

Joseph J. Roberts Family Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2022

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm83061507>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/eadmss.ms010242>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Glenn R. Gardner, 2010
Revised 2021 August

Collection Summary

Title: Joseph J. Roberts Family Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1839-2001

ID No.: MSS61507

Creator: Roberts, Joseph J. (Joseph Jenkins), 1809-1876

Extent: 30 items

Extent: 1 container plus 1 oversize

Extent: 0.2 linear feet

Extent: 1 microfilm reel

Extent: 5 microfiches

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm83061507>

Summary: President of Liberia. Correspondence, land grants, ship registrations, wills, genealogical material, photographs, and other papers relating to land sales by the Liberian government and to acquisition of property in Liberia by the Davis and Roberts families.

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

Davis family.

Roberts family.

Roberts, Joseph J. (Joseph Jenkins), 1809-1876.

Subjects

Land grants--Liberia.

Real property--Liberia.

Titles

Joseph Jenkins Roberts family papers

Roberts family papers

Occupations

Presidents--Liberia.

Acquisition Information

The papers of the Joseph J. Roberts Family were given to the Library of Congress by William R. Davis in 1983, 1991, 1993, and 2001. Items were purchased in 1918, 1978, and 2019.

Processing History

The papers of the Joseph J. Roberts Family were processed and described David Mathisen and Brian McGuire in 1983. Additions to the collection and revisions to the finding aid were made by Patrick Kerwin in 1996 and 2003 and by Laura J. Kells in 2020. An online version of the finding aid was created by Glenn R. Gardner in 2010.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of members of the Joseph J. Roberts family is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

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

Microfilm and Microfiche

Microfilm on one reel and 5 microfiches were received as part of the papers of the Joseph J. Roberts Family and are listed and described in this finding aid. This microfilm is not available for interlibrary loan.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container, microfilm reel, or microfiche number, Joseph J. Roberts Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Joseph J. Roberts was born a free African American in Norfolk, Virginia, on March 15, 1809. In 1829 he emigrated to the colony of Liberia with his family. His wife, Sarah, whom he had married in 1828, died during their first year in Liberia. In 1836 he married Jane Rose Waring. Roberts ran an import-export business in Monrovia that traded goods with the United States. He served as high sheriff, vice governor, and governor and, following Liberian independence, was elected Liberia's first president. He served as president 1848 to 1856, and then again 1872 to 1876. He died on February 24, 1876.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of the Joseph Jenkins Roberts family span the years 1839-2001 and consist of certificates, correspondence, documents relating to the government of Liberia (chiefly land grants and ship registrations), wills, and miscellaneous genealogical material. Present also are one reel of microfilm and five microfiches of correspondence, land grants, ship registrations, wills, and miscellaneous items.

The focus of the collection is on land sales, mainly 1841-1883, to individuals by the Liberian government and the acquisition of property by members of the Davis and Roberts families in Monrovia, Liberia. Joseph J. Roberts, the first president of Liberia, signed many of the land grants.

The 2020 Addition consists of a letter written in 1847 by Joseph J. Roberts, then governor of Liberia, to Benjamin Coates, a merchant and member of the American Colonization Society of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material or topic followed by an addition.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Certificates
BOX 1	Ancient Arabic Order of the Mystic Shrine, 1898
BOX 1	Palm Grove Cemetery Company of Monrovia, undated
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1849-1977 Microfiche shelf no. 20,502.1
BOX 1	Debt list, 1856
BOX 1	Genealogical material, 1977, 1997, 2001 <i>See also Oversize</i>
BOX 1	Land grants, 1839-1891 Microfiche shelf no. 20,502.1
BOX 1	<i>Land Record of Montserrado County, Republic of Liberia vol. 7</i> , (land grants, ship registrations and wills), 1849-1854 Microfilm shelf no. 20,502
BOX 1	Liberian army information, 1979
BOX 1	"Liberian National Anthem"/"The Lone Star Forever," undated
BOX 1	"Notes on the acquisition of the estate papers of William McCall Davis, April 1892," undated Microfiche shelf no. 20,502.1
BOX 1	Photographs, undated
BOX 1	Republic of Liberia v. Brownell, 1955
BOX 1	Wills
BOX 1	Davis, William McCall, 1883
BOX 1	Ellis, Collinet, 1911
BOX 1	King, William Henry, 1903
BOX 1	Miscellaneous, 1856-1977 Microfiche shelf no. 20,502.1
BOX 1	Roberts, Joseph Jenkins, 1875, undated
BOX 1	Teage, Colin, undated
BOX 1	Teage, Francis, 1845
BOX 1	2020 Addition
BOX 1	Letter, 1847
BOX OV 1	Oversize
BOX OV 1	Genealogical chart, 1977 (Same container)