

Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons



**Music Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2021**

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

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Prepared by the Music Division of the Library of Congress

Finding aid encoded by Rachel McNellis, 2021

Collection Summary

Title: Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons

Inclusive Dates: 1907-1980

Bulk Dates: 1919-1927

Call No.: ML31.S54

Creator: Edwards, Bertha W.

Extent: 27 items

Extent: 1 container

Extent: 1 linear foot

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016570611>

Summary: Hiram Simmons (1874–1938) was a Black composer and musician in Portsmouth, Virginia, known primarily for his gospel music. He also worked as an educator, music publisher, and organist. The Simmons material collected by Portsmouth librarian Bertha W. Edwards includes published music, one photograph, and a biographical sketch.

Acquisition Information

Gift, Bertha W. Edwards, 2003.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Processing History

Music Division staff processed the Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons. Rachel McNellis coded the finding aid in 2021, assisted by Anthony Edwards.

Copyright Status

Materials from the Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

Access and Restrictions

The Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons is open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Certain restrictions on using or copying materials may apply.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container or reel or digital ID number], Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1874	Born in Prince Anne County, Maryland
Unknown	Moved with his parents to Berkley, a town in Norfolk County, Virginia
1899	Wrote "Heavenly Father, Hear Our Prayer"
Circa 1900	Began his music publishing company, Church Music Publishing House, out of his home Sold his music in person within the local community
1915	Moved to 708 High Street, Portsmouth, Virginia Employed by Ebenezer Baptist Church on Effingham Street
1916	Moved to 204 South Green Street, Portsmouth Established himself as a composer, music teacher, and music publisher
1919	Composed "The Story of Our Lord's Supper: An Oratorio in Vocal Score"
1924	Two hymns published in the <i>Baptist Standard Hymn Book</i>
1925 June 17	Married Susie E. Judkins, a Portsmouth school teacher (died 1942 March 16)
1938 March 12	Died at King's Daughter's Hospital in Portsmouth
1938 March 15	Funeral service at Emanuel A.M.E. Church Buried at Mount Calvary Cemetary in Portsmouth

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of materials created by and regarding Hiram Simmons, a Black organist, pianist, and composer who was active in Portsmouth, Virginia, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The items span the years 1907 to 1980, with the majority dating from 1920 to 1927. The collection is organized into two series. The **Music** series consists of published scores for Simmons's gospel hymns, anthems, and one piano solo. The **Papers** series contains one photograph of Simmons and a biographical sketch that outlines his work as an educator, music publisher, and composer.

Organization of the Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons

The collection is arranged in two series:

- [Music, 1907-1937](#)
- [Papers 1919, 1980](#)

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

Edwards, Bertha W.

Simmons, Hiram, 1874-1938, composer.

Simmons, Hiram, 1874-1938.

Subjects

Choruses, Sacred (Mixed voices) with piano.

Choruses, Sacred (Mixed voices), Unaccompanied.

Composers--United States--Biography.

Gospel music.

Oratorios--Vocal scores.

Piano music.

Form/Genre

Biographies.
Gospel music.
Oratorios.
Photographs.
Sacred music.
Scores.
Vocal scores.

Description of Series

Container
BOX 1/3-27

Series
Music, 1907-1937

This series consists of published music for twenty-five compositions by Simmons. These are primarily piano-vocal or chorus scores for his gospel music. Two works, *My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me* (1922) and *O Clap Your Hands, All Ye People* (1925), are choral anthems with organ accompaniment that have lyrics based on Biblical texts. This series also includes a spiral bound collection of his choral works, *Soul Appealing Anthems and Sacred Selections*, which was published in 1913. The only instrumental work in this collection is his piano solo *The Afro-American Musicians: March and Two-Step* (1907), which is the earliest dated composition in the collection.

Arranged alphabetically by title.

BOX 1/1-2

Papers, 1919, 1980

The Papers consist of a black and white photograph of Simmons and a biographical sketch written by Alexander Davis. This document outlines Simmons's activities as a teacher, music publisher, organist, and composer during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Arranged by material type.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1/3-27	<p>Music, 1907-1937</p> <p>This series consists of published music for twenty-five compositions by Simmons. These are primarily piano-vocal or chorus scores for his gospel music. Two works, <i>My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me</i> (1922) and <i>O Clap Your Hands, All Ye People</i> (1925), are choral anthems with organ accompaniment that have lyrics based on Biblical texts. This series also includes a spiral bound collection of his choral works, <i>Soul Appealing Anthems and Sacred Selections</i>, which was published in 1913. The only instrumental work in this collection is his piano solo <i>The Afro-American Musicians: March and Two-Step</i> (1907), which is the earliest dated composition in the collection.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by title.</p>
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	The Afro American Musicians: March and Two Step, 1907 Score for solo piano
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Dear Old School Days, 1920 Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/5	Eternal Lord, Creator, King, 1927 Piano-vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Heavenly Father, Bless Us To-day, 1909 Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Heavenly Father, Bless Us To-day, undated Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/8	I Love to Hear That Voice, 1914 Piano-vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 1/9	I'll Serve Thee Lord Jesus, 1936 Piano-vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 1/10	Is There Joy and Peace?, undated Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/11	The Lord Will Provide, 1935 Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/12	<i>My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?</i> , 1922 Score
BOX-FOLDER 1/13	<i>O Clap Your Hands, All Ye People</i> , 1925 Score for mixed voices
BOX-FOLDER 1/14	Oh, I Want to Feel My Savior, 1934 Piano-vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 1/15	Our March Song, 1920 Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/16	Our School Song, 1920 Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/17	Sing Aloud, La, La, 1920 Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/18	Song of the Lilies, 1920 Chorus score

Music, 1907-1937

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 1/19	The Song that Leads to Heaven, 1920 Piano-vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 1/20	The Story of Our Lord's Supper, 1919 Score
BOX-FOLDER 1/21	The Story of the Cross, 1937 Piano-vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 1/22	<i>Soul-Appealing Anthems and Sacred Selections</i> , 1913 Spiral-bound collection of choral music
BOX-FOLDER 1/23	Sunshine, 1920 Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/24	Te Deum, undated Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/25	There Is a Hill, Far, Far Away, 1915 Piano-vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 1/26	Thinking of Jesus, Always, 1935 Chorus score
BOX-FOLDER 1/27	While Thee Are Young Thee Should Enter his Fold, undated Chorus score
BOX 1/1-2	Papers, 1919, 1980 The Papers consist of a black and white photograph of Simmons and a biographical sketch written by Alexander Davis. This document outlines Simmons's activities as a teacher, music publisher, organist, and composer during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Arranged by material type.
BOX-FOLDER 1/1	Biographical sketch, circa 1980 Typescript
BOX-FOLDER 1/2	Photograph of Hiram Simmons, 1919 25 x 20 cm, signed "Mosby, 1919"