton, a prominent club woman and activist in the Washington D.C. area. Mrs. Hamilton socialized with some of the most well known African American intellectuals of her time, including Mary McLeod Bethune. It was the early experiences of his parents' work with their community that would influence Hamilton later in life.

Throughout his life Col. Hamilton's activities could be divided into three areas: the military, public service, and private business. As a child Hamilton earned his education through Washington's public school system. He graduated from Dunbar High School and went on to receive his teaching degree from Minor Teachers College. After working as a teacher for ten years, Hamilton enlisted with the National Guard for the first time in 1905. It would be the first of many reenlistments and would include World War I, riding with the 10th Cavalry Regiment Buffalo Soldiers near the Mexican border, and commanding the 366th Infantry in North Africa and Italy during World War II. In 1983 Col. Hamilton became an honorary Brigadier General at the age of 96 for his long and distinguished service with the U.S. Armed Forces.

While working as a teacher and joining the military, Hamilton was also an entrepreneur. Joining forces with his brother Percival Y. Hamilton, the Hamilton brothers went into the publishing business and produced their own newspaper called the Sentinel. They established the Hamilton Printing Company in 1910 and worked from two previous locations before permanently locating on the corner of 14th and U St from 1922 to the 1970s.

Outside his many careers Hamilton carried on his mother's altruistic pursuits and involved himself heavily in club work and civic organizations. He served on Washington D.C.'s Board of Education, the Board of Elections, the recreation board, as well as, the American Legion and the Masons. For many years his mother, Julia West Hamilton, served as President of the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA and Col. Hamilton continued her work with the organization.

Col. Hamilton married twice but never had children. He died in 1985 just shy one year from his 100th birthday.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers which date from 1887-1991, bulk dates 1937-1978, document the personal and public life of Col. West A. Hamilton. The majority of material relates to Col. Hamilton's involvement with Washington D.C.'s educational system, both as a teacher and civic activist. A series of letters in particular highlight his efforts to help Dunbar High School, which he was an alum. There are also documents and photographs from his long serving military career and printing business.

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## Arrangement

The papers are arranged into six series. Folders are arranged alphabetically within series, while documents are organized chronologically. Four series contain oversized material and include: Biographical Files, Career, Photographs, and Printed material. Non archival materials associated with the papers are housed in the Collections Department.

- Series 1: Biographical files
- Sub-series 1.1: Correspondence

- Sub-series 1.2: Education
- Sub-series 1.3: General
- Series 2: Books
- Sub-series 2.1: Club Books
- Sub-series 2.2: Fiction
- Sub-series 2.3: Religious Books
- Sub-series 2.4: Text Books
- Series 3: Career
- Sub-series 3.1: Committee Work
- Sub-series 3.2: Correspondence
- Sub-series 3.3: General
- Series 4: Financial Records
- Series 5: Photographs
- Series 6: Printed Materials

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

African American educators  
African American soldiers

Types of Materials:

Awards  
Books  
Certificates  
Correspondence  
Diaries  
Greeting cards  
Ledgers (account books)  
Magazines (periodicals) -- 20th century  
Minutes  
Photographic prints  
Photographs  
Reports  
Yearbooks -- 1940-1950

Names:

District of Columbia. Board of Trustees of Public Schools  
Dunbar High School (Washington, D.C.)  
Hamilton, West A., Col.  
Public Schools of the District of Columbia

Geographic Names:

Washington (D.C.)

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical files , 1908, 1927 - 1978, undated

#### 1.25 Linear feet

This series contains material related the personal life of Col. West A. Hamilton. The series comprises correspondence, educational experiences, and the records of his day to day life. A large portion of the series documents Hamilton's love of greeting cards. There are several folders worth of the cards, as well as, a scrapbook that appears in the oversized section of the collection.

#### 1.1: Correspondence

Box 1, Folder 1	General , 1927 - 1928, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Greeting Cards , 1972 - 1975, undated
Box 1, Folder 3	Invitations , 1957 - 1969
Box 1, Folder 4	Liberia , 1950 - 1951
Box 1, Folder 5	Scrapbook, 1974 - 1977 <i>[oversize]</i>
Box 1, Folder 6	Scrapbook—Loose Cards , 1975 - 1978
Box 1, Folder 7	Scrapbook—Loose Cards, undated
Box 1, Folder 8	Scrapbook—Loose Cards, undated

#### 1.2: Education

Box 1, Folder 9	International Correspondence Schools , 1908
Box 1, Folder 10	Prairie View A&M College , 1948, 1974 - 1978
Box 1, Folder 11	Prairie View A&M College of Texas Yearbook, 1949
Box 2, Folder 1	Prairie View A&M College of Texas Yearbook, 1952
Box 2, Folder 2	Prairie View A&M College of Texas Yearbook, 1975

#### 1.3: General

Box 2, Folder 3	Prairie View A&M College of Texas Yearbook, 1975
Box 2, Folder 4	Calendar Books , 1941
Box 2, Folder 5	Calendar Books , 1956

Box 2, Folder 6	Calendar Books , 1957
Box 3, Folder 1	Calendar Books , 1958
Box 3, Folder 2	Calendar Books , 1959
Box 3, Folder 3	Calendar Books , 1978
Box 3, Folder 4	Hamilton, Julia West, 1948, 1978
Box 3, Folder 5	Membership Cards, 1945 - 1949, undated
Oversized	
Box 9, Folder 1	Scrapbook , 1974 - 1977

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## Series 2: Books , 1901 - 1949, 1887

### 1.5 Linear feet

This series contains books of various subject matter from Col. Hamilton's collection. Hamilton was a member of the Masons and there are two books referring to the rituals and practices of the organization.

### 2.1: Club Books

Box 3, Folder 6; Box 3, Folder 6	<i>Ritual for Opening, Closing, Burial Ceremonies...</i> , 1949
Box 3, Folder 7; Box 3, Folder 7	<i>Ritual of the Subordinate Lodges Under the Jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge</i> , 1928
Box 3, Folder 8; Box 3, Folder 8	<i>Standard Masonic Monitor...</i> , 1917
Box 3, Folder 9; Box 3, Folder 9	Untitled [Military Book], circa 1945

### 2.2: Fiction

Box 4, Folder 1	<i>The Man Who Couldn't Sleep</i> , by Arthur Stringer, 1919
Box 4, Folder 2	<i>Mystery Reader</i> , by Dorothy B. Hughes , 1942
Box 4, Folder 3	<i>The Sleeping Sphinx</i> , by John Dickson Carr , 1947
Box 4, Folder 4	<i>Whisper Murder!, Death Lifts the Latch, Somewhere in the House</i> , 1946

### 2.3: Religious Books

Box 5, Folder 1	<i>The Book of Common Prayer</i> , 1944
Box 5, Folder 2	<i>Gospel Hymns No. 5 with Standard Selections</i> , by Ira D. Sankey... , 1887

### 2.4: Text Books

Box 5, Folder 3	<i>American Institute of Electrical, Engineers</i> , 1909
Box 5, Folder 4	<i>Durell's Arithmetic Book Two</i> , 1913
Box 6, Folder 1	<i>French Test Papers</i> , 1901
Box 6, Folder 2	<i>Introduction to the Study of Law in Suffolk Law School</i> , 1924
Box 6, Folder 3	<i>Modern Music and Musicians Part One: Compositions</i> , 1912
Box 6, Folder 4	<i>The Standard Book of Play</i> , 1946

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## Series 3: Career , 1933 - 1979, undated

### 1 Linear foot

This series contains material related to Col. Hamilton's extensive committee work within the city of Washington D.C. and include Board of Education meeting minutes and a series of letters focus on the restoration of Dunbar High School's swimming pool. There is also correspondence related to the Hamilton Printing Company. In particular there are a couple of letters referring to the liquidation of the business in the 1970s

### 3.1: Committee Work

Box 6, Folder 5	Board of Education—Meeting Minutes, 1970, 1961
Box 6, Folder 6	Board of Education—General materials, 1958 - 1961
Box 6, Folder 7	Board of Elections , 1955 - 1958
Box 6, Folder 8	Building Laborers' Local Union No. 74 Scholarships , 1974 - 1975
Box 7, Folder 1	D.C. Recreation Board Meeting materials , 1961
Box 7, Folder 2	Financial Ledger , 1962

### 3.2: Correspondence

Box 7, Folder 3	Dunbar High School , 1954 - 1960
Box 7, Folder 4	General , 1957
Box 7, Folder 5	Hamilton Printing Company, 1967 - 1976, undated

### 3.3: General

Box 7, Folder 6	Certificates/Awards , 1933 - 1979, undated <i>[oversize]</i>
Box 7, Folder 7	Dunbar High School—Programs , 1941
Box 7, Folder 8	Notes—American University , circa 1954-1955
Box 7, Folder 9	Notes—Church Sermon , undated

### Oversized

Box 9, Folder 2	Certificates/Awards , 1954 - 1979
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## Series 4: Financial records , 1941 - 1982

*0.25 Linear feet*

This series contains records covering the financial dealings of the Hamilton Printing Company and Col. Hamilton's personal transactions.

Box 7, Folder 10	Bills—Hamilton Printing Company , 1948 - 1976
Box 7, Folder 11	Bills—Personal , 1950 - 1982
Box 7, Folder 12	Contracts , 1976
Box 7, Folder 13	Hamilton Printing Company—Ledger , 1949 - 1953
Box 7, Folder 14	Hamilton Printing Company —Ledger , 1958 - 1970
Box 7, Folder 15	Taxes , 1957 - 1960, 1941

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## Series 5: Photographs , 1937 - 1971, 1905

### *0.25 Linear feet*

This series contains images from Col. Hamilton's personal and professional lives. Hamilton also collected photographs of military dignitaries, which appear in this series.

Box 7, Folder 16	Personal Photographs, undated
Box 7, Folder 17	Military, 1971, 1937, 1905, undated <i>[oversize]</i>
Box 7, Folder 18	Personal Photographs , 1942 - 1971, undated <i>[oversize]</i>

### Oversized

Cabinet 10, Drawer 10	Military , 1905
Box 9, Folder 4	Personal Photographs, undated

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## Series 6: Printed materials , 1939 - 1982, undated

### *0.25 Linear feet*

This series contains artwork, brochures, booklets, and clippings related to different aspects of Col. Hamilton's life and work.

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|-----------------|---|
| Box 8, Folder 1 | Artwork/Quotations , undated<br><i>[oversize]</i> |
| Box 8, Folder 2 | Education, 1982, 1952, 1961, 1974                 |
| Box 8, Folder 3 | General , 1939 - 1960, undated                    |
| Box 8, Folder 4 | General , 1972 - 1977, 1991, undated              |

### Oversized

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Box 9, Folder 5 | Artwork/Quotations, 1943, 1980, undated |
|-----------------|---|

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