

Finding Aid to the Martha's Vineyard Museum

Record Unit 340

African-Americans on Martha's Vineyard, 1722 – 2004

By Joie Lemaitre

Descriptive Summary

Repository: Martha's Vineyard Museum

Call No.:

Quantity: .5 cubic ft.

Abstract: The African American collection is a compilation of original documents, bills of sale, newspaper articles, and published pamphlets relating to the African American community on Martha's Vineyard.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information: The African American Collection was acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum by many donors throughout the 20th century.

Processing Information: Joie Lemaitre

Access Information: none

Use Restrictions: none

Preferred Citation for Publication: Martha's Vineyard Museum, African American Collection, Record Unit 340.

Index Terms

- African Americans
- Blacks
- Slavery
- Cottage City
- Anti-Slavery Society
- NAACP
- West, Dorothy
- Burleigh, Harry
- Cuffe, Paul
- Martin, Capt. William

Series and Subseries Arrangement

Series I: Slavery

Subseries A: Anti-Slavery Society

Subseries B: Correspondence

Series II: Newspaper Clippings

Subseries A: Prominent African American Islanders

Subseries B: African American History

Subseries C: Summer Community

Subseries D: Racism

Series III: African American Organizations on Martha's Vineyard

Series IV: Racism on Martha's Vineyard

Series V: African Americans in the Maritime Trades

Series VI: Research

Series VII: African Americans on Nantucket

Historical Note:

The collection of records in Record Unit 240 has been "artificially" created. There is no original order to these documents. Rather, it is assumed that the organization's librarians, interns and volunteers have brought these records together at some point. The institution's own records do not shed light on when and why the collection was originally formed. What is known is that the MVM was founded in 1922. And, the organization began to collect documents in 1923. Thus, the formation of this record unit can only be dated to sometime between 1923 and the present day. The processing of this collection in 2006 has largely kept this artificial collection together.

Scope and Content Note:

This collection spans nearly 285 years of African American history on Martha's Vineyard; it is an artificial compilation, a result of many donors. The material comprises original documents, newspaper articles, pamphlets and original research relating to the African American Community on Martha's Vineyard. Of special note are original documents dating from 1722 to 1799 that detail the buying and selling of slaves to island residents. There is also a published piece by Marcus Jernegan from 1916 on *Slavery and Conversion in the American Colonies*.

Series Descriptions

Series I: Slavery

Box 1 of 1

Folder 1: Document--Gift of Negro Girl to Thomas Jernegan, February 12, 1722/23

Folder 2: Document--Sale of "Negroe boy" by Zach Mayhew to Ebenezer Hatch, June 19, 1727

Folder 3: Estate account of Joseph Chace, includes One Negro Boy, January 5, 1741/2

Folder 4: Document regarding sale of black slave to 2 Yankee Captains of sloops, August 21, 1768

Folder 5: Bill of Sale in folder 4, August 21, 1768

Folder 6: Bill of sale for purchase of Negro "Mingdelas", Edgartown, October 8, 1778

Folder 7: Slave lists from Havana, May 1797

Folder 8: Slave list

Folder 9: Slave list from Havana, 1799; cargo for the account of Messrs. Athearn and Benjamin Homer of Boston

Folder 10: Jonathon Athearn House, the property of a slave owner, *Vineyard Gazette*, August 19, 1926

Subseries A: Anti-Slavery Society

Box 1 of 1

Folder 11: Constitution and articles for the Edgartown North District Anti-Slavery Society, December 31, 1836

Folder 12: Petition to Mass. Legislature from the Edgartown delegation re: anti-slavery legislation, no date

Folder 13: Petition to US Senate and House from inhabitants of Edgartown's Anti-Slavery Society regarding the annexation of Texas to the Union as a slave state, no date

Folder 14: Petition to free fugitive slave by members of Edgartown Anti-Slavery Society, February 1, 1843

Subseries B: Correspondence and Publications

Box 1 of 1

Folder 15: Correspondence between Mr. Holte and the *Vineyard Gazette*, includes list of slaves in MA circa 1754, correspondence is between 1987-1988

Folder 16: Publication of the *Life and Adventures of Paul Cuffee*, published in 1839. Also the Cuttyhunk Historical Society publication on Paul Cuffee from 1999 as well as research on the Slocum/Cuffee connection by Janet Bosworth, January 1988

Folder 17: Article from the *Vineyard Gazette*, Sept. 29, 1854 regarding a runaway slave and other related articles

Folder 18: "Slavery and Conversion in the American Colonies" by Marcus Jernegan from the *American Historical Review*, April 1916 (copy)

Series II: Newspaper Clippings

Subseries A: Prominent African American Islanders

Box 1 of 1

Folder 19: Clippings by and about the author, Dorothy West, 1971-1993

Folder 20: Articles and publications featuring the famous composer and baritone, Harry T. Burleigh, 1889. Also includes original letter, program, and research paper by Anne Simpson about Harry T. Burleigh, 1986.

Folder 21: Newspaper articles and biological information on a variety of African Americans, 1970-1993

Subseries B: African American History

Box 1 of 1

Folder 22: Newspaper clippings about African American history, including the assessment of “negro” soldiers in WWII to articles following the African American Trail on Martha’s Vineyard to articles on the Civil Rights movement.

Folder 23: Articles on discrimination and “class”. The *Vineyard Gazette* article is on a discrimination case, August 19, 1947. The *Boston Globe* article is on a new book called *Clashing Over the Color of Class*, March 30, 1999.

Folder 24: Assorted 19th C. clippings from the *Vineyard Gazette* classifieds as well as a report of the Committee of Accounts of the Town of Edgartown from 1855. This details the sale of Nancy Michael’s home – an African American woman.

Folder 25: Vineyard papers on African-Americans in the Maritime Trade, specifically, Capt. William Martin of Chappaquidick, 1993-1997.

Subseries C: African American Summer Community

Box 1 of 1

Folder 26: Articles specifically on the evolving African American summer community from the late 1800’s to today, 1970-2000.

Series III: African American Organizations on Martha’s Vineyard

Box 1 of 1

Folder 27: Newspaper clippings from the *Vineyard Gazette* on the NAACP, as well as, two program booklets for Freedom Fund Rally’s at Oak Bluffs Campground from 1964 and 1965. The 1965 rally featured Mrs. Medgar Evers.

Folder 28: Newspaper clippings about The Open Door Club of Martha’s Vineyard, 1946-1984. The folder also includes club program notes from 1961.

Series IV: Racism on Martha’s Vineyard

Box 1 of 1

Folder 29: “Gay Head Gleanings”, a political poem re: the black vote, no date, c. 1880

Folder 30: Newspaper article regarding the refusal to rent property to a “colored man” at the Oak Bluffs Campground, *Martha’s Vineyard Herald*, July 13, 1889.

Series V: African Americans in the Maritime Trades

Box 1 of 1

Folder 31: Kendall Whaling Museum Monograph Series No. 6 , African Americans in the Maritime Trades, 1990.

Folder 32: Publication entitled "The Black Man and the Sea" from the Whaling Museum Society, 1982.

Folder 33: publication of the American Neptune, featuring an article entitled, "Black-Owned Shipping before Marcus Garvey", July 1975.

Series VI: Research

Box 1 of 1

Folder 34: Research notes on "The African American Presence on Martha's Vineyard" by Jacqueline L. Holland, Ed.D for the Intelligencer

Folder 35: Research notes

Series VII: African Americans on Nantucket

Box 1 of 1

Folder 36: Articles from the publication *Historic Nantucket*, 1977-1992. All articles reference the African American community on Nantucket.