



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the William Dandridge Terrell Papers

NMAH.AC.0097

Robert Harding, archivist

1985

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	William Dandridge Terrell Papers
Date:	1911-1965
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0097
Creator:	Terrell, William Dandridge, 1871-1960s (radio communication specialist) (Creator)
Extent:	0.5 Cubic feet (1 box)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The collection documents W.D.Terrell's life, specifically his work as Chief of the Radio Division in the Commerce Department. Terrell was responsible for monitoring the institution of radio into the nation's defense forces.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by William Dandridge Terrell's wife in 1967.

Provenance

Donated to the Division of Electricity by Terrell's wife in 1967. Transferred from the Division of Electricity (now the Division of Work and Industry), on March 30, 1984.

Related Materials

Materials in the Archives Center

George H. Clark Collection of Radioana (AC0055)

Processing Information

Processed by Robert Harding, archivist, 1985.

Preferred Citation

William Dandridge Terrell Papers, 1911-1965, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

William Dandridge Terrell (1871-1965) was born in rural Virginia and worked in government service for twenty-two years in the communications field. His specific duties are unknown, but in 1911, after his government service, he was appointed to a New York civilian post. His new duty was to insure the efficient operation of the freshly pioneered wireless apparatus on all Atlantic based Naval ships. In 1915, Terrell was transferred to Washington, D.C. where he supervised a staff of thirty-five. As Chief of Radio Division in the Commerce Department, Terrell was responsible for monitoring the [the use of?] radio nation's defense forces. Terrell was promoted to Chief of Field Operations for the Federal Radio Commission (FRC), which was created in 1934. Terrell continued in that post even when the FRC was changed to Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Terrell retired to Florida in 1943 at the age of 72. He died on March 23, 1965.

Scope and Contents

This eight folder collection documents William Dandridge Terrell's life from his 1911 appointment to the Commerce Department to his death in the 1960s. The collection consists of a brief and partially completed autobiography and descendant listing; a large body of correspondence related to financial planning, insurance policies, and appointment notices; a program from an American Wireless Operators Convention held in his honor; several retirement announcements; business correspondence concerning Terrell's inspection job from 1911-1914; and four photographs of Terrell, his family, and his friends.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into one series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Communications
- National defense
- Radio -- Defense
- Radio -- History
- Radio communication specialists
- Wireless communication system

Types of Materials:

- Correspondence -- 1930-1950
- Personal papers -- 20th century
- Photographs -- 20th century

Names:

- United States. Commerce Department
- United States. Federal Radio Commission

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	Biography, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1912
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1911-04 - 1911-07
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1913
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1914-08 - 1914-11
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence (miscellaneous), 1912 - 1934, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	1964 Yearbook of Veteran Wireless Operators Association, Inc., 1964
Box 1, Folder 8	Photographs, undated