

Nathan Francis Mossell Papers

UPT 50 M913

Finding aid prepared by Evi Heilbrunn.

Last updated on November 13, 2013.

University of Pennsylvania, University Archives and Records Center

August 2012

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: University Archives and Records Center
Creator	Mossell, Nathan Francis, 1856-1946
Title	Nathan Francis Mossell Papers
Call number	UPT 50 M913
Date [bulk]	1885-1945
Date [inclusive]	1873-1983
Extent	1.75 cubic feet
Language	English

Biography/History

Nathan Francis Mossell was born in Hamilton, Canada, on July 27, 1856. His parents eventually settled in Lockport, New York circa 1865, where Nathan spent the majority of his childhood. In 1873, Mossell entered Lincoln University's preparatory program, receiving a Bachelors degree in 1879. While at Lincoln, he met and courted his future wife, Gertrude Hicks Bustill(1855-1948) and after graduation, decided to pursue a medical education in Philadelphia, a city that served as the national center of American medical education during the nineteenth century.

Dr. Mossell serves as a pioneer among African American medical professionals in the late nineteenth century, paving an educational as well as professional path for both black men and women in Philadelphia as physicians and nurses. In 1879, Mossell became one of the first African Americans enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1882, Mossell was the first African American to receive a diploma from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Roughly a decade late, in 1895, Dr. Mossell established

the first private black hospital in the city and the second in the United States, the Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital and Nurse Training School at 1512 Lombard Street. With few options available to black physicians during the 1880s, Douglass Hospital not only served as the first institution devoted to treating and healing black bodies in the city, but also symbolically represented one of the earliest efforts to initiate the rise of a respected, professional class of African American men and women. He served as Douglass Hospital's Superintendent and Medical Director for over thirty-years, retiring in the early 1930s. Beyond his multiple accolades as a physician, Mossell was also a staunch civil rights crusader. His inability to accept what he commonly referred to as "caste prejudice" established him as a public figure above all else, who was determined to fight for equal rights for African Americans. His writings attest to his fervent opinions about discrimination against blacks and his efforts to change racist policies in the vicinity of Philadelphia, but also nationally through organizations such as the NAACP. Beginning in the early 1890s, Dr. Mossell fought for the desegregation of Girard College, a school originally founded to educate and support white orphans. Other efforts such as his participation in the Niagra Movement in 1905, reflected his opposition to how other African American uplift leaders approached and envisioned the social assimilation of black Americans by the early twentieth century. On October 27, 1946, he died at the age of ninety-one, leaving behind his wife and two daughters, Florence and Mary Mossell.

Scope and Contents

The Nathan Mossell Papers document his medical career and social leadership from the 1890s to 1940s and they include professional and public writings by Dr. Mossell, specifically on the Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital and socio-political issues facing African Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The collection also contains two scrapbooks with newspaper clippings on Douglass Memorial Hospital, hospital events and memorabilia, as well as correspondence between members of the Douglass Board of Managers and its Medical Director. Many documents are the original brochures and advertisements from hospital fundraisers as well as graduation ceremonies for the Nurse Training School. Family materials include writings by Gertrude Bustill Mossell, as well as documents relating to the genealogical history of the Mossell-Bustill family. A family photo album contains forty-three portraits of members of the Bustill and Mossell families as well as close friends, dating from the 1860s through the 1880s.

ARRANGEMENT

The Nathan Mossell papers are organized into four series: Biographical, Writings, Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital and Lincoln University. The family papers are organized by family member: Gertrude Bustill Mossell, Mary Cambell Mossell, Mossie Mossell Griffin, Bustill-Mossell Family and Gertrude Cunningham. The material in each series has been arranged alphabetically.

Administrative Information

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PROVENANCE

Donated by Mrs. Ardelia Stewart, Executrix of the will of Gertrude Elizabeth Nicholson Cunningham, Nathan Mossell's granddaughter, in 1989, through the assistance of Mrs. Gussie H. Gelzer, secretary to the Alexander Family.

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital (Philadelphia, Pa.).

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Bustill Family
- Cunningham, Gertrude
- Griffin, Mossie Mossell
- Mossell, Gertrude H., (Gertrude Hicks), 1855-1948
- Mossell, Mary C.

SUBJECT(S)

- African American physicians--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.
- African American women--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

- African Americans--Civil rights--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.
- African Americans--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.
- African Americans--Professional education--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.
- African Americans--Social life and customs--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia

Collection Inventory

NATHAN FRANCIS MOSSELL.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

	Box	Folder
Awards/Testimonials.	1	1
"The Birth of the Negro Medical Profession in Philadelphia" by Daniel Walden and Thomas Treadwell, 1968.	1	2
Christmas Cards.	1	3
"Dr. Nathan F. Mossell" by Sylvia James (a play in conjunction with the Philadelphia Fellowship Commission), 1947.	1	4
Funeral Service, 1946.	1	5
Journal of Negro History, 1922.	1	6
"Nathan Francis Mossell, 1856-1946," Journal of the National Medical Association, 1 full journal, 6 reprints, 1 photocopy, 1954.	1	7
"Nathan Mossell, 1856-1946 Black Physician, Social Critic: A Preliminary Sketch" by Daniel Walden and Thomas Treadwell, 1970.	1	8
Obituary of Nathan Francis Mossell, 1946.	1	9
Radio Addresses.	1	10

Race Relations in the US--An Appeal to England and Europe, 1910.	1	11
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SCRAPBOOKS.

Box

1886 - 1932.		2
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1897 - 1945 (1).		3
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1897 - 1945 (2).		4
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Box

Folder

Telegrams and letters sent on the occasion of NFM's 86th and 90th birthday.	1	12
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WRITINGS.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL.

Box

Folder

At the Grave of Thaddeus Stevens, 1934.	1	13
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Autobiography.	1	14
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The Clansmen, 1906.	1	15
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Constitutional League Sends Message to President, 1903.	1	16
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Era of the New Deal, 1938.	1	17
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Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital and Training School.	1	18
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Letters, Newspaper Editorials and Radio Speech, 1907-1943.	1	19
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The Medical Profession: A Toast, 1944.	1	20
Men and Issues Here, 1901-1937.	1	21
Race Problems and Leadership, 1898.	1	22
Race Segregation in Public Education.	1	23
Restricted Suffrage.	1	24
Social Equality and Prejudice.	1	25
Stephen Girard's Will versus the People.	1	26
Teaching of History Considered in Relation to Race Problems, 1899.	1	27
This Nation and the British Empire need a New Birth of Freedom.	1	28
	Box	Folder
The Modern Hospital: It's Construction, Organization and Management, 1908.	1	29
Phlebitis following Abdominal Operations is of Septic Origin, 1901.	1	30

FREDERICK DOUGLASS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL.

	Box	Folder
Annual Report, 1920.	1	31
Dedication program, 1909.	1	32
Douglass Hospital Pamphlets, Event Brochures.	1	33
Endowment Report, n.d.	1	34

Fundraising broadsides with NFM and Frederick Douglass engravings.	1	35
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Gala May Fete and Extraordinary.	1	36
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Historical Accounts of Douglass Hospital.	1	37
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LINCOLN UNIVERSITY.

	Box	Folder
Class-Day Exercises: Class of 1873.	1	38
Commencement Exercises, 1943 (2).	1	39
Lincoln Alumni Magazine, [1885];.	1	40

GERTRUDE BUSTILL MOSSELL.

	Box	Folder
"Dear Old Philadelphia": poem printed on postcard (4), 1913.	1	41
"Forerunners of the Afro-American Council," Howards American Magazine, p. 410-424, 1900.	1	42
"I am Calling to You" poem with engraving of Frederick Douglass (2),1919; "Emancipation," 1913: Religious poem; "The Power of the Press": article appearing in Afro-American Encyclopedia: Thoughts, Doings and Saving of the Race, 1896.	1	43
"Little Dansie's One Day at Sabbath School," 10 p. (3), 1902.	1	44
Obituary, 1948.	1	45

Twenty 19th Century Black Women (Washington, D.C. : National Council of Negro Women), p. 29, 1979.	1	46
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MARY CAMPBELL MOSSELL.

	Box	Folder
Advertisements: Niagara Laundry; Dry Goods, Trimmings and Notions.	1	47

MOSSIE MOSSELL GRIFFIN.

	Box	Folder
Obituary.	1	48

BUSTILL-MOSSELL FAMILY.

	Box	Folder
"The Bustill Family," Journal of Negro History, October (3 photocopies), 1925.	1	49
Bustill family genealogical papers.	1	50
Bustill family reunion announcements, 1912-1923.	1	51

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS.

	Box	Folder
Bustill family.	1	52
Education.	1	53
Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital/Mercy-Douglass Hospital.	1	54
Gertrude Bustill Mossell.	1	55
Miscellaneous.	1	56
Paul Robeson.	1	57
Racial Inequality.	1	58
Society/Family/Personal.	1	59
Vietnam War and Domestic politics.	1	60
	Box	Folder
Photographs Gertrude Bustill Mossell, other family members, and office building on Pine Street (12).	1	61
Photographs Nathan Francis Mossell (8 photo., 3 engr.).	1	62
Photograph Album, 1860-1880.		5

GERTRUDE CUNNINGHAM.

	Box	Folder
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Black History pamphlets and brochures.	1	63
Correspondence (1)/Mercy Service Club (1).	1	64
Index to Nathan Francis Mossell's Scrapbook.	1	65
McGovern Campaign; Photographs -- Many showing Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, Juanita Kidd Stout, and Helen O. Dickens as well as other family members (52), 1972.	1	66
Photographs, 1977-1983.	1	67
Resolution from Board of Education of Township of Moorestown, State of New Jersey (2).	1	68
The Shortchanged children of suburbia: what schools don't teach about human differences and what can be done about it, 1967.	1	69
Vietnam War.	1	70