



Smithsonian

Anacostia Community Museum

Benjamin W. Austin Liberian Autograph Collection

Kim L. Dixon

2010-04

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical Note	2
Scope and Contents	2
Arrangement	2
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	
Series 1: Correspondence, 1862 - 1895	3
Series 2: Printed material, circa 1880s	4

Collection Overview

Repository:	Anacostia Community Museum Archives
Title:	Benjamin W. Austin Liberian Autograph Collection
Date:	circa 1862-1895 (bulk 1884-1889)
Identifier:	ACMA.06-049
Extent:	0.06 Linear feet ((1 box) (4 folders))
Language:	English .
Summary:	The collection, which dates from circa 1812-1895 and measures .06 linear feet, is comprised of correspondence from Liberian elected officials and diplomats, and other individuals involved in the American Colonization Society. The primary recipient of these letters is Benjamin W. Austin, an American autograph collector and historian. The collection also includes a lithograph image of Joseph James Cheeseman, the president of Liberia from 1892 until his death in 1896; a collection of autograph cards bearing the signatures of other members of the Liberian government; and a newspaper clipping of an article on the American Colonization Society.
Digital Content:	Image(s): Benjamin W. Austin Liberian Autograph Collection

Administrative Information

Processing Information

Finding aid prepared by Kim L. Dixon, 2010-04. Finding aid encoded by Elizabeth Bauerle, 2011-12.

Preferred Citation

Benjamin W. Austin Liberian Autograph Collection, Anacostia Community Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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

Ownership and Literary Rights

The Correspondence from the Republic of Liberia collection is 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.

Biographical Note

The roots of the country of Liberia can be traced to the American Colonization Society. The society was instrumental in the founding of the colony of Liberia in 1821. Controversial even at its beginnings, it advocated the removal of free people of color from the United States, where they suffered restrictive legislative rights, to Africa. It was thought in Africa, African Americans would enjoy freedoms that would always be denied to them by free whites in the Americas.

Originally begun as a colony of the United States, Liberia was governed by white agents until the appointment of Joseph Jenkins Roberts in 1842. In 1847 Liberia's legislative body voted to declare independence from the United States and elected Roberts as the first President.

Scope and Contents

The collection which dates from 1862 to 1895, bulk dates 1880-1889, documents an artificial grouping of letters, visiting cards, and articles that address the personalities of various early government officials of what was then the Republic of Liberia. Of particular interest are the series for letters addressed to Rev. Ben W. Austin who was at one time the secretary of the Northwestern Literary and Historical Society in Sioux City and later, the secretary of the Trinity Historical Society in Dallas, Texas. There is also an interesting letter from Joseph J. Roberts, the first President of Liberia.

Arrangement

The papers are arranged into two series. Folders are arranged alphabetically within series, while documents are organized chronologically.

- Series 1: Correspondence
 - Series 2: Printed Material
-

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Slavery -- United States

Types of Materials:

Clippings
Correspondence
Lithographs
Signatures (names)

Names:

American Colonization Society
Cheeseman, Joseph James, 1843-1896

Places:

Liberia

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1862 - 1895

3 Items

Scope and Contents: This series contains an artificial collection of correspondence and visiting cards (calling cards) from various dignitaries of the Republic of Liberia. Of particular interest is a letter from the first President of Liberia, Joseph J. Roberts and a series of letters sent to Rev. Ben W. Austin from different government officials.

Box 1, Folder 1	Calling Cards, circa 1880s
Box 1, Folder 2	Letters of B. W. Austin, 1889, 1887, 1884
Box 1, Folder 3	Letters of Liberian Presidents, 1895, 1862

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Printed material, circa 1880s

1 Item

Scope and Contents: This series contains articles about the American Colonization Society and a lithograph of President Joseph James Cheeseman of Liberia.

Box 1, Folder 4 [Clippings, circa 1880s](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)