

**The Filson Historical Society**

**Matthews family  
Papers, 1912-1941**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, see the Curator of Special Collections.

Size of Collection:  
0.33 Cubic Feet

Location Number:  
Mss. A M439

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**Scope and Content Note**

Collection consists of letters, pamphlets, essays, advertising and fund raising cards, centering on the career, civic and personal interests of William B. Matthews, the principal of Louisville's Central High School from 1911 to 1934. The letters concern African-American school affairs, in particular, Central High School, as well as civic, church, and YMCA activities. The collection gives an overview of African-American aspirations and involvement for and in the Louisville area in the early years of the twentieth century.

Folder 1 includes business and personal correspondence of William B. Matthews, as well as his wife and daughter; includes correspondence to Mrs. Matthews from Hattie Bishop Speed.

Folder 2 includes reports titled, "Report of Findings Committee of State Inter-Racial Conference Held on the Call of Governor Morrow in Louisville, July 23-24, 1920," and "Report: Woman's Section, Commission on Interracial Cooperation: Study of Negro Homes" circa 1920s.

Folder 3 includes undated manuscripts titled, "The American Citizen and the American Race," and "Preamble to Constitution of the Crispus Attucks Chapter of the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution" (along with handwritten notes in "Kentucky Society, Sons of the American Revolution January 1916" Annual Report)

Folder 4 includes invitation to reception for Matthews, 24 September 1912; program, Mammoth Field and Track Meet, Central High School Athletic Association, 30 May 1914; program, dedication exercises of Central Colored High School, 9 March 1917; payment record of salaries at Central Colored High School, 23 December 1926; program, commencement exercises, Central Colored High School, 14 June 1934; paper on Orphans' Home Exposition, undated.

Folder 5 includes brochure on Louisville Free Public Library's holdings on Oliver Hazard Perry and the Battle of Lake Erie, June 1913; program for Louisville Teachers' Institute, 12 May 1917 (held at Central High School); Announcement of Courses of Study and Faculty of Louisville Summer Normal, Summer 1920 (held at Central High School); advertisement for Memorial Auditorium Bonds, circa 1920; invitation to Bon Vivant Club dance, 6 January 1922; Proceedings of the Kentucky Negro Educational Association, April 1922 (held in Louisville); program for the Presentation of Rev. A. L. Gaines as the Baltimore A. M. E. Conference Candidate for the Bishopric at the General Conference, Louisville, May 1924; program, the Municipal College Players, "The Whole Town's Talking" 23 May 1933 (held at Central High School); program, Bazaar benefiting Madison Relief Fund, Madison Junior High School, November 1933; Kentucky Negro Educational Association Programs, April 1934 and 1936; *Poetic Memories* by J. W. Tamblyn.

Miscellaneous material includes advertisement cards, contest cards for church fundraisers, programs for various events, YMCA-Colored Branch information, and Red Cross Hospital for Colored Patients information.

**Additional Resources:**

William B. Matthews Collection, 1881-1932, the Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library Archives and Special Collections

William B. Matthews Papers, 1899-1925, the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History, Atlanta

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**Biographical Note**

William B. Matthews (1864-1940)

William Baxter Matthews was born on 31 July 1864 to William B. and Annie Head Matthews in Powerville, Georgia. He graduated from Lewis High School in Macon, Georgia in 1883, and went on to graduate from Atlanta University (A.B.) in 1890; he received an additional A.B. from Columbia University in 1915. From 1890 through 1911, Matthews was the principal of Gate City School, which became the Houston Street School, in Atlanta, Georgia. He relocated to Louisville, Kentucky in 1912 to become principal of Central Colored High School, a position he held until his retirement in 1934. Under Matthews' leadership, Central High School underwent several structural changes, including a move in 1913 to Ninth and Chestnut Streets to a building once occupied to Louisville's Male High School, as well as an expansion in 1923, which allowed for the school's first library. The school added home economics and industrial shops, business training, an orchestra, a physical training program, and school publications (a newspaper and yearbook).

In addition to his work as an educator, Matthews was a state agent with the North Carolina Mutual and Provident Association and proprietor of the Negro Business Directory and Advertising Agency which published *The Negro Business Directory and Commercial Guide of Atlanta* in 1911. He was active in the community as a member of the Atlanta and Louisville branch of the YMCA, the N.A.A.C.P., fraternal organizations, and the Negro Young People's Christian and Educational Congress.

Matthews was elected president of the Atlanta University Alumni Association in 1895, and was a trustee of Atlanta University from 1902-1929. He compiled the *Negro Business Directory of Atlanta* in 1909. In Louisville, he taught Sunday School at Plymouth Congregational Church.

Matthews married Josephine O. "Ophelia" Beale on 1 January 1895; he had one daughter, Florida Louise, born circa 1898. Matthews died on 8 January 1940 in Louisville, Kentucky.

*Sources:*

Finding Aid for the William B. Matthews Collection at the Atlanta University Center  
(<http://www.auctr.edu/rwwl/FindingAids%5Cwbmatthews.pdf>)

Mather, Frank Lincoln (ed.), *Who's who of the colored race: a general biographical dictionary of men and women of African descent*, Volume 1, 1915: 186.

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**Folder List**

Box 1

Folder 1: Correspondence, 1912-1941

Folder 2: Reports, circa 1920s:

Folder 3: Writings, undated

Folder 4: Central High School materials, 1912-1934, undated

Folder 5: Brochures and Pamphlets, 1913-1939

Folder 6: Miscellaneous, 1911-1928, undated

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**Subject Headings**

Afro-Americans – Education – Kentucky – Louisville  
Afro-Americans – Kentucky – Louisville  
Kentucky Commission on Interracial Relations  
Louisville (Ky.) – Race relations  
Matthews, William B.  
Morrow, Edwin Porch, 1877-1932  
Red Cross Hospital (Louisville, Ky.)  
Rosenwald, Julius, 1862-1932  
Sons of the American Revolution. Kentucky Society  
World War, 1914-1918 – African-American participation  
Young Men's Christian Associations