



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives
403 Seventh Avenue North
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

AMBROSE A. BENNETT
(1884-1957)
FAMILY PAPERS
1918-[1937-1957]-1996

Processed by:

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INTRODUCTION

This finding aid focuses on the papers of Rev. Ambrose Allen Bennett, African American minister, born in Davidson County, Tennessee. Spanning the years 1918-1996, although the bulk is largely concentrated between 1937-1957, the papers contain numerous sermons given by Rev. Bennett while minister at Westwood Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. Also contained within the collection are many photographs of the Bennett family as well as Nashville scenes in the early half of the twentieth century. Other items in the collection include certificates, clippings, estate papers, land records, legal documents, obituaries, plaques, programs, school records, a scrapbook of memoirs, and several miscellaneous items.

The materials in the collection is not limited to the family of Ambrose Allen Bennett but also includes documents on the allied family lines of William Henry Fort, Jr. (1911-1974), and William Jennings Hale, Jr., (1914-1989), both prominent African American families in Nashville (see genealogical chart). The materials were donated by Dr. Jane Fort (1938-), the granddaughter of Rev. Bennett. It should be noted that the unprocessed materials had been stored for several years within conditions which lacked humidity and temperature control prior to their transfer to the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

The materials in this finding aid measures 9 linear feet. There are no restrictions on the material. Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Ambrose Allen Bennett Family Papers may be made for scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Ambrose Allen Bennett Family Papers, containing approximately 500 items, span the period 1918-1996, although the bulk is concentrated between 1937-1957. The collection is composed of certificates, clippings, estate papers, land records, legal documents, obituaries, plaques, programs, school records, a scrapbook of memoirs, and several miscellaneous items.

A major portion of the collection consists of sermons and speeches which were given by Rev. Bennett, an African American, during his years in the ministry, the last twenty-five years which were spent at Westwood Baptist church in Nashville, Tennessee. These sermons and speeches have been alphabetically arranged by topic or subject.

There are many photographs in the collection. Most of these depict Rev. Bennett and his family in the early 1900s, but also include Nashville scenes and national points of interest. Among the photographs are several showing training exercises at various military bases during the Joint Orientation Conference in 1950 in which Rev. Bennett was a civilian participant (see Box 2, Folder 5 and Box 3, Folder 6).

Among the funeral programs contained in the collection are those related to the Bennett family. These include Chester Starnes Allen (1923-1982), Reuben Walter Allen, Sr. (1890-1975), Reuben Walter Allen, Jr. (1912-1986), Exum Louis Smith (1915-1997), and Mary Bennett Smith (1920-2002).

In addition to the Ambrose A. Bennett family there is material on two prominent African American allied lines: William Henry Fort, Jr. (1911-1974), and William Jennings Hale, Jr. (1914-1989), both of which were descendents of families that were associated with higher education in Nashville. They were also husbands of Geraldine Bennett Fort-Hale, daughter of Rev. Ambrose Bennett (see genealogical chart), a professor at Tennessee State University for twenty-eight years.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ambrose Allen Bennett

- 1884 June 18, born in Davidson County, Tennessee, the only son of Charles C. and Mary Allen Bennett
- Removed with his family to Bowling Green, Kentucky
- Returned with his family to Nashville, Tennessee
- Educated in Nashville Public Schools
- Graduated from Rogers Williams University in Nashville
- Professor of Mathematics at Rogers Williams University
- 1916 January 17, ordained a minister of the First Baptist Church, East Nashville
- Married to Jennie B. Smith
- 1918 August 1, married to Mattie K. Carter
- 1918-1943 Served successively as secretary, administrative assistant and sales manager with the Sunday School Publishing Board
- 1919-1923 Served as pastor of Roger Heights Baptist Church
- 1923-1928 Assistant pastor at First Baptist Church, East Nashville
- 1928-1953 Served as pastor of Westwood Baptist Church
- 1957 March 30, died in Nashville and interred in Greenwood Cemetery

CONTAINER LIST

Microfilm Roll #1

BOX 1

1. Baby's record—Jane Geraldine Fort
2. Biographical sketch—Geraldine Bennett Fort
3. Candidate for City council—Ambrose Bennett, 1947
4. Cards—Greeting—A. A. Bennett
5. Certificates—Statue of Liberty Ellis Island Centennial Commission—Geraldine Fort Hale
6. Certificates—Students' Army Training Camp—Ambrose Bennett, 1918
7. Church records—Westwood Baptist, Nashville, Tennessee
8. Clippings—Ambrose Bennett
9. Clippings—Fisk University
10. Clippings—Geraldine Bennett Fort
11. Correspondence—A. A. Bennett, 1937-1957
12. Correspondence—Geraldine Fort Hale, 1984
13. Diploma—Dunbar (Okmulgee, OK) High School—Wm. Henry Fort, 1924
14. Estate papers—Ambrose Bennett, 1957
15. Estate papers—Mattie Bennett, 1951

BOX 2

1. Financial documents—Promissory notes—Alice Mai Oglesby
2. Financial documents—Promissory notes—National Baptist Missionary Training School, 1956
3. Guest register—Anniversary Celebration—William and Geraldine Bennett Fort Hale, 1978
4. Invitations—Miscellaneous
5. Joint Orientation Conference—History, list of participants, photographs, etc., 1950
6. Land records—Deed—Bransford Realty Co., to Ambrose Bennett, et ux, 1950
7. Land records—Deed of Trust—Alice Mai Oglesby to Ambrose Bennett, 1954
8. Land records—Deed of Trust—Alice Mai Oglesby to E. A. Goodloe, 1950
9. Land records—Warranty Deed—J. C. Carter to J. R. Evans, 1950
10. Land records—Warranty Deed—J. R. Evans, et ux, to Ambrose Bennett, et ux, 1944
11. Land records—Warranty Deed—P. L. McConnico, et vir, to Ambrose Bennett, et ux, 1949
12. Legal documents—Indenture—James Dixon and wife to W. W. Wilhoite, 1951
13. Legal documents—Power of Attorney—Geraldine Fort Hale, 1992
14. Legal documents—Will—William Carter, 1951
15. Legal documents—Will—Leona I. Hampton, 1948, 1951
16. Legal documents—Will—John Kennedy, 1949
17. Legal documents—Will—Alice Mai Oglesby, 1955

18. Legal documents—Will—Malinda White, 1952
19. Lists—Household articles destroyed by fire at 2712 Meharry Blvd., Sept. 18, 1952
20. Memorials—Rev. Ambrose Allen Bennett, 1957
21. Memorials—Mattie Kate Bennett, 1951

BOX 3

1. Obituaries—Ambrose A. Bennett (1884-1957)
2. Obituaries—Ambrose A. Bennett, Jr. (1914-1941)
3. Obituaries—Jane E. Benson Fort (-1938)
4. Obituaries—William Henry Fort, Sr. (1871-1939)

Microfilm Roll #2

5. Photographs (4 ½ x 5 ½)—Ambrose A. Bennett—Nashville, Tenn.
6. Photographs (4 ½ x 5 ½)—Baltimore, MD—Joint Orientation Conference, 1950
7. Photographs (5 ½ x 7 ½)—Ambrose A. Bennett—Unknown
8. Photographs (8 ½ x 10)—Allen Family—Unknown

BOX 4

1. Plaques—American Baptist Men, First Baptist church—William H. Fort, 1974
2. Plaques—Middle Tenn. Council Development Campaign—Bill Fort, 1972
Plaques—“What Is A Mason?”
3. Plaques—Northwest Civitan Club—William H. Fort, 1973-74
4. Playlets—Miscellaneous
5. Poetry—Miscellaneous
6. Programs—Agriculture & Home Economics Hall of Fame Induction, T. S. U., Oct. 4-5, 1996
7. Programs—Anniversary Celebrations, etc.
8. Programs—Annual Women’s Day, Apr. 29, 1973
9. Programs—“The College Woman and The Sorority,” Mar. 4-7, 1957
10. Programs—19th Annual Spring fete, Fisk Univ., May 5, 1927
11. Programs—54th annual Commencement, Fisk Univ., 1928
12. Programs—Funerals—Allen, Smith, and miscellaneous families
13. Programs—Marion Anderson Concert, Feb. 11, 1957
14. Programs—National Home Demonstration Club Week, Apr. 27, 1952
15. Programs—P. Q. Week, Tenn. A. & I. State Univ., Jan. 14-17, 1957

BOX 5

1. Publications—Booklet—“The Church With the Finger—Prints of Jesus”
2. Publications—Booklet—Directory: Nashville City Schools, 1949-1950
3. Publications—Booklet—“Here’s Zelma”
4. Recommendations—A. A. Bennett
5. School records—Ambrose Bennett

6. School records—Geraldine Bennett
7. School records—Dorothy Fort

Microfilm Roll #3

BOX 6

1. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"A"
2. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"B"
3. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"C"
4. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"D"
5. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"E"
6. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"F"
7. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"G"
8. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"H"
9. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"I-J-K"
10. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"L"

Microfilm Roll #4

BOX 7

1. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"M"
2. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"N-O"
3. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"P-Q"
4. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"R"
5. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"S"
6. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"T"
7. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"U-V"
8. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"W"
9. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—"X-Y-Z"
10. Weddings—Jane Geraldine Fort-and-George Joseph Morrison, 1968
11. Writings—Mattie K. Bennett

BOX 8

Oversize

1. Photographs—Dorothy K. Fort and Jane G. Fort

BOX 9

Oversize

1. Photographs—Jane Benson Fort
2. Photographs—William Henry Fort, Sr.
3. Photographs—William Henry Fort, Jr.

BOX 10

Oversize

1. Scrapbook—School (Fisk University) Memories—William Henry Fort, Jr. 1928

BOX 11

Oversize

1. Certificates—Admirals Club—William H. Fort
2. Certificates—Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority—Mattie Bennett, 1939
3. Certificates—Boy Scouts of America—William H. Fort, n.d.
4. Certificates—Free Masonry—Masonic Temple—William H. Fort, 1957
5. Certificates—Free Masonry—32 degree—William H. Fort, 1948
6. Certificates—Harvard University Alumni—William H. Fort, 1971
7. Certificates—Honorary Sergeant-At-Arms—William H. Fort, 1973
8. Certificates—Meharry Medical College Fund—William Fort, 1973
9. Certificates—Shriners—William H. Fort, 1948
10. Diplomas—A. & I. State Teachers College—Mattie K. Bennett, 1930
11. Diplomas—Columbia University—Geraldine Phillips Bennett, 1934
12. Diplomas—Fisk University—William H. Fort, n.d.
13. Diplomas—Harvard University—Guiliemum Henricum Fort, CCLXXXIII
14. Drawing (charcoal)—Ambrose Bennett
15. Paintings—Ambrose A. Bennett
16. Paintings—Miscellaneous (3)
17. Photographs—Tenn. State Univ., Agriculture and Home Economics—Hall of Fame Inductees—Geraldine Fort Hale, 1996
18. Photographs—Unknown (4)
19. Prints—Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, AL (3)