

# William LePre Houston Family Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the  
Library of Congress

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Manuscript Division, Library of  
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2006

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Finding aid encoded by Library of  
Congress Manuscript Division, 2010

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010216>

# Collection Summary

Title: William LePre Houston Family Papers

Span Dates: 1777-1936

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1890-1936)

ID No.: MSS57570

Creator: Houston, William LePre, 1870-1953

Creator: Charles Hamilton Houston, 1895-1950

Extent: 4,000 items; 23 containers plus 2 oversize; 9.2 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English, with French and Spanish

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Lawyers. Correspondence, diaries, financial records, academic papers, printed matter, and miscellaneous material related to the Houstons' family life, fraternal organizations, the law, and Charles Hamilton Houston's military service during World War I.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### People

Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963--Correspondence.

Hastie, William, 1904-1976--Correspondence.

Hays, Will H. (Will Harrison), 1879-1954--Correspondence.

Houston family.

Houston, Charles Hamilton, 1895-1950. Charles Hamilton Houston papers. 1871-1935.

Houston, G. David--Correspondence.

Houston, Margaret Gladys Moran--Correspondence.

Houston, Mary Ethel Hamilton--Correspondence.

Houston, William LePre.

Johnson, Mordecai W. (Mordecai Wyatt), 1890-1976--Correspondence.

Morris, Edward H.--Correspondence.

Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915--Correspondence.

Washington, George, 1732-1799--Autographs.

Wayne, Anthony, 1745-1796--Autographs.

Woodson, Carter Godwin, 1875-1950--Correspondence.

### Organizations

Amherst College.

Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America.

Harvard Law School.

Railway Men's International Benevolent Industrial Association.

Republican Party (U.S. : 1854- )

United States. Army--History--World War, 1914-1918.

Universidad Central (Spain)

### Subjects

African Americans.

Labor unions, Black--United States.

Practice of law--Washington (D.C.)

World War, 1914-1918--France.

### Occupations

Lawyers.

# Administrative Information

## Provenance

The papers of the William LePre Houston family, including his wife, Mary E. Hamilton Houston, and his son, Charles Hamilton Houston were given to the Library of Congress by Edward Davidson in 1977.

## Processing History

The papers of William L. Houston family were housed and described in 1979. The collection was reprocessed in 2006.

## Transfers

Some photographs have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. Issues of the *Daily National Intelligencer*, 1828-1829, and *National Intelligencer*, 1828-1829, have been transferred to the Library's Serial and Government Publications Division. All transfers in these divisions are identified as part of the William LePre Houston Family Papers.

## Related Material

Charles Hamilton Houston and his role in civil rights legislation and in the development and training of civil rights lawyers is documented in the records of the [NAACP](#) and the [Carter Godwin Woodson Papers](#), also in the Manuscript Division, and in a collection of Charles Hamilton Houston papers at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

## Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of William LePre Houston family is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

## Access and Restrictions

The papers of William LePre Houston family are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, William LePre Houston Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

# Biographical Note

## William LePre Houston

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1870, May 14	Born, Mound City, Ill.
1890	Passed Civil Service exam and hired as a clerk in the War Department Record and Pension Office
1891	Married Mary Ethel Hamilton
1892	Graduated, Howard University Law School, Washington, D.C.

1906-1909	Grand Master of Odd Fellows in the United States
1909	Resigned clerk position
1910	Began independent law practice Began teaching academic law, night school, Howard University, Washington D.C.
1915	Cofounder, Supreme Order of the Helpers
1921-1924	Appointed to District of Columbia Board of Education
1924	With son, Charles Hamilton Houston, formed law firm of Houston & Houston
1937	Appointed special assistant to United States Attorney General
1953, Sept. 9	Died, Washington, D.C.

Charles Hamilton Houston

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1895, Sept. 3	Born, Washington, D.C.
1915	Graduated Phi Beta Kappa, Amherst College, Amherst, Mass.
1918-1919	Army service during World War I
1922	LL.B, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Mass.
1923	S.J.D., Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Mass.
1923-1924	Studied civil law, Sheldon Fellowship, University of Madrid, Spain
1924	Passed District of Columbia bar Married Margaret Gladys Moran (divorced 1938)
1924-1950	Practiced law with his father in the firm Houston & Houston, later Houston, Houston, Hastie & Waddy
1924-1935	Faculty member, Howard University Law School, Washington, D.C., including stints as professor, vice dean, and chief administrative officer
1935-1940	Special counsel to NAACP
1938	Married Henrietta Williams Argued <i>Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada</i> before United States Supreme Court
1950, Apr. 22	Died, Washington, D.C.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of the William LePre Houston family span the years 1777-1936, with the bulk of the collection concentrated between 1890 and 1936. The papers include correspondence, financial records, academic files, subject files, and printed matter. They are organized in [Correspondence](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Oversize](#) series, and in files focused on [William LePre Houston](#), a lawyer in general practice in Washington, D.C., and his son and law partner, [Charles Hamilton Houston](#). Charles served as legal counsel for the National Association of Colored People during 1935-1940 and devised the strategy that led to *Brown v. Board of Education* and other court decisions striking down racial segregation laws in the United States. Charles served with the army in France during World War I and studied civil law in Spain during 1923-1924. Some material in the collection is in French and Spanish.

Most of the letters in the [Correspondence](#) series are between William and Charles Houston and Mary Ethel Hamilton Houston, their wife and mother respectively. Much of the correspondence was occasioned by Charles's schooling at Amherst College in Massachusetts, his army service during World War I, and his matriculation at Harvard Law School. Included is correspondence in Spanish from when Charles attended the University of Madrid.

Also well represented in the correspondence of Charles Houston is Margaret Gladys Moran Houston, his first wife. General correspondents of Charles include William Hastie, Mordecai W. Johnson, and Carter Godwin Woodson.

Some correspondence between William Houston and his son concerns legal cases, particularly William's work as attorney for the Railway Men's International Benevolent Industrial Association and other African-American labor organizations. William's activism as a Republican and his legal work for labor organizations is documented in a 1919 letter to Will H. Hays, chairman of the Republican National Committee.

William Houston was grandmaster of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America and some of his general correspondence reflects this position. Important in the correspondence is Edward H. Morris, another Odd Fellow grandmaster, lawyer, Chicago politician, and member of the Illinois house of representatives. Other general correspondents of William Houston include W. E. B. Du Bois, G. David Houston, and Booker T. Washington

Prominent in the [William LePre Houston](#) series is a file on the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America. It complements his general correspondence and includes a letter from Isaac F. Florez writing from the Dominican Republic in 1910 to inform Houston that the president of that country had just been initiated into the order. Odd Fellows also wrote from the Philippines and Liberia. Also included in the file are editions of an Odd Fellow newspaper, the Birmingham Wide-Awake, and other material focused on a jurisdictional controversy among the Odd Fellows in Alabama that William was trying to resolve as grandmaster of the national organization.

The [Charles Hamilton Houston](#) series complements his correspondence, particularly files related to his schooling at Amherst and Harvard Law School and his military experiences as a lieutenant during World War I. Charles kept a diary in which he recorded his daily experiences and the hostile racial environment he encountered during army training in the United States and service in France.

An autograph collection in the [Miscellany](#) includes the signatures of notables such as George Washington and Anthony Wayne.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in five series:

- [Correspondence, 1887-1936.](#)
- [William LePre Houston, 1867-1933](#)

- Charles Hamilton Houston, 1871-1935
- Miscellany, 1777-1936
- Oversize, 1911-1923

## Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-10	<u>Correspondence, 1887-1936</u> Letters sent and received with attached and related material. Organized by name of family member, then by family or general correspondence, and thereunder chronologically.
BOX 10-17	<u>William LePre Houston, 1867-1933</u> Diaries, financial records, printed matter, accouterments related to the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, financial and miscellaneous papers generated by Mary Ethel Hamilton Houston, legal and political papers, speeches and writings, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material or subject
BOX 17-22	<u>Charles Hamilton Houston, 1871-1935</u> Academic papers, diaries, financial records, notebooks, printed matter, files relating to World War I military service, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material or subject.
BOX 22-23	<u>Miscellany, 1777-1936</u> Autographs, photographs, postcards, printed matter, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX OV 1-OV 2	<u>Oversize, 1911-1923</u> Photographs, maps, posters, and scrapbooks. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-10	Correspondence, 1887-1936 Letters sent and received with attached and related material. Organized by name of family member, then by family or general correspondence, and thereunder chronologically.
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BOX 1	Family
BOX 1	Houston, Margaret Gladys Moran (wife), 1918-1923, 1932, undated (6 folders)
BOX 1	Other family members, 1901, 1908, 1913
BOX 1	General
BOX 1	1910-1923 ( 2 folders)
BOX 2	1924-1934, undated (8 folders)
BOX 2	Houston, Margaret Gladys Moran, general correspondence, 1920-1929, undated
BOX 2	Houston, Mary Ethel Hamilton
BOX 2	Family
BOX 2	Houston, Charles Hamilton (son)
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BOX 3	1912-1913 (6 folders)
BOX 3	1914
BOX 3	Jan.-Feb.
BOX 4	Mar.-Dec (3 folders)
BOX 4	1915-1919 (6 folders)
BOX 5	1920-1921 (6 folders)
BOX 5	1922
BOX 5	Jan.-Sept. (2 folders)
BOX 6	Oct.-Dec.
BOX 6	1923-1936, undated (5 folders)
BOX 6	Houston, Margaret Gladys Moran (daughter-in-law), 1920-1923, undated
BOX 6	Other family members, 1887, 1892, 1901, 1912-1924, undated (4 folders)
BOX 6	General, 1892, 1901-1935, undated (3 folders)

Correspondence, 1887-1936

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BOX 7	Houston, William LePre
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BOX 9	Others, 1895-1913, 1934, undated (2 folders)
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BOX 10-17	William LePre Houston, 1867-1933 Diaries, financial records, printed matter, accouterments related to the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, financial and miscellaneous papers generated by Mary Ethel Hamilton Houston, legal and political papers, speeches and writings, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material or subject
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BOX 11	<i>Washington Post</i> , subscription, 1892-1895
BOX 11	Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America
BOX 11	<i>Birmingham Wide-Awake</i> , Birmingham, Ala., newspaper, 1907-1912
BOX 11	Chronological file, 1889-1912, undated (6 folders)
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BOX 13	Regalia and accouterments, undated
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William LePre Houston, 1867-1933

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BOX 14	Lansburgh & Brothers, 1912-1923, undated (3 folders)
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BOX 14	Saks & Co., 1910-1923, 1931
BOX 15	Singer Sewing Machine Co., 1917-1919, 1931-1932 (2 folders)
BOX 15	Miscellany, 1885, 1994, 1904-1924, 1930, undated (3 folders)
BOX 15	Will, 1922
BOX 15	Legal file
BOX 15	Dunbar Law Club, moot case, Hercules v. Strong Firearms Co., 1919
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BOX 15	Miscellany, 1911, 1921-1928 (2 folders)
BOX 15	Miscellany, 1885-1889, 1896, 1908, 1920, undated (2 folders)
BOX 15	Pen and Pencil Club, Washington, D.C., 1901-1905
BOX 15	Political file
BOX 15	Albany Colored Republican Club, Albany, N.Y., mass meeting, poster, 1912 <u><i>See Oversize</i></u>
BOX 15	Atlantic County Republican League, Atlantic City, N.J., second annual banquet, photograph, 1913 <u><i>See Oversize</i></u>
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BOX 17	Graduation, 1915
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Charles Hamilton Houston, 1871-1935

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Charles Hamilton Houston, 1871-1935

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BOX 22	Photographs
BOX 22	Houston, Thomas Jefferson and Katherine, parents of William LePre Houston, undated
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BOX 22	Postcards, undated
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BOX OV 1-OV 2	Oversize, 1911-1923 Photographs, maps, posters, and scrapbooks. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.
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BOX OV 2

Scrapbook, 1911 (Container 23)