

AAEHC Annual Report

2014-2015

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By
Joseph D. Thompson, Assistant Archivist for the AAEHC
Christopher Pote, Archivist
Mitzi J. Budde, Head Librarian and Professor

Introduction

The staff of the African American Episcopal Historical Collection is pleased to report that the collection remains strong in every way. Notable achievements include the successful administration of a second cycle of the travel-to-collection grant program, the addition of several new oral histories, and significant increases in presentations, publicity, and collection use.

Collection Development

- Thompson contacted the family of a recently deceased Episcopal priest about the disposition of his papers and received a positive initial response.
- Thompson contacted the widow of a priest in Missouri about the disposition of his papers and received a positive initial response.
- Thompson followed up with the family of a recently deceased Episcopalian about the disposition of his papers. The family seems inclined to donate them to the AAEHC, but they are awaiting completion of an article about their father.
- Thompson continued conversations with a recently retired Episcopalian who plans to donate his papers in late 2015 or early 2016.
- Pote and Thompson reviewed the Swann Galleries African American Fine Art auction catalog for works by Allan Rohan Crite. It was determined that the available Crite pieces would not be appropriate for the AAEHC. Thompson also reviewed the Swann Galleries African Americana auction catalog for historical materials for the AAEHC but found no relevant items to pursue.

Acquisitions and Processing

- Through the efforts of the Rev. Dr. Al Moss, the AAEHC received a Pauli Murray letter and sermon typescript from Mrs. Marion Wetmore Henry during a special luncheon in honor of Mrs. Henry and her gift. The items were added to the Pauli Murray Collection – A30.

- Thompson completed processing of the David Harris Papers – RG A25. Collection is housed according to archival standards. The finding aid is complete and published on the AAEHC website.
- Thompson completed processing of all interviews in the Delois Ward Oral History – RG A59 to date. Finding aid and transcripts are complete and published on the AAEHC website. All elements of the collection, including transcripts, audiocassettes, memory card, and compact discs, are housed according to archival standards.
- Thompson made significant progress in the processing of the Frederick Boyd Williams Collection – RG A28.
- The sorting of the Alfred A. Moss, Jr. Papers – RG A22 received to date was completed. Processing of preservation issues (e.g., removal of metal paper clips and photocopying of newsprint), which has been ongoing, is also close to completion.
- Thompson continued to work with Bishop Arthur Williams in reviewing the transcript of his oral history, conducted in 2009.
- Thompson created and implemented an oral history workflow and extensive checklist to make processing more efficient.
- New accession:
 - Bernie Jones Papers – RG A64
- Thompson accessioned new installments to the following existing collections:
 - Alfred A. Moss, Jr. Papers – RG A22
 - Union of Black Episcopalians Collection – RG A34
 - John Carleton Hayden Papers – RG A39
 - Delois Burney Ward Oral History – RG A59 (supplementary materials)
 - AAEHC Audiovisual Collection – RG A49
 - AAEHC Subject File – RG A50

Oral History

- In consultation with the Rt. Rev. George Wayne Smith, Bishop of Missouri, Thompson arranged for an oral history interview with the Rev. Emery Washington, Sr., who was for many years the rector of All Saints' Episcopal Church in St. Louis, the oldest historically black Episcopal church west of the Mississippi. The interview was conducted by Dr. Robert Good, a teacher who has extensive experience with oral history and has also been actively involved in diocesan efforts to combat racism. The interview was conducted on March 31, 2015. Thompson has begun initial processing of the interview.
- On November 6, 2014, Thompson interviewed the Rev. Dr. Lloyd A. "Tony" Lewis, recently retired Molly Laird Downs Professor of New Testament at VTS, and began processing the interview.

- Thompson interviewed Mr. Victor Challenor who was the first life-professed African American brother in the Order of the Holy Cross. The interview took place on October 31, 2014, while Thompson was in New York for a conference at the Schomburg Research Center. Initial processing of the interview has begun.
- Thompson conducted a second interview with prominent laywoman, Ms. Delois Burney Ward, on June 9, 2014.
- Pote and Thompson revised [the oral history section of the website](#) and integrated the oral histories into [the “Collections” section of the website](#).

Travel Grants

- Thompson administered the AAEHC travel-to-collection research grant program, sponsored by HSEC. The application deadline for the 2015 round of grants was January 15, 2015. Five applications were received, and four were funded by the grants subcommittee (Dr. Gardiner Shattuck, Mrs. Susan Stonesifer, Budde, and Pote). A total of \$5225 has been allocated to this year’s cohort for reimbursement after their visits.
- Budde, Pote, Thompson, and staff from the Office of Institutional Advancement collaborated to announce the grant recipients through a VTS Dean’s Commentary and a press release. The Dean’s Commentary, which includes the names and project titles of the grant recipients, is included as an Appendix to this report.
- Mr. Lance Poston, one of the recipients in this year’s cohort, has already visited the collection, May 7-12, 2015.
- All 2014 award recipients conducted their research at the AAEHC:
 - Ms. Angela Hooks, August 6-13, 2014
 - The Rev. Dr. Robert Tobin, August 3-9, 2014
 - Dr. Dan Royles, May 4-9, 2014
- Thompson publicized and organized recipients’ presentations to the seminary community about their research projects:
 - Poston: May 12, 2015, 19 persons in attendance.
 - Hooks and Tobin (joint session): August 7, 2014, 21 persons in attendance. At Thompson’s invitation, the Rt. Rev. Nathan D. Baxter, Bishop of Central Pennsylvania (retired), gave a formal response to the presentations.
 - Royles: May 8, 2014, 11 persons in attendance.
- Reporting on his research at the AAEHC, Dr. Tobin wrote, “My weeklong stay at the Virginia Theological Seminary conducting research in the African American Episcopal Historical Collection proved to be a turning point in my understanding of the project I have undertaken...Having the opportunity to make use of the AAEHC...made it clear to

me that the latter part of my study will be significantly focused on the black Episcopal leadership that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s.”

- Thompson extensively assisted a scholar who secured external funding to conduct research in the Bishop Payne Library and the AAEHC after hearing about the collection through the travel grant publicity. He visited the library July 14-18, 2014.
- Thompson’s administration of the grants has included the following phases:
 - updating the grant announcement and application in preparation for the 2015 cycle. The Steering Committee gave its approval at the June 2014 meeting. Thompson and Pote revised the grant section of the AAEHC website accordingly.
 - announcing the grant in several waves of publicity in numerous venues and in his professional networks. Ms. Carol Kyber, Assistant Director of Communications for VTS, designed excellent advertisements for several of the venues.
 - fielding multiple reference inquiries generated by the publicity.
 - receiving and organizing application materials for the review of the subcommittee.
 - evaluating the applications for pertinence to the AAEHC and for quality of scholarship to assist the grants subcommittee in the selection process.
 - collaborating with staff in the VTS business office to ensure compliance with the reimbursement process.
 - processing receipts and paperwork for the reimbursements.
 - collaborating with Budde and Pote on the award notification process, on the arrangement of recipients’ visits, and on the organization and promotion of the research presentations.

Exhibitions, Presentations, Publication, and Conferences

- With assistance from Ms. Sarah Glenn, Technical Services Technician, Thompson mounted an exhibit entitled *The Art of Allan Rohan Crite* in the entry area of the Bishop Payne Library, May 2015. The exhibit includes many works that were donated by Dr. Linda A. Chisholm, a longtime friend of the AAEHC.
- In collaboration with the Rt. Rev. Nathan Baxter, retired Bishop of Central Pennsylvania, Budde and Thompson hosted a tour of the AAEHC and a reception for the executive board of the Union of Black Episcopalians and black VTS faculty during the annual commemoration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., April 13, 2015.
- In observance of Theological Education Sunday, Thompson preached at St. Philip’s Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia, including a discussion of the AAEHC as an educational resource, February 8, 2015 (the observance was held a week after the official date). After the service, Thompson gave a presentation entitled *An Introduction to the African American Episcopal Historical Collection*, with approximately 25 persons in attendance. Thompson established contact with several individuals who were interested in donating some materials to the AAEHC and possibly in being interviewed for the oral

history program. Thompson was invited to St. Philip's after the rector heard his presentation to the VTS Alumni Association Executive Council (see bullet point below).

- In observance of Theological Education Sunday, Thompson preached at his field education site, Trinity Episcopal Church in Arlington, Virginia. He included a discussion of the AAEHC as an educational resource and spoke with numerous individuals about the AAEHC afterwards, February 1, 2015.
- In observance of Black History Month 2015, Thompson created a video presentation entitled *Black Beauty Matters: The Art of Allan Rohan Crite* for use at Christ Church Cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri. For Lent, the cathedral had temporarily installed stations of the cross created by Crite.
- Thompson and Pote were invited by the VTS Director of Multicultural Ministries, Professor Donyelle McCray, to make a presentation about the AAEHC during the annual Intercultural Competency Training, primarily for Juniors. In two separate sessions on January 29 and 30, 2015, they delivered a presentation entitled *Voices from the African American Episcopal Historical Collection*. It focused on excerpts from several oral histories in the collection, including those of Bishop Arthur Williams and Ms. Delois Burney Ward. In total, 26 students attended the presentations. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
- At the invitation of Mr. Curtis Prather, Director of Communications for VTS, Thompson wrote an article for [*News from the Hill* \(pages 20 and 21\)](#). Entitled *The First African American Student Body President Looks Back, Thirty Years Later*, it recounted the election of the Rev. Liston A. Garfield in 1984.
- Building upon Pote's slideshow of items from Bishop John T. Walker's papers in the VTS Archives, Thompson created an exhibit entitled "*God has been good to me as a servant in the church*": *Bishop John T. Walker, 1925-1989* for the 46th Annual Conference and Meeting of the Union of Black Episcopalians in Atlantic City, New Jersey, June 29-July 3, 2014. While at the conference, Thompson networked with numerous individuals and spoke before the entire body as the representative of the AAEHC and VTS.
- Thompson attended a meeting of the Union of Black Episcopalians on the organization's response to the killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice, held at the Bishop John T. Walker Center, Washington, DC, December 17, 2014.
- Thompson attended the *State of Black Research Collections* conference at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, October 30-31, 2014. He networked extensively and used those contacts to publicize the travel grant.
- Thompson gave a presentation about the AAEHC to a meeting of the VTS Alumni Association Executive Council (AAEC) on October 9, 2014. 14 people were in attendance.

- Thompson preached at his home congregation, Christ Church Cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri, and spoke with various individuals about the AAEHC, May 24-27, 2014.
- Budde, Pote, and Thompson engaged in discussions with the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church and the VTS Office of Institutional Advancement about the AAEHC presence at General Convention 2015.

Student Worker

- Thompson and Pote supervised a part-time student worker on various projects, including inventorying the collection, adding numerous items to the AAEHC Subject File – RG A50, and significant processing of collections. We are grateful to the Nancy M. Prichard Endowment Fund, which provides the funding for our part-time student assistant.
- In response to a research request, Pote and Thompson supervised the student worker in creating an inventory of Bishop John T. Walker’s papers. Though the collection is technically a part of the VTS Archives, providing greater access to Bishop Walker’s papers, and other VTS collections related to black Episcopalians, furthers the goals of the AAEHC.

Access

- Finding aids have been made available on-line for the following collections:
 - [David Harris Papers – RG A25](#)
 - [Delois Burney Ward Oral History – RG A59](#)
 - [Transcript of Ward Interview #1](#)
 - [Transcript of Ward Interview #2](#)
- Thompson updated the guide [Allan Rohan Crite Materials in the Bishop Payne Library](#) in order to reflect the change in location of several items.

Fundraising and Publicity

- The annual solicitation letter from Dean Markham and the Rev. Dr. Robert Prichard was mailed July 22, 2014. Steering Committee members and Thompson reviewed the mailing list and made significant additions. Pote and Thompson also met with Ms. Linda Dienno, VTS Director of Development, to discuss ideas for broadening the collection’s donor base.
- Thompson has been collaborating with Ms. Carol Kyber from the VTS Communications Department on new pamphlets and brochures for the AAEHC. Budde, Pote, and the Rev. Dr. Al Moss were consulted about the redesign as well. The revised documents should be ready by the Steering Committee meeting or soon thereafter.

Collection Use

- Ongoing reference assistance to multiple patrons provided by Thompson and Pote. Thompson responded to 149 separate AAEHC reference inquiries from May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015.
- This number represents a 93.5% increase from last year's annual report and is partially attributable to the publicity for the research grants and to the usage of the grant recipients. There was also increased usage of the collection by researchers not associated with the grant program.

Staff Development

- Thompson successfully completed the continuing education course, "Managing Electronic Records in Archives and Special Collections," sponsored by the Society of American Archivists in Fairfax, Virginia, March 13, 2015.
- With others from the Washington Theological Consortium, Thompson attended a special tour of the Library of Congress exhibit on the Civil Rights Act, February 27, 2015.
- Thompson attended the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists in Washington, DC, August 13-15, 2014.
- Pote, Thompson, and VTS colleagues from other departments participated in a webinar on digitization sponsored by the Society of American Archivists, May 21, 2014.
- As part of his commitment to integrate the vocations of ministry and theological librarianship and archives, Thompson began his field education placement at Trinity Episcopal Church in Arlington in September 2014.

Conclusion

It is our hope that this report demonstrates the excellent health of the AAEHC. The growth of the collection is impressive. Continued increases in its size, promotion, and usage will reinforce each other and help maintain a robust rate of development for the foreseeable future.

APPENDIX

VTS DEAN'S COMMENTARY ANNOUNCING TRAVEL GRANT RECIPIENTS

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

The headlines from Baltimore, New York City, Ferguson, and elsewhere have been riveting and tragic. The pace of events has been swift. However, let us not forget that these conflicts have been decades, even centuries, in the making. Moving forward, it is essential to have an understanding of our history that incorporates many experiences and perspectives, especially those of communities that have been treated unjustly.

VTS documents such perspectives in the [African American Episcopal Historical Collection](#) (AAEHC), a partnership with the [Historical Society of the Episcopal Church](#) (HSEC) that is curated in the [Bishop Payne Library](#) (BPL). HSEC generously funds a program to promote the AAEHC by awarding travel grants to individuals who wish to do research in the collection. I am pleased to announce this year's class of grant recipients:

Mr. Lance Poston, University of Kentucky, *Deconstructing Sodom and Gomorrah: A Historical Intervention in the Mythology of Black Homophobia*, May 7-13, 2015

Dr. Jontyle Robinson, Tuskegee University, *Crite's Creations: Capturing a Neighborhood, Connecting a Globe*, June 1-12, 2015

Ms. Jennifer Boyle, Teachers College, Columbia University, *The Social Gospel and Activism at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Harlem, 1950-2000*, September 15-19

Dr. Heather White, New College of Florida, *Gay Liberation at the Church of the Holy Apostles, New York City, 1960-1980*

While the researchers are on campus, they will share their work with the community in presentations hosted by BPL. Mr. Poston's presentation is already scheduled as a forum today at 1 p.m. in Addison 111.

Please take time to attend this presentation, and future ones. Learning about these histories is one small way to increase our knowledge, empathy, and compassion as we attempt to convey the reconciling love of Christ to a hurting world.

The Very Rev. Ian S. Markham, Ph.D.
Dean and President