

Guide to the Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers

JWJ MSS 60



by Jennifer Meehan

2009

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: JWJ MSS 60

CREATOR: McAdoo, Orpheus M. (Orpheus Myron), 1858-1900

TITLE: Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo papers

DATES: circa 1850-1966

BULK DATES: 1886-1936

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.88 linear feet (10 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection consists of material documenting the entrepreneurial and performance activities of Orpheus M. McAdoo as a member of the Jubilee Singers and director of the Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers, as well as material relating to Mattie Allen McAdoo and the McAdoo and Allen families. Highlights include scrapbooks containing announcements, clippings, and ephemera for the Fisk Jubilee Singers Tour of Australia in 1886-1888 and "McAdoo's Virginia Jubilee Singers and Concert Company, Clippings from Papers throughout Australasia" in 1893-1895; photographs of Orpheus McAdoo, Mattie Allen McAdoo, and one or more of McAdoo's troupes (possibly the Virginia Jubilee Singers and/or the Georgia Minstrels and Alabama Cakewalkers); and artifacts, such as beads, beaded jewelry, a spearhead and pipe, presumably collected by the McAdoos while on tour in South Africa. Also found are the license and invitation for the marriage of Orpheus and Mattie McAdoo and the certificate and announcement for the birth of their son, Myron; sheet music for songs perhaps performed by Orpheus McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo; numerous family photographs (many of which are unidentified); personal and financial papers of Mattie Allen McAdoo; and material relating to various members of the McAdoo and Allen families, including Myron McAdoo, Myra McAdoo, and Lula Allen.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.mcadoo>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.mcadoo>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

- b. box
- f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from the William Reese Company on the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts & Letters Fund, 2009.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections as they are acquired, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and minimal organization. Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo

Biographical information is drawn from Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), pp. 119-140.

Orpheus M. McAdoo (1858-1900)

Orpheus McAdoo was born in Greensboro, North Carolina on January 4, 1858. He graduated from Hampton Institute in 1876, and taught school in rural Virginia for three years and then at the Hampton preparatory school for several years. In 1885, McAdoo joined Frederick Loudin's Jubilee Singers, also known as the Original Fisk Jubilee Singers, and toured with the group in London and Australia. He returned to the United

States in 1889 to form his own group, the Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers. Among the people he recruited were Belle F. Gibbons, his younger brother Eugene McAdoo, Madame J. Stewart Ball, his future wife Mattie E. Allen, and Moses Hamilton Hodges. Beginning in 1890, the company toured the British Isles before traveling to South Africa, where they had a great deal of success, performing in large cities as well as more remote regions of the country from 1890 to 1892. In 1892, the company embarked on a tour of Australia and New Zealand. They returned to South Africa in 1895 for a second extended tour, at which point McAdoo transformed the group from the Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers to McAdoo's Minstrel and Vaudeville Company and broadened the list of performers to include variety artists in addition to singers. McAdoo's company headed back to Australia in 1898. While the company toured Australia, McAdoo returned to the United States in 1899 to assemble a full-scale modern African American minstrel troupe, which he named the Georgia Minstrels and Alabama Cakewalkers. The newly-formed company toured Australia from 1899 to 1900. Six weeks after the end of the tour, on July 17, 1900, McAdoo died and was buried in Waverly Cemetery, Sydney.

Mattie Allen McAdoo (1868?-1936)

Mattie Allen McAdoo was born in Columbus, Ohio, circa 1868. After graduating from high school, she taught school, before joining Orpheus McAdoo's Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers as a contralto soloist. She married McAdoo in 1891, and gave birth to a son, Myron, in 1893. After her husband's death in 1900, Mattie McAdoo returned to the United States with her son. She performed as a singer with her sister, Lula Allen, and her brother, Robert Allen. Later in life, she worked for the Phyllis Wheatley YMCA in Washington, D.C. Mattie McAdoo died in 1936.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of material documenting the entrepreneurial and performing activities of Orpheus M. McAdoo as a member of the Jubilee Singers and director of the Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers, as well as material relating to Mattie Allen McAdoo and the McAdoo and Allen families. Highlights include scrapbooks containing announcements, clippings, and ephemera for the Fisk Jubilee Singers Tour of Australia in 1886-1888 and "McAdoo's Virginia Jubilee Singers and Concert Company, Clippings from Papers throughout Australasia" in 1893-1895; photographs of Orpheus McAdoo, Mattie Allen McAdoo, and one or more of McAdoo's troupes (possibly the Virginia Jubilee Singers and/or the Georgia Minstrels and Alabama Cakewalkers); and artifacts, such as beads, beaded jewelry, a spearhead and pipe, presumably collected by the McAdoos while on tour in South Africa. Also found are the license and invitation for the marriage of Orpheus and Mattie McAdoo and the certificate and announcement for the birth of their son, Myron; sheet music for songs perhaps performed by Orpheus McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo; numerous family photographs (many of which are unidentified); personal and financial papers of Mattie Allen McAdoo; and material relating to various members of the McAdoo and Allen families, including Myron McAdoo, Myra McAdoo, and Lula Allen.

Arrangement

Organized into four series: I. Photographs, circa 1860-1960. II. Scrapbooks, 1886-1895. III. Personal and Family Papers, circa 1850-1966. IV. Artifacts, circa 1895.

Collection Contents

Series I: Photographs, circa 1860-1960

Arranged by type or subject of photograph.

b. 1, f. 1	Portraits of Orpheus McAdoo	circa 1895
b. 1, f. 2	Portrait of Orpheus McAdoo, painted photograph in plastic with original frame	circa 1895
b. 1, f. 3	Portraits of Orpheus and Mattie McAdoo and family	circa 1895
b. 1, f. 4	Portraits of Mattie McAdoo (with others)	circa 1900
b. 1, f. 5	Portraits of Myron McAdoo as toddler	circa 1895
b. 1, f. 6	Portrait of Myron McAdoo (?) as young man	circa 1910
b. 1, f. 7	Group portraits of Jubilee Singers, Georgia Minstrels or Alabama Cake Walkers (?)	circa 1895
b. 1, f. 8	Cabinet photograph of Orpheus McAdoo's gravestone in Sydney	circa 1900
b. 1, f. 9	Unidentified family portraits (?), cased photographs: 3 tintypes (2 without cases)	circa 1865
b. 1, f. 10	Unidentified family portrait (?), cased photograph: 1 ambrotype	circa 1860
b. 2, f. 11	Portraits of Lottie Allen and Lilian -----, cabinet photographs	circa 1903
b. 2, f. 12	Unidentified family portraits (?)	circa 1910-1920
b. 2, f. 13	Portraits of Lula Allen and Robert Allen, reproductions	
b. 2, f. 14	Portraits of Harry Cardozo and Helen Cardozo	
b. 2, f. 15	Photograph album of Lula Allen (including photographs of Mattie and Myron McAdoo)	1916-1917
b. 2, f. 16	Page from photograph album of Lula Allen	
b. 2, f. 17	Cabinet photograph of scene in Cape Town, South Africa	circa 1895
b. 2, f. 18	Photograph album, exterior scenes	
b. 2, f. 19-20	Snapshots	circa 1930-1960
b. 2, f. 21	Miscellaneous	

Series II: Scrapbooks, 1886-1895

b. 3, f. 22	Fisk Jubilee Singers Tour of Australia	1886-1888
	"McAdoo's Virginia Jubilee Singers and Concert Company, Clippings from Papers throughout Australasia" (with sheet music laid in) See: "McAdoo's Virginia Jubilee Singers and Concert Company, Clippings from Papers throughout Australasia" (from Series II)	1892-1895

Series III: Personal and Family Papers, circa 1850-1966

Arranged in rough chronological order. Financial papers relating to Mattie McAdoo are arranged as a group at the end of the series.

b. 3, f. 23	Family record, Allen Family	circa 1850–1875, 1931
b. 3, f. 24	Program, Fisk Jubilee Singers	circa 1886
b. 3, f. 25	Marriage certificate, Orpheus and Mattie McAdoo	1891
b. 3, f. 26	Wedding invitation, Orpheus and Mattie McAdoo	1891
b. 3, f. 27	Sheet music	circa 1892-1902
b. 3, f. 28	Birth certificate and announcement for Myron McAdoo	1893
b. 3, f. 29	Agreement between Joseph G. Stevens and Orpheus McAdoo	1894
b. 3, f. 30	Clipping related to Orpheus McAdoo	1896
b. 3, f. 31	Correspondence, Orpheus McAdoo: 1 postcard	1900
b. 3, f. 32	Presentation card to Orpheus McAdoo	
b. 3, f. 33	Orpheus McAdoo's will, exemplification of probate	1900
b. 3, f. 34	Clipping related to Mrs. Martha Allen	1905
b. 3, f. 35	Dinner menu signed by Mattie McAdoo and others	1909
b. 3, f. 36	Advertisement for performance of Mattie McAdoo, Robert Allen, and Lula Allen at Opera House	circa 1910
b. 3, f. 37	Clippings and other material related to Mattie McAdoo	circa 1910-1930
b. 3, f. 38	Diaries, Mattie McAdoo	1915, 1933, undated
b. 3, f. 39	Material relating to Myron McAdoo	1917-1918
b. 3, f. 40	Correspondence, Mattie McAdoo	1918-1933
b. 3, f. 41	Clippings related to death of Mattie McAdoo	circa 1936
b. 3, f. 42	Phyllis Wheatley YMCA	circa 1936
b. 4, f. 43	Illustrated greeting cards and drawings by Ralph Vaughn	
b. 4, f. 44	Postcards received by Bertha and Lula Allen	
b. 4, f. 45	Blank postcards	
b. 4, f. 46	Material relating to Lula Allen	
b. 4, f. 47	Dorothy Porter's notes and research on McAdoo	
b. 4, f. 48	Miscellaneous	

b. 4, f. 49	Address book	
b. 4, f. 50	Material relating to Myra McAdoo	circa 1966
	Financial papers relating to Mattie McAdoo	
b. 5, f. 51-52	Account books	1901-1933
b. 5, f. 53	Bank book	
b. 5, f. 54	Money order	1901
b. 5, f. 55	Deed of trust	1903
b. 5, f. 56	Stock certificates	1900-1948
b. 5, f. 57	Warranty deeds	1916-1917
b. 5, f. 58	Returned checks	1924-1936, 1950
b. 5, f. 59	Estate settlement of Mattie McAdoo, check books	1937-1944

Series IV: Artifacts, circa 1895

b. 6	Beads and beaded jewelry (13 items)	circa 1895
b. 7	Spearhead; wooden pipe; wooden frame (3 items)	circa 1895
b. 9, 8	Fans (8 items)	circa 1895

Oversize

b. 10, f. 60

["McAdoo's Virginia Jubilee Singers and Concert Company, Clippings from Papers throughout Australasia" \(from Series II\)](#)

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

African American singers -- 19th century
African Americans -- Music -- 19th century
Minstrel shows
Songs
Vaudeville

Geographic Names

Australia -- Description and travel
South Africa -- Description and travel

Genres / Formats

Artifacts (object genre)
Photographs

Names

Allen, Lula
McAdoo, Mattie Allen
McAdoo, Myra
McAdoo, Myron
McAdoo, Orpheus M. (Orpheus Myron),
1858-1900

Corporate Bodies

Jubilee Singers
Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers

Contributors

McAdoo, Orpheus M. (Orpheus Myron),
1858-1900
McAdoo, Mattie Allen