

**William LePre Houston Family Papers**  
**A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**2006**

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

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Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/eadmss.ms010216>

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Revised by Joseph K. Brooks with the assistance of Sherralyn McCoy, Brian McGuire, and Kimberly Owens

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2010

## 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

**Extent:** 23 containers plus 2 oversize

**Extent:** 9.2 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English, with French and Spanish

**Location:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm81057570>

**Summary:** 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 LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

### 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.

## 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

Date	Event
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

Date	Event
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

<b>Container</b>	<b>Series</b>
BOX 1-10	<p><b><u>Correspondence, 1887-1936</u></b></p> <p>Letters sent and received with attached and related material. Organized by name of family member, then by family or general correspondence, and thereunder chronologically.</p>
BOX 10-17	<p><b><u>William LePre Houston, 1867-1933</u></b></p> <p>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</p>
BOX 17-22	<p><b><u>Charles Hamilton Houston, 1871-1935</u></b></p> <p>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.</p>
BOX 22-23	<p><b><u>Miscellany, 1777-1936</u></b></p> <p>Autographs, photographs, postcards, printed matter, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.</p>
BOX OV 1-OV 2	<p><b><u>Oversize, 1911-1923</u></b></p> <p>Photographs, maps, posters, and scrapbooks. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.</p>

# Container List

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<b>BOX 1-10</b>	<b>Correspondence, 1887-1936</b> Letters sent and received with attached and related material. Organized by name of family member, then by family or general correspondence, and thereunder chronologically.
<b>BOX 1</b>	Houston, Charles Hamilton
<b>BOX 1</b>	Family
<b>BOX 1</b>	Houston, Margaret Gladys Moran (wife), 1918-1923, 1932, undated (6 folders)
<b>BOX 1</b>	Other family members, 1901, 1908, 1913
<b>BOX 1</b>	General
<b>BOX 1</b>	1910-1923 (2 folders)
<b>BOX 2</b>	1924-1934, undated (8 folders)
<b>BOX 2</b>	Houston, Margaret Gladys Moran, general correspondence, 1920-1929, undated
<b>BOX 2</b>	Houston, Mary Ethel Hamilton
<b>BOX 2</b>	Family
<b>BOX 2</b>	Houston, Charles Hamilton (son)
<b>BOX 2</b>	1907-1911
<b>BOX 3</b>	1912-1913 (6 folders)
<b>BOX 3</b>	1914
<b>BOX 3</b>	Jan.-Feb.
<b>BOX 4</b>	Mar.-Dec (3 folders)
<b>BOX 4</b>	1915-1919 (6 folders)
<b>BOX 5</b>	1920-1921 (6 folders)
<b>BOX 5</b>	1922
<b>BOX 5</b>	Jan.-Sept. (2 folders)
<b>BOX 6</b>	Oct.-Dec.
<b>BOX 6</b>	1923-1936, undated (5 folders)
<b>BOX 6</b>	Houston, Margaret Gladys Moran (daughter-in-law), 1920-1923, undated
<b>BOX 6</b>	Other family members, 1887, 1892, 1901, 1912-1924, undated (4 folders)
<b>BOX 6</b>	General, 1892, 1901-1935, undated (3 folders)
<b>BOX 7</b>	Houston, William LePre
<b>BOX 7</b>	Family

## Correspondence, 1887-1936

### Container

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BOX 7	Houston, Charles Hamilton (son)
BOX 7	1896-1914 (10 folders)
BOX 8	1915-1929, undated (10 folders)
BOX 8	Houston, Margaret Gladys Moran (daughter-in-law), 1920-1923, undated
BOX 8	Houston, Mary Ethel Hamilton (wife)
BOX 8	1896, 1903-1908
BOX 9	1909-1935, undated (7 folders)
BOX 9	Others, 1895-1913, 1934, undated (2 folders)
BOX 10	General, 1892-1923, 1934, undated (7 folders)
BOX 10-17	<b>William LePre Houston, 1867-1933</b> 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 10	Diaries, 1902-1907
BOX 11	Financial records
BOX 11	General, 1890-1892, 1908-1919, undated
BOX 11	Receipts
BOX 11	Howard University Law School, Washington, D.C., tuition, 1890-1892
BOX 11	House rentals, 1890-1903
BOX 11	Miscellany, 1891-1895, 1908-1916, 1933, undated (3 folders)
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)
BOX 12	Photographs, 1907-1908 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 12	Printed matter, 1886, 1906-1914 (2 folders)
BOX 13	Regalia and accouterments, undated
BOX 14	Houston, Mary Ethel Hamilton (wife)
BOX 14	Financial records
BOX 14	Bank statements, 1920-1923
BOX 14	Checks, 1904-1906, 1915-1923, 1932 (2 folders)
BOX 14	Lansburgh & Brothers, 1912-1923, undated (3 folders)
BOX 14	Miscellany, 1888-1891, 1902-1933, undated (3 folders)
BOX 14	O. J. DeMoll & Co., 1902-1914



## William LePre Houston, 1867-1933

Container	Contents
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
BOX 15	Howard University Law School, Washington, D.C., 1921, 1926
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 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 15	Atlantic County Republican League, Atlantic City, N.J., second annual banquet, photograph, 1913 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 15	Miscellany, 1893, 1905-1910, undated
BOX 15	<i>Republican Campaign Text Book</i> , 1916
BOX 15	Printed matter
BOX 15	Ingersoll, Robert G., 1894-1897
BOX 16	Miscellany, 1867, 1894-1897, 1907-1911, 1918-1923, undated (3 folders)
BOX 16	Scrapbook, 1892-1905, undated
BOX 16	Speeches and writings, undated
BOX 16	Teacher's grade book, [Paducah, Ky.?], 1889-1890
BOX 17	War Department, 1890-1901 (2 folders)
BOX 17-22	<b>Charles Hamilton Houston, 1871-1935</b> 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 17	Academic file
BOX 17	Amherst College, Amherst, Mass.
BOX 17	Examinations and notebooks, 1912-1915, undated
BOX 17	Graduation, 1915
BOX 17	Miscellany, 1911-1915, undated
BOX 17	Phi Beta Kappa, 1909, 1915, undated
BOX 17	Publications, 1911-1915
BOX 18	Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Mass.
BOX 18	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, 1923, undated
BOX 18	Boston, Mass., map, undated <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 18	Garvey, Marcus, luncheon, 1921
BOX 18	Harvard Nile Club, 1921-1923

## Charles Hamilton Houston, 1871-1935

### Container

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BOX 18	Miscellany, 1919-1927, undated
BOX 18	Photographs, 1920-1921 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 18	Sheldon Fellowship, for study in Spain, 1923
BOX 18	Vocational Rehabilitation Act, Section 2, 1920-1924, undated
BOX 18	M Street High School (later Dunbar High School), Washington, D.C.
BOX 18	Drawing notebook, undated
BOX 18	Miscellany, 1908-1911, 1917, undated
BOX 18	Miscellany, 1907, undated
BOX 18	Dent v. Swilly, 1926-1927
BOX 19	Financial records
BOX 19	Correspondence, 1927-1930
BOX 19	Cambridge Trust Co.
BOX 19	Checks, 1921-1925
BOX 19	Statements, 1921-1922
BOX 19	Check stubs and bank books, 1912-1922 (3 folders)
BOX 19	Income tax, 1924-1929, undated
BOX 20	Insurance
BOX 20	Bureau of War Risk, 1919-1921
BOX 20	Miscellany, 1914-1916, 1927-1935
BOX 20	New York Life Insurance Co., 1917-1934
BOX 20	Standard Life Insurance Co., 1920-1931, undated
BOX 20	Veterans Bureau, 1921-1934
BOX 20	Miscellany, 1907-1928
BOX 20	O. J. DeMoll & Co., 1924-1929
BOX 20	Houston, Margaret Gladys Moran (wife), 1917, 1922, 1928-1929
BOX 20	Miscellany, 1913, 1922-1927, undated
BOX 20	Printed matter
BOX 20	Miscellany, 1908, 1915, 1922-1923
BOX 20	Newspaper clippings, 1920-1921, undated
BOX 20	Will, 1922
BOX 20	World War I army service
BOX 20	Artifacts, including bullet, uniform buttons, and dog tags, undated
BOX 20	Chronological file, 1917-1921, undated (3 folders)
BOX 20	Diaries, 1918-1919
BOX 20	Fort Sill Military Reservation, Okla.
BOX 20	Information bulletins, 1923
BOX 20	Map, 1923 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 20	Manuals, 1871, 1909-1918, 1923 (3 folders)
BOX 21	Notebooks, 1918
BOX 22	Postcards, 1918-1919
BOX 22	Printed matter and ephemera, 1917-1919

## Charles Hamilton Houston, 1871-1935

Container	Contents
BOX 22	Writings, 1924
BOX 22-23	<b>Miscellany, 1777-1936</b> Autographs, photographs, postcards, printed matter, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 22	Cobb, James A., letter to William E. Borah, 1929
BOX 22	Ephemera and autographs, 1777-1780, 1864, 1905, 1910-1913, 1922-1923, undated (2 folders)
BOX 22	Photographs
BOX 22	Houston, Thomas Jefferson and Katherine, parents of William LePre Houston, undated
BOX 22	Houston, William LePre; Mary Ethel Hamilton Houston; Charles Hamilton Houston; Margaret Gladys Moran Houston; and Henrietta Williams Houston, undated
BOX 22	Postcards, undated
BOX 22	Printed matter
BOX 22	Baker, Ray Stannard, "Following the Color Line," American Magazine, 1907-1908
BOX 23	Miscellany, 1862, 1908, 1916, 1929-1932, undated
BOX 23	NAACP, 1915, 1936
BOX 23	Newspaper clippings, 1900, 1910, 1920-1927, undated
BOX 23	Scrapbook, 1911 <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX OV 1-OV 2	<b>Oversize, 1911-1923</b> Photographs, maps, posters, and scrapbooks. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	William LePre Houston
BOX OV 1	Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America
BOX OV 1	Photographs, 1907-1908 (Container 12)
BOX OV 1	Political File
BOX OV 1	Albany Colored Republican Club, Albany, New York, mass meeting, poster, 1912 (Container 15)
BOX OV 1	Atlantic County Republican League, Atlantic City, N.J., second annual banquet, photograph, 1913 (Container 15)
BOX OV 1	Charles Hamilton Houston
BOX OV 1	Academic file
BOX OV 1	Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Mass.
BOX OV 1	Boston, Mass, map, undated (Container 18)
BOX OV 1	Photographs, 1920-1921 (Container 18)
BOX OV 1	World War I army service
BOX OV 1	Fort Sill Military Reservation, map, 1923 (Container 20)
BOX OV 2	Miscellany
BOX OV 2	Scrapbook, 1911 (Container 23)