



ArchivesSpace

a community served by †Lyrasis

Robert Hamill Nassau papers4492530

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on January 14, 2025.

Description is written in: English.

appm

Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary

3041 Broadway

New York, NY 10027

Telephone: (212) 851-5606

burke@library.columbia.edu

URL: <https://library.columbia.edu/locations/burke.html>

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical / Historical	3
Scope and Contents	4
Arrangement	4
Administrative Information	4
Related Materials	6
Controlled Access Headings	6
Burke Library record group:	6
Collection Inventory	6
Series 1: Correspondence	6
Series 2: Personal and biographical materials	7
Series 3: Accessions	8

Summary Information

Repository:	Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary
Creator:	Nassau, Robert Hamill, 1835-1921
Title:	Robert Hamill Nassau papers
ID:	4492530
Date [inclusive]:	1856 -- 1976
Physical Description:	1.5 linear feet 1.5 linear feet; 3 boxes
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	Robert Hamill Nassau was a Presbyterian missionary who served throughout West Africa, including Benita; Belambla; Kangwe; Talaguga; Baraka (Libreville); and Batanga. The collection contains letters sent to and received by Nassau from friends and family, and a selection of personal and biographical information.

Preferred Citation

Item description, MRL1: Robert Hamill Nassau Papers, 1856-1976, series #, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Robert Hamill Nassau was born in 1835 at Montgomery Square, Pennsylvania. He attended the Lawrenceville School in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, after which he was awarded a bachelor's degree from the College of New Jersey (later to become Princeton University.) After two years of teaching at Lawrenceville, he attended Princeton Theological Seminary from 1856-1859, obtained an MA from the College of New Jersey, and the degree of MD from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1861. Upon graduation, Nassau was ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick and became a missionary for the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. His first appointment as a medical missionary was on Corisco Island, off the coast of West Africa. Nassau served throughout West Africa, including Benita; Belambla; Kangwe;

Talaguga; Baraka (Libreville); and Batanga. Nassau also founded a mission station in Kangwe, later known as Lambaréné. His final missionary placement was in Batanga until 1906, after which he returned to the USA, and took a stated supply position in Florida. Nassau was married twice: First to Mary Cloyd Latta on Corisco in 1862 (died 1870), also a missionary and mother of three sons: William Latta, George Paull and Charles Francis; and to Mary Brunette Foster (died 1884), mother of daughter Mary Brunette Foster. Daughter Mary was the first white child born in Equatorial Africa. Nassau was a prolific writer and wrote many books, including *Fetichism in West Africa* (1904). He also learned African dialects and translated materials. He continued writing until his death in Ambler, Pennsylvania in 1921.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

This collection contains letters sent to and received by Robert Hamill Nassau, and letters received by his second wife Mary Brunette Foster (died 1884), discussing in detail the life and work of a medical missionary in Africa and illustrating the relationship between Nassau and his family, and his colleagues and members of the Mission Board. This collection also includes personal items collected by Nassau, including summaries of work and programs from Presbyterian churches that he attended, as well as biographical information written about Nassau posthumously, and a journal segment.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

This collection is organized in three series: Series 1: Correspondence; Series 2: Personal and biographical materials; and Series 3: Accessions.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary

3041 Broadway

New York, NY 10027

Telephone: (212) 851-5606

burke@library.columbia.edu

URL: <https://library.columbia.edu/locations/burke.html>

Revision Description

PDF converted to EAD and description updated by Leah Edelman. 2022-01-14

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Onsite storage.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Formerly part of the independent Missionary Research Library (MRL), these records were accessioned by the Burke Library at the time of the MRL's closure in 1976.

Processing Information

Some material was cataloged by Lynn A. Grove on 1988-07-18. This collection was originally processed in winter 1977 by Paul A. Byrnes. It was updated in 2011, when metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened, materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes, acidic items were separated from one another by interleaving with acid-free paper as needed, and the finding aid was created by Brigette C. Kamsler in 2011 with the support of the Henry Luce Foundation. The finding aid was edited by Leah Edelman in 2022. Accessions were added to the finding aid in 2024 by Leah Edelman.

Conditions Governing Use

Some material in this collection may be protected by copyright and other rights. Information concerning copyright, fair use, and reproduction requests can be consulted at Columbia's Copyright Advisory Office.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Materials

The Robert Hamill Nassau Manuscript Collection, SCM 100. Princeton Theological Seminary. Library. Special Collections.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Missions -- Africa
- Missions -- Gabon
- Missionaries
- Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. -- : Missions

Burke Library record group:

Missionary Research Library Archives: MRL1, Africa

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Correspondence, 1856 -- 1906

Physical Description: 1.25 linear feet 2.75 linear feet; 3 boxes

Conditions Governing Access:

Conditions Governing Access

This series is open for research.

Arrangement

This series is arranged chronologically by correspondents.

Scope and Contents

This series contains letters sent to and received by Robert Hamill Nassau, and letters received by his second wife Mary Brunette Foster (died 1884). The majority of the letters were written by his family, including his parents, Reverend Charles William Nassau and Hannah Hamill Nassau; and an older sister, Isabella Ann Nassau (also a missionary in Africa). Additional letters are from other sisters, Matilda Nassau Lowrie and Emma Nassau Swan; colleagues, and pastors. The letters are inscribed with locations and dates, and many include the original envelopes. The letters discuss in detail the life and work of a medical missionary in Africa, and illustrate the relationship between Nassau and his family, and his colleagues and members of the Mission Board.

Title/Description	Instances	
Letters sent by Nassau to his sisters and parents: items 1-256 , 1868 -- 1898	box 1	
Letters sent by Nassau to his sisters and parents: items 257-381, 1898 -- 1906	box 2	
Letters received by Nassau or his wife Mary Brunette Foster Nassau from family and friends: items 382-536, 1874 -- 1906	box 3	folder 1-9
General letters, 1856 -- 1902	box 3	folder 10

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Personal and biographical materials, 1890 -- 1976

Physical Description: 0.25 linear feet 0.25 linear feet; 1 box

Conditions Governing Access:**Conditions Governing Access**

This series is open for research.

Arrangement

This series is arranged chronologically.

Scope and Contents

This series contains personal items collected by Nassau, including summaries of work and programs from Presbyterian churches that he attended, as well as biographical information written about Nassau posthumously.

Title/Description	Instances	
Report of Committee on Outfit and Outfit List for the Interior, Gaboon and Corisco Missions, 1890	box 3	folder 11
Session Work Summaries, Batanga and Kribi Church, 1902	box 3	folder 12
Corisco Presbytery Narrative, 1903	box 3	folder 13
Presbyterian Church Programs, 1904	box 3	folder 14
Secondary Biographical Information, 1963 -- 1976	box 3	folder 15

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Accessions, 1860 -- 1864

Physical Description: 0.25 linear feet 0.25 linear feet; 2 folders

Conditions Governing Access:

Conditions Governing Access

This series is open for research.

Arrangement

This series is arranged in chronological order of accession.

Scope and Contents

This series contains a journal segment and letters.

Title/Description	Instances	
Liberia journal segment, 1861	box 3	folder 16
Scope and Contents		
16 page journal segment describing three days in Monrovia, Liberia, in 1861, and an inland trip up the Mesurado River to visit the home of Leo L. Lloyd, who had escaped from slavery in the United States.		

Nassau letters, 1860 -- 1864	box 3	folder 17
------------------------------	-------	-----------

Scope and Contents

Letters received by Nassau, including two from family members while he was in West Africa, and a third from 1860, shortly after he'd been approved by the ABCFM Board as a missionary, from John Leighton Wilson, who preceded Nassau as a missionary in West Africa. This is a particularly significant letter as it came prior to Nassau's decision to where he would serve his appointment as missionary, and Wilson offers his advice and the possibility for consultation on the subject. Of the two family letters, one was sent by his father, Charles William Nassau, in 1864, and another by his sister, Isabella, from September 1862, which includes a fascinating detail about family and friends spending "most of the evening in the study re- and re- re reading the Pres. Emancipation Proclamation", shortly after the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation had been published. The collection also includes two envelopes

with Nassau's markings recording his receipt of the letters.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)