



Smithsonian
Anacostia Community Museum

A Finding Aid to the Benjamin Layton
collection, circa 1865-1977, in the
Anacostia Community Museum Archives

Katie Seitz

2016



Anacostia Community Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Anacostia Community Museum Archives
Title:	Benjamin Layton collection
Identifier:	ACMA.06-031
Date:	circa 1865-1977
Extent:	3.45 Linear feet (5 boxes; 1 folder)
Creator:	Layton, Benjamin
Language:	English
Summary:	The Benjamin Layton collection documents the life, family history, and interests of Benjamin T. Layton. Items date from circa 1865 to 1977. The collection measures 3.45 linear feet and is composed of newsletters, clippings, pamphlets, newspapers, correspondence, certificates, photographs, memorabilia, books, stamps, etchings, and programs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Benjamin Layton collection was donated to the Anacostia Community Museum in two accretions in 1976 and 1978 by Benjamin Layton.

Related Materials

The Anacostia Community Museum houses more items in the [Benjamin Layton Collection](#), including buttons, fraternity paddles, lapel pins, and medals.

[Order to Report for Induction](#), 1941. 1993.3172.04. The Price of Freedom: Americans at War, National Museum of American History.

[Notice to Appear for Physical Exam](#), 1940. 1993.3172.03. The Price of Freedom: Americans at War, National Museum of American History.

[Layton Family Collection](#), 228 THL, Stewart Bell Jr. Archives, Handley Regional Library, Winchester, VA, USA.

Processing Information

The records were processed by Katie Seitz with the assistance of archivist Jennifer Morris in March 2016.

Preferred Citation

Benjamin Layton collection, Anacostia Community Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Benjamin Layton.

Restrictions

Use of the materials requires an appointment. Please contact the archivist to make an appointment: ACMarchives@si.edu.

Conditions Governing Use

The Benjamin Layton collection is the physical property of the Anacostia Community Museum. Literary and copyright belong to the 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.

Biographical / Historical

Benjamin Thomas Layton was born on December 24, 1917, in Hanover, Virginia, to a prominent Virginia family. His maternal great-grandfather, Ballard Trent Edwards, was a freeborn African American man who opened a school for formerly enslaved people and served for eight years in the Virginia House of Delegates. His father, William Brown Layton, was the superintendent of the Negro Reformatory of Virginia (later the Virginia Manual Labor School), a reform school for African American boys located in Hanover County.

Layton was an athlete and scholar, playing varsity tennis and attending Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. He did graduate work in social sciences at the University of Chicago and Howard University, but his studies were interrupted by the draft in 1941.

Layton served with distinction in the U.S. Army during World War II, leading truck convoys carrying soldiers, supplies, weapons, and prisoners of war during the Battle of the Bulge. He also worked in military intelligence. His last active duty assignment was commanding a military detachment in Baumholder, Germany. His decorations included the Bronze Star, which he was awarded in 1977. He attained the rank of lieutenant colonel before retiring from the Army in 1963.

From 1963 to 1966 he worked in Europe, then returned to the United States in 1966, where he was an ROTC instructor at Chamberlain Vocational High School in Washington, D.C. He left in 1967 to become an equal-opportunity specialist at the United States Department of Agriculture, from which he retired in 1985. His brother William W. Layton also lived and worked in the Washington, D.C., area.

Layton had a passion for collecting and donated coins, paper money, and military artifacts to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. He also donated objects relating to clubs and fraternities to the Anacostia Community Museum. He was a member of numerous organizations, including the Retired Officers Association, the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, the American Legion, the Prince Hall Masons, the Kiwanis Club of Wheaton, and the Federation Nationale des Anciens Combattants, a French veterans group.

Layton was married twice, his first marriage to Irma Goode ending in divorce. He lived in Kensington, Maryland, with his second wife Marguerite, with whom he had two daughters. He died on February 15, 2001, at age 83 and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Scope and Contents

The collection documents the life, family history, and collecting interests of World War II veteran and federal employee Benjamin T. Layton. Layton grew up in Virginia and settled in Kensington, Maryland. Notable aspects of the collection include nineteenth-century photographs of African Americans, photographs of Layton's family, 1970s political photographs, and first editions of Richard Wright's *Black Boy* and Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* and *Working with the Hands*. Family photographs and memorabilia reflects the family's roots in Virginia and the Washington, D.C., area. Layton's historical photograph collection draws from photographers in the Mid-Atlantic and New England.

Items date from circa 1865 to 1977. The collection measures 3.45 linear feet and is composed of newsletters, clippings, pamphlets, newspapers, correspondence, certificates, photographs, memorabilia, books, stamps, etchings, and programs. It has been arranged in three series: Series I: Biographical Files, 1913-1977, Series II: Photographs, circa 1865-1977, and Series III: Printed Material, 1901-circa 1976. Some items in Series II and Series III are oversized.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- African American families
- African American newspapers
- African American soldiers
- African American veterans
- Bronze Star Medal (U.S.)
- John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (U.S.)
- Politicians -- United States

Types of Materials:

- Black-and-white photographs
- Cabinet photographs
- Cartes-de-visite
- Copy prints
- Correspondence
- Etchings
- Newsletters
- Pamphlets
- Photographic prints
- Photographs
- Portraits
- Postage stamps
- Programs
- Tintypes

Names:

- Agnew, Spiro T., 1918-1996
- Ford, Gerald R., 1913-2006
- Layton, Benjamin
- Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993

Nixon, Pat, 1912-1993
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994
Rockefeller, Nelson A. (Nelson Aldrich), 1908-1979
Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915
Wright, Richard, 1908-1960

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Files, 1913-1977

0.42 Linear feet (1 box)

This series measures .42 linear feet and is arranged by material type and subject. It consists of newsletters, clippings, pamphlets, newspapers, correspondence, and a certificate. Material relates to the life and work of Benjamin Layton and his family in Virginia and the Washington, D.C., area, especially his father William Brown Layton and his brother William W. Layton. Subjects include media coverage of Benjamin Layton's Bronze Star Medal and William W. Layton's prolific collection and donation of historical artifacts.

Box 1, Folder 1	Newsletters, newspapers, and clippings, 1939-1977 June
Box 1, Folder 2	Family memorabilia and clippings, 1935 June-1976 March
Box 1, Folder 3	Obituaries of Benjamin T. Layton (uncle) and William Brown Layton (father), 1975 August, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Blank postcard and correspondence to and from Della Thomas, 1913-1917
Box 1, Folder 5	Certificate awarding Bronze Star Medal to Benjamin Layton, 1977 February

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Series 2: Photographs, circa 1865-1977

0.88 Linear feet (2 boxes, 1 folder)

[Image\(s\)](#)

This series measures .88 linear feet and is arranged by subject and photographic format or process. It contains three subseries: Subseries 1: Historical Photograph Collection, circa 1865-circa 1890; Subseries 2: Layton Family Photographs, circa 1865-circa 1890; and Subseries 3: Political Photographs, circa 1970-circa 1976.

Subseries 1 consists of nineteenth-century photographs, mostly cartes-de-visite, tintypes, and cabinet cards, depicting African American and white adults and children. Subseries 2 consists of photographs of Benjamin Layton, his family, and their activities. Subseries 3 consists of publicity photographs of U.S. political figures and others from the 1970s. Oversized material in Subseries 3 is housed in Cabinet 10, Drawer 6.

2.1: Historical Photograph Collection, circa 1865-circa 1890

The 58 black-and-white photographs in this subseries are grouped by photographic process or format and by subject. Photographs include portraits of African American men, women and children in cabinet photographs, cartes-de-visite (card photographs), copy prints, and tintypes. Photographers represented are from New York, Massachusetts, Virginia, and New Jersey. 24 photographs of African Americans from this subseries appear in a digital exhibit available through SOVA. This subseries includes two pieces of ephemera: a small note and an artist's depiction of the birth of Jesus.

Box 2, Folder 1	Babies – cabinet cards, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 2	Children – cabinet cards, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 3	Couples – cabinet cards, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 4	Men – cabinet cards, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 5	Women – cabinet cards, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 6	Children – postcards, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 7	Babies – cartes-de-visite, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 8	Children – cartes-de-visite, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 9	Men – cartes-de-visite, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 10	Women – cartes-de-visite, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 11	Child – tintype, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 12	Couple – tintype, circa 1865-circa 1890

Box 2, Folder 13	Family – tintype, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 14	Man – tintype, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 15	Woman – tintype, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 16	Scene – tintype, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 17	Babies – various formats, circa 1865-circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 18	Ephemera, circa 1865-circa 1890

2.2: Layton Family Photographs, circa 1900-1977

This subseries consists of 21 color and black-and-white photographs of Benjamin Layton, his maternal and paternal ancestors, and events in their lives. Layton was a descendent of prominent Virginians and left information about family history with the photographs. These contextual notes have been transferred to labels on photo sleeves. Roughly half of the photographs depict Layton at different stages of his life, including childhood, his early years in the Army, and the 1977 ceremony awarding him the Bronze Star. Two photographic portraits of unidentified family members are on a plaque housed separately in Box 4.

Box 2, Folder 19	Layton family photographs, circa 1900-1977
Box 4	Laminated plaque, circa 1900 <i>0.42 Linear feet (1 box)</i>

2.3: Political Photographs, circa 1970-circa 1976

This series is arranged by size and subject and consists of 62 black-and-white and color photographs. The photographs are mostly publicity photos and portraits, 32 of standard size and 30 oversized. The most common photographic subjects are President Richard Nixon, First Lady Pat Nixon, Tricia Nixon, and President Gerald Ford, but also include Quincy Jones, Thurgood Marshall, Vice President Spiro Agnew, Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Oversized material in this subseries is housed in Cabinet 10, Drawer 6.

Box 2, Folder 20	Political photographs - standard size, circa 1970-circa 1976
Cabinet 10, Drawer 6	Political photographs - oversized, circa 1970-circa 1976

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Series 3: Printed Material, 1901-circa 1976

2.15 Linear feet (2 boxes, 2 folders)

This series is arranged by format and consists of books, newspapers, stamps, etchings, programs, and pamphlets primarily relating to African American life, history, and culture. The material in this series reflects Layton's interests in arts and culture, his musical pursuits, and family possessions. All books are housed in Box 3, which contains a 1975 *Black Guide to Washington*, a 1939 handbook of the American Federation of Musicians, and first editions of *Up from Slavery* and *Working with the Hands* by Booker T. Washington and *Black Boy* by Richard Wright. The Washington and Wright books are inscribed by members of the Layton family. Oversized material in this subseries is housed in Box 5.

Box 3	Books, circa 1901-1975 <i>0.75 Linear feet (1 Box)</i>
Box 5, Folder 1	Programs, pamphlets, and newspapers, circa 1976 <i>1.38 Linear feet (1 box)</i>
Box 1, Folder 8	Sheet of Bicentennial stamps, 1976
Box 1, Folder 9	Etchings of women in fancy dress, circa 1960

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ACMA PH2004.7007.02: Portrait of African American man, circa 1870s
1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Leath's Photographic Gallery

Topic: African Americans
Place: Petersburg (Va.)
Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men
Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.04: Portrait of African American women, circa 1870s
1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Rockwell's Gallery

Topic: African American
Place: Petersburg (Va.)
Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- African American women
Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.05: Portrait of African American man wearing plantation tie, circa 1870s

1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\): Portrait of African American man wearing plantaiton tie](#)

Leath's Photographic Gallery

Topic: African American
Place: Petersburg (Va.)
Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men
Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.07: Portrait of African American woman holding a parasol, 1884

1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

C.R. Ress Studio

Topic: African American
Parasols
Place: Fredericksburg (Va.)
Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- African American women
Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.08: Portrait of African American woman, 1884

1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

C.R. Ress Studio

Topic: African American
Place: Petersburg (Va.)
Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- African American women
Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.09: Full-length portrait of seated African American woman, circa 1870s

1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 /12 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

A. E. Beers Studio

Topic: African American
Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- African American women

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.10: Portrait of African American man, circa 1870s
1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

J. B. Wortham Studio

Topic: African American

Place: Winchester (Va.)

Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.12: Full-length portrait of African American baby in christening gown, 1888
1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

C.R. Ress Studio

Topic: African American

Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- Children

Culture: African American Culture

ACMA PH2004.7007.14: Portrait of African American children, circa 1880
1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Rockwell's Gallery

Topic: African American children

Place: Petersburg (Va.)

Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- Children

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.15: Half-length portrait of African American man, circa 1877
1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Leath's Photographic Gallery

Topic: African American

Place: Petersburg (Va.)

Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs

Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.18: Portrait of African American woman, circa 1870s - 1890s

1 Item (photographic print on cabinet card ; albumen; 17 x 11 cm. (6 1/2 x 4 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Topic: African Americans

Place: New York

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs
Photographs
Portraits -- African American women

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.27: Full-length portrait of African American infant, circa 1880-1900

1 Item (photographic print ; albumen; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Langhorne Studio

Topic: African American children

Place: New Jersey

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs
Photographs
Portraits -- Children

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.29: Portrait of African American man holding hat, circa 1880

1 Item (photographic print ; albumen; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Topic: African American

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.30: Portrait of African American man holding a walking cane, circa 1880s

1 Item (photographic print ; albumen; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Davis Studio

Topic: African American

Place: New York

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs

Photographs
Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.31: Portrait of African American man, circa 1892
1 Item (photographic print ; albumen; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

New York Gallery

Topic: African American

Place: Petersburg (Va.)

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.33: Full-length Portrait of African American man holding hat, circa 1880s
1 Item (photographic print. ; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

J.R. Pearson

Topic: African American

Place: Pittsburgh (Pa.)

Genre/Form: Photographs
Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.34: Full-length portrait of African American man, circa 1880
1 Item (photographic print ; albumen; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

O'Neil Studio

Topic: African American

Place: New Bedford (Mass.)

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.39: Portrait of African American man, circa 1880
1 Item (photographic print ; albumen; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Topic: African American

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs
Photographs

Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.40: Full-length portrait of African American man, circa 1880
1 Item (photographic print. ; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

G. Thorn Studio

Topic: African American

Place: New Jersey

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.41: Portrait of African American man, circa 1880
1 Item (photographic print ; albumen; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Hatch Studio

Topic: African American

Place: New Bedford (Mass.)

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.43: Full-length portrait of African American man, circa 1885
1 Item (photographic print ; 6 1/2 x 4 in. (16.5 x 10.2 cm))

[Image\(s\)](#)

C.R. Ress Studio

Topic: African American

Place: Petersburg (Va.)

Genre/Form: Cabinet photographs
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men

Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.45: Portrait of African American woman, 1884
1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

C.R. Ress Studio

Topic: African American

Place: Petersburg (Va.)

Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite

Photographs
Portraits -- African American women
Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.47: Portrait of African American man, 1884
1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

C.R. Ress Studio

Topic: African American
Place: Petersburg (Va.)
Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- African American men
Culture: African American

ACMA PH2004.7007.48: Portrait of African American woman, circa 1870s
1 Item (photographic print on cartes de visite mount ; 11 x 6 cm. (4 x 2 1/2 in.))

[Image\(s\)](#)

Topic: African American
Genre/Form: Cartes-de-visite
Photographs
Portraits -- African American women
Culture: African American