

Jubilee Singers Archives

1858-1924

Reprocessed by Aisha M. Johnson

Special Collections Librarian

Fisk University

September 2013

Background: The tradition of excellence at Fisk has developed out of a history marked by struggle and uncertainty. The Fisk Jubilee Singers originated as a group of students who set out on a concert tour of the North on October 6, 1871 to save a financially ailing school. Their ages ranged from fifteen to twenty-five years old. The idea to form the group was conceived by George L. White, the University's treasurer, against the disapproval of the University. White borrowed money for the tour.

In the beginning, the group met with failure, singing classical and popular music. When they began to sing slave songs, they brought spirituals to the attention of the world during their national and European concerts. It was White who gave them the name Jubilee Singers in memory of the Jewish Year of Jubilee. The original Jubilee Singers (1871) are Minnie Tate, Greene Evans, Isaac Dickerson, Jennie Jackson, Maggie Porter, Ella Sheppard, Thomas Rutling, Benjamin Holmes, Eliza Walker, and George White as director. The Singers raised \$150,000, which went to the building of Jubilee Hall, now a historic landmark.

Today, the tradition of the Jubilee Singers continues at Fisk University. On October 6th of every year, Fisk University pauses to observe the anniversary of the singers' departure from campus in 1871. The contemporary Jubilee Singers perform during the University convocation and conclude the day's ceremonies with a pilgrimage to the grave sites of the original Jubilee Singers to sing.

Scope and Content Note: The Jubilee Singers Archives, 1858-1924, consists of thirteen archival boxes (6.5 linear feet) focused on the activities of the Fisk University Jubilee Singers. There is an abundance of correspondences from members including George White (organizer), Ella Sheppard Moore, Mabel Imes, America Robinson, Maggie Porter, and Julia Jackson. The collection also includes newspaper clippings, photographs, publicity materials, and programs. The intellect of Ella Sheppard Moore is made apparent through her many manuscripts and publications in the collection. The Jubilee Singers documented their expeditions very well, as shown in the collection's multiple scrapbooks, while the sheet music captures the historical music and arrangements dating back to 1872. In addition, there are three archival boxes filled with materials collected by the Jubilee Singers during their excursions throughout the United States and Europe.

Jubilee Singers Archives
1858-1924

Inventory

Box 1

History of the Jubilee Singers – Correspondence

- f. 1. History of the Jubilee Singers -- Manuscript
- 2. Biographical Information -- Mabel Lewis Imes
- 3. Correspondence, General -- 1858-1860, 1870-1875
- 4. Correspondence, General -- January – August 1876
- 5. Correspondence, General -- September – December 1876
- 6. Correspondence, General -- 1877-1878, 1883, 1895, 1899
- 7. Correspondence, General -- no date
- 8. Correspondence, General -- no date
- 9. Correspondence, Personal -- Imes, Mabel L.
- 10. Correspondence, Personal -- Jackson, Julia
- 11. Correspondence, Personal -- Porter, Maggie
- 12. Correspondence, Personal -- Robinson, America, 1875-1876
- 13. Correspondence, Personal -- Robinson, America, 1877-1878
- 14. Correspondence, Personal -- Sheppard, Ella

Box 2

Financial Records

- f. 1. Financial Records -- Contracts -- 1872-1876, no date
- 2. Financial Records -- Jubilees Fund Statements -- 1876
- 3. Financial Records -- Jubilee Singers Receipts and Statements -- 1873
- 4. Financial Records -- Jubilee Singers Receipts and Statements -- 1874
- 5. Financial Records -- Jubilee Singers Receipts and Statements -- 1875
- 6. Financial Records -- Jubilee Singers Receipts and Statements -- 1876
- 7. Financial Records -- Jubilee Singers Receipts and Statements -- 1877
- 8. Financial Records -- Jubilee Singers Receipts and Statements -- 1878
- 9. Financial Records -- Jubilee Singers Receipts and Statements -- 1907
- 10. Financial Records -- Jubilee Singers Receipts and Statements -- miscellaneous
- 11. Financial Records -- Jubilee Singers Receipts and Statements -- n.d.

Box 3 (Flat Box)

Newspaper Clippings – Publicity

- f. 1. Newspaper Clippings -- 1870-1875
- 2. Newspaper Clippings -- 1876-1877
- 3. Newspaper Clippings -- 1901, 1912, 1922

4. Newspaper Clippings -- Mr. and Mrs. James Myers, Directors of Jubilee Singers
5. Newspaper Clippings -- n.d.
6. Newspaper Clippings -- n.d.
7. Publicity Poster -- Fisk Jubilee Singers, 1873
8. Publicity Poster -- Fisk Jubilee Singers National Tour, 1915-1916
9. Publicity Poster -- Fisk Jubilee Singers, 1919-1920

Box 4 (Flat Box)

Photographs

- f. 1. Photographs -- Ella Sheppard (about 16 years old) and Rosa Sheppard (about 4 years old), 1867
2. Photographs -- Jubilee Singers, 1871
3. Photographs -- Mr. George L. and Susan Gilbert White, 1876
4. Photographs -- Jubilee Singers, 1873
5. Photographs -- Jubilee Singers, 1880-1881
6. Photographs -- Jubilee Singers, 1890
7. Photographs -- Jubilee Singers, 1898
8. Photographs -- Jubilee Singers, circa 1900-1902
9. Photographs -- Jubilee Singers and others as they appear in the Fisk University News, 1911
10. Photographs -- Ella Sheppard Moore, n.d.
11. Photographs -- Jubilee Singers Autographs, n.d.
12. Photographs -- Rev. August Pike, n.d.
13. Photographs -- Students of Professor White, n.d.
14. Photographs -- Friends of the Jubilee Singers in Britain, n.d.
15. Photographs -- Jubilee Singers, miscellaneous

Box 5

Programs

- f. 1. Programs -- Pre-Jubilee Singers concert, 1871
2. Programs -- 1872
3. Programs -- 1873
4. Programs -- 1874
5. Programs -- 1875
6. Programs -- 1876
7. Programs -- 1877-1879
8. Programs -- 1880
9. Programs -- 1881-1882
10. Programs -- 1886
11. Programs -- 1895-1898
12. Programs -- 1899
13. Programs -- 1918, 1921

14. Programs – n.d.

Box 6

Publications, Salutations, and Writings

- f. 1. Publications -- Negro Womanhood: Its Past. Authored by Ella Sheppard Moore
2. Publications -- Before Emancipation. Authored by Ella Sheppard Moore
3. Publications -- Article on Ella Sheppard Moore in the Nashville *Globe*, December 1907
4. Publications -- The Story of a Life. Authored by George W. Moore
5. Publications -- Pamphlet about the Jubilee Singers from Berlin, 1877
6. Publications -- Fisk University News, Jubilee Singers Number, October 1911
7. Publications -- Fisk University News, Jubilee Singers Number, November 1914
8. Publications -- Fisk University News, Jubilee Singers Number, October 1915
9. Salutations -- 1878, Read at the meeting in the Hotel L'angleterre at Strasbourg by H. Rockrich, pastor and president of the reformed Conisbury of Strasbourg (Alsace)
10. Writings -- Book of Verse presented to Ella Sheppard by Mabel Lewis, 1874. (vault)
11. Writings -- Manuscript, Poem composed by Ella Sheppard Moore for the Jubilee Singers, 1875. Authored by Ella Sheppard
12. Writings -- Diary of Ella Sheppard, November 7, 1874- November 14, 1876 (vault)
13. Writings -- Diary of Ella Sheppard, October 19, 1877- July 15, 1878 (vault)
14. Writings -- Note concerning a gift of beads given to the Jubilee Singers, authored by Ella Sheppard Moore. n.d.
15. Writings -- Diary and Almanac of J. H. Halley, 1877
16. Writings -- Notes, n.d.
17. Writings -- Miscellaneous

Box 7 (vault)

Scrapbooks, 1867-1877

- f. 1. Scrapbook -- 1867-1872 (cd)
2. Scrapbook -- 1873-1874
3. Scrapbook -- 1876-1877

Box 8 (vault)

Scrapbooks, 1877-1881, 1888

- f. 1. Scrapbook -- 1877-1878
2. Scrapbook -- 1879-1881
3. Scrapbook -- Press Notices and Letters, 1888

Box 9

Sheet Music

- f. 1. Sheet Music -- "Jubilee Anthem" for the dedicatory services of Jubilee Hall by James Merrylees of Gaslow, Scotland; 1872
2. Sheet Music -- "Jubilee Anthem" for the dedicatory services of Jubilee Hall by James Merrylees of Gaslow, Scotland; 1872
3. Sheet Music -- Jubilee Songs (as sung by the Fisk University Jubilee Singers), 1872
4. Sheet Music -- Steal Away to Jesus. Repertoire of Professor Work's Group, 1921-1922
5. Sheet Music -- Ev'rytime I Feel the Spirit, n.d.

Box 10

Collected

- f. 1. Collected -- George W. Moore -- Souvenir du Nouveau Paris
2. Collected -- America Robinson -- Memorabilia
3. Collected -- Ella Sheppard -- Guidebook for Belgium and Holland, 1875
4. Collected -- Ella Sheppard -- Railroad Map of the United States and Canada, 1880
5. Collected -- Rosa Sheppard -- Teaching Certification from Fisk University, 1881
6. Collected -- George L. White -- Pitch Pipe and Brooch
7. Collected -- Autographs written for the original Jubilee Singers, 1873-1891
8. Collected -- Autographs written for the original Jubilee Singers, 1875

Box 11

Collected

- f. 1. Collected -- Book of Costumes -- Remembrance of Holland from Rotterdam, April 1877
2. Collected -- Jubilee Singers Letter Book
3. Collected -- Jubilee Singers Passports, 1877
4. Collected -- Jubilee Singers Pocketbook inscribed "Fisk University, 1874" (vault)
5. Collected -- Jubilee Singers Pocketbook inscribed "Fisk University, 1874" (vault)
6. Collected -- Samples of Woolen Goods from the John Houston and Co. in Gaslow, Scotland
7. Collected -- Scenes from Berlin
8. Collected -- Tickets for Jubilee Singers Concerts, 1873, 1875 (vault)
9. Collected -- Views in the Scottish Lake District in Scotland
10. Collected -- Miscellaneous

Box 12

Collected

- f. 1. Collected -- Engraved Plate Table of Contents of Jubilee Singers Songs
2. Collected -- Engraved Plate of Jubilee Singers' London Address
3. Collected -- Engraved Plate of Jubilee Hall (from left side)
4. Collected -- Engraved Plate of Jubilee Hall (from right side)
5. Collected -- Plaque of Original Jubilee Singers' names, 1873
6. Collected -- Plaque presented to the Jubilee Singers by Friends in England

Box 13

Collected

- f. 1. Collected -- Four volumes of *The Graphic*, presented to the Jubilee Singers by George Meek; England, 1876