



Smithsonian

Anacostia Community Museum

Finding Aid to the Bladensburg Union Burial
Association records, 1874–1978, bulk 1920–1970,
in the Anacostia Community Museum Archives

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Anacostia Community Museum Archives
Title:	Bladensburg Union Burial Association records
Date:	1874–1978 (bulk 1920-1970)
Identifier:	ACMA.06-025
Creator:	Bladensburg Union Burial Association
Extent:	3.64 Linear feet (4 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The collection, which dates from 1874 to 1978 and measures 3.64 linear feet, documents the history of the Bladensburg Union Burial Association. The records include the Association's constitution, by-laws, treasurer reports, receipts, and correspondence.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Bladensburg Union Burial Association records were donated to the Anacostia Community Museum on October 14, 2004 by Reverend L. Jerome Fowler.

Related Materials

This collection contains artifacts catalogued in [ACM's Object collection](#) .

Plummer, Nellie Arnold. *Out of the Depths: or, the Triumph of the Cross* , 1997.

Processing Information

The records were processed in January 2008 by Tonijala D. Penn. Finding aid encoded by Jennifer Morris, 2015.

Preferred Citation

Bladensburg Union Burial Association records, Anacostia Community Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Reverend L. Jerome Fowler.

Restrictions

The collection is open for unrestricted research. Use requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

The Bladensburg Union Burial Association records are the physical property of the Anacostia Community Museum. Literary and copyright belong to the author/creator or their legal heirs and assigns. Rights to work produced during the normal course of Museum business resides with the Anacostia Community Museum. For further information, and to obtain permission to publish or reproduce, contact the Museum Archives.

Biography of the Bladensburg Union Burial Association

In 1870 undertaker Francis Gasch refused to conduct a burial because the family of the deceased could not afford to pay the exorbitant cost of the funeral. This plight was quite common for newly freed African Americans. Recognizing the need for action Henry Vinton Plummer intervened on the behalf of the family and assumed the financial responsibility. Thereafter, in an effort to empower members of his race to establish their own resources he called a meeting where he proposed a society which the members in attendance named the Bladensburg Burying Association. Funds were raised by collecting membership dues which ensured its members a proper funeral.

The Bladensburg Union Burial Association is a fine example of black enterprise during the period of reconstruction. By utilizing self help methods to propel themselves out of difficult and turbulent times beneficent societies were able to take care of their own by providing financial resources to its members who paid dues. Through self empowerment the Bladensburg Union Burial Association would go on to respond to its members needs through active community involvement for many years to come by providing for the needs of formerly enslaved, newly freed and future generations.

Biography of Henry Vinton Plummer

The Bladensburg Union Burial Association's founder, Mr. Henry Vinton Plummer was a man of integrity and remarkable character. He was the eldest son of Adam Francis Plummer and Emily Saunders who were enslaved in Maryland on separate plantations for twenty two years. Plummer was one of eighteen children born from this union into slavery on July 31, 1844 on Sarah Ogle Hilleary's Three Sisters Plantation in Lanham, Maryland. He escaped slavery in 1862 by running away to the District of Columbia to join the Union Navy during the Civil War, where he served as chaplain for the Union forces before being honorably discharged in 1865. After being honorably discharged Plummer enrolled in Wayland Seminary, which provided education and training for Freedmen to enter into the Baptist ministry. Upon the completion of his theological studies he became the Pastor of the St. Paul Baptist Church in Bladensburg, Maryland, which was founded by his sister Sarah Miranda Plummer on October 19, 1866. Plummer married July Lomax of Virginia in 1867 and their marriage produced nine children. In 1884, Plummer was appointed as the first black chaplain in the 9th Calvary, which was one of the Buffalo Soldiers units of the Regular Army. Amidst controversy, Plummer was accused of conduct unbecoming an officer and dishonorably discharged from his post in Fort Robinson, Nebraska by a military court in 1894. In 2005, Plummer's descendants successfully petitioned the Army Board for Correction of Military Records to eradicate his dishonorable discharge.

Scope and Content Note

The collection is arranged into four main categories: Administration, Finances, Correspondence and Writings. Material in each folder is arranged in chronological order by date.

Series Description

1. Administration: The series contains constitution amendments, by-laws, applications, forms, roll calls, minutes and business related to the operation of the Bladensburg Union Burial Association.
2. Finances: The series contains materials related to funding the organization, to include treasurer reports, financial notebooks and expense receipts, which document membership dues and taxes.
3. Correspondence: The series consists primarily of correspondence generated by members of the Bladensburg Union Burial Association.
4. Writings: The series contains writings by Union members to include: the history of the Bladensburg Union Burial Association, bible verses, poetry and writings which are miscellaneous in nature.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- African American churches
- African American clergy
- African American clergy -- History
- Funeral rites and ceremonies

Types of Materials:

- Membership lists
- Papers
- Receipts (financial records)

Names:

- Plummer, Henry Vinton, 1844-1905
- Plummer, Nellie Arnold, 1860-ca. 1920

Places:

- Bladensburg (Md.)

Container Listing

Series 1: Administration

Scope and Contents: The series contains materials generated by the organization and includes documents which give insight into the day-to-day operations of the Bladensburg Union Burial Association.

Box 1, Folder 1	Applications, Bladensburg Union, 1925-1966, 1964, 1966
Box 1, Folder 2	Blank applications, Bladensburg Union
Box 1, Folder 3	Rules for a funeral
Box 1, Folder 4	The Bladensburg Union wills, 1938, 1950
Box 1, Folder 5	Bladensburg Union will forms, blank
Box 1, Folder 6	Sick Certificates of the Bladensburg Union, 1923-1926, 1966, 1930-1932
Box 1, Folder 7	Sick Certificates of the Bladensburg Union, blank
Box 1, Folder 8	Form for death notice, 1926, 1924
Box 1, Folder 9	Bladensburg Union arrearage forms
Box 1, Folder 10	Bladensburg Union, permanent fund forms
Box 1, Folder 11	Members minutes, taken by Acting Secretary, H.E. Burke, 5 February 1923-4 April 1938
Box 1, Folder 12	Members minutes,, 24 May 1938-8 September 1947
Box 1, Folder 13	Minutes of the Bowman Burke Jr. Department of the Bladensburg Union, 5 January 1963-3 May 1969
Box 1, Folder 14	Constitution and By-Laws of the Bladensburg Burying association and its Junior Department of Bladensburg, Maryland, 1926
Box 1, Folder 15	Constitution and By-Laws of the Bladensburg Burying association and its Junior Department of Bladensburg, Maryland, 1952
Box 1, Folder 16	Constitution and By-Laws of the Bladensburg Burying association and its Junior Department of Bladensburg, Maryland, 1965

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Series 2: Finances

Scope and Contents: This is the largest series and contains materials directly related to funding the organization and keeping track of membership dues, expense receipts and taxes.

Box 2, Folder 1	Membership dues record book, 1874-1898 [fragile]
Box 2, Folder 2	Membership dues record book, 1876-1898 [fragile]
Box 2, Folder 3	Pages from Membership dues record book, circa 1901-1903
Box 3, Folder 1	Membership dues record book recorded by Nellie A. Plummer, Treasurer, 1885-1912
Box 3, Folder 2	Finance Auditing plan book, 1900-16, organized by John Harvey Wiggington of Yale University, June 1900
Box 3, Folder 3	Membership dues record book, 1912-1933
Box 3, Folder 4	Membership dues record book, 1923-1933
Box 3, Folder 5	Membership dues record book, 1923-1934
Box 3, Folder 6	Membership dues record book, 1934-1948
Box 3, Folder 7	Membership dues record book, 1963-1964
Box 3, Folder 8	Membership dues record book, 1965-1967
Box 3, Folder 9	Reports from the Auditing Committee of the Bladensburg Union, 27 July 1955, 23 July 1958, 16 July 1963, 24 July 1962, 28 July 1960, 29 July 1954, 20 July 1959, 10 July 1956, 10 July 1957
Box 3, Folder 10	Treasurer's Reports, 1964-1971
Box 3, Folder 11	Anniversary Tax notebooks, 1967 August-1968 December
Box 3, Folder 12	Anniversary tax envelopes, 25 cents
Box 3, Folder 13	Receipts, 1928-1932, 1922-1926
Box 3, Folder 14	Receipts, 1949, 1946-1947
Box 3, Folder 15	Receipts, 1963-1969
Box 3, Folder 16	Miscellaneous receipts, undated

Box 3, Folder 17	Surbana Trust Company member federal deposit envelopes
Box 3, Folder 18	The Bladensburg Union Account book for Gertrude Hammond, 1910-1915
Box 3, Folder 19	The Bladensburg Union Account book for John G. Walker, 1967-1972
Box 3, Folder 20	Membership Pledges, St. Paul's Baptist Church, Blaensburg, Maryland, 5 December 1965
Box 3, Folder 21	Pledge offering envelopes, 1966
Box 3, Folder 22	Miscellaneous

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Series 3: Correspondence

Scope and Contents: The series is comprised mostly of correspondence generated by members of the Bladensburg Union Burial Association and a host of program brochures from various Baptist churches in the Maryland area.

Box 4, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1929
Box 4, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1937-1939, 1931-1932
Box 4, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1947, 1945, 1941
Box 4, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1966-1969, 1964
Box 4, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1978
Box 4, Folder 6	Correspondence, undated
Box 4, Folder 7	Program, 90th Anniversary of the Bladensburg Burying Association, 18 September 1960
Box 4, Folder 8	Sympathy card
Box 4, Folder 9	Addressed Envelopes
Box 4, Folder 10	Church program brochures, Shiloh Baptist Church, St. Bladensburg Baptist Church, and St. Paul Baptist Church, 1910, 1902, 1897
Box 4, Folder 11	Miscellaneous invitations

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Series 4: Writings

Scope and Contents: The series consists of writings by members of the Bladensburg Union Burial Association.

Box 4, Folder 12	Bladensburg Burying Association history
Box 4, Folder 13	Poem, The smallest star, by Carolyn Hopkins, undated
Box 4, Folder 14	Untitled writing, author unknown, undated
Box 4, Folder 15	Scriptures and verse
Box 4, Folder 16	Newspaper clipping, 1932

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