

**Inventory of the
Knox Family Papers
In The New Bedford Whaling Museum
Research Library**

Title:	Knox Family Papers
Date Span:	1846-1991
Mss Number:	Mss 203
Provenance:	Gift of William J. Knox Jr. (B91-19)
Extent:	6 linear inches
Abstract:	Correspondence, personal papers, and scrapbooks compiled by an African-American New Bedford family, 1846-1991
Processed by:	Mark Procknik, 2022
Repository:	New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library

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Introduction

Materials in this collection were donated to the New Bedford Whaling Museum by William J. Knox Jr. on 17 July 1991 as part of Accession B91-19.

Biographical Note

Elijah Knox was born as a slave in the early 1800s, but he achieved his freedom on June 5, 1846. His sister, Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897) was also born a slave but gained her freedom by the mid-19th century. Elijah married twice. His first wife was Emily Douglas, and the couple had two children: Martha Jane Knox (born 1850), who eventually married Captain Noah Morgan, and John F. Knox (born 1852). After Emily's death, Elijah married Julia Ann Seals, and the couple had two sons: Elijah H. Knox (born 1871) and William Jacob Knox (born 1875). While living in New Bedford, Elijah became a skilled carpenter and an active member of Petomska Lodge #1518 of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows before passing away in January 1907. Elijah's son, Elijah H. Knox, served as a private in the Spanish American War, never married, and passed away in Chelsea (Massachusetts) on December 1, 1944.

William J. Knox, Elijah's youngest son graduated from New Bedford High school in 1894 and married Estella J.M. Briggs, the daughter of Royal A. Briggs who served in the 54th Infantry during the American Civil War, on September 18, 1894. The couple had five children: Alberta Mae Knox (born 1896), Estella Briggs Knox (born 1902), William Jacob Knox Jr. (born 1904), Lawrence Howland Knox (born 1906), and Clinton Everett Knox (born 1908). William began working as a clerk in the New Bedford Post Office in 1905 after passing the civil service examination in 1903, eventually rising to the position of Special Clerk in 1925 before passing away in 1933. His wife Estella survived him by 18 years and was a well-respected member of the New Bedford community and a member of the J.W. Hood Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star. Estella passed away in 1951.

Alberta graduated from New Bedford High School in 1913 and went on to earn her teaching degree in 1916. She then taught for 45 years in school systems in Massachusetts and New Jersey before retiring in 1961. Alberta married Boyd Brazile Eatmon on August 17, 1936, and passed away in 1991. Estella graduated from New Bedford High School and then attended business school. Upon graduation, she worked as a stenographer at the New Bedford Police Station and later held secretarial positions in Atlanta (Georgia) and Cambridge (Massachusetts). She married Bernard W. Pritchett on August 27, 1937, and passed away in Cambridge on August 27, 1937. William Knox Jr. was a chemist at Columbia University and one of the African American scientists and technicians on the Manhattan Project, serving as the project's only African American supervisor. William passed away in 1995. Lawrence was also a chemist and worked alongside his brother on the Manhattan Project but died unexpectedly of carbon monoxide poisoning in 1966. Clinton Everett Knox was the youngest of William Sr. and Estella's children. He graduated New Bedford High School in 1926 and went on to become United States ambassador to Haiti before passing away in Silver Springs (Maryland) on October 14, 1980.

Scope and Content Note

Materials in this collection span the years 1846 to 1991 and document four generations of the Knox family of New Bedford (Massachusetts). The earliest papers in the collection relate to Elijah Knox and his life in New Bedford as a freed slave. The collection includes several documents from 1846 certifying his status as a free man, his 1902 Last Will and Testament, and an undated reproduction of his photographic portrait. A member of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, the collection also contains a resolution by Petomska Lodge #1518 written in 1907 in remembrance of Elijah. Items related to Elijah's son, Elijah H. Knox, consist of an 1898 newspaper clipping relating his experiences serving in the Spanish-American War.

The collection heavily documents William J. Knox, Elijah Knox's youngest son and his line, with several materials pertaining directly to William throughout the years 1892 to 1925. The bulk of William's papers consist of correspondence from 1913 to 1925 and include a 1913 letter from Dallas Brown congratulating William on his daughter Alberta's graduation from New Bedford High School in addition to several letters from 1925 concerning his work as a clerk in the New Bedford Post Office. Additional materials related to William include a list of graduates from New Bedford High School's Class of 1894, his marriage certificate documenting his marriage to Estella J.M. (Briggs) Knox in 1894, his 1903 United States Civil Service Commission notice of eligibility, and a resolution written in 1933 by the Emergency Advisory Council of New Bedford in remembrance of William.

In addition to William, the collection also contains several items related to his wife, Estella Knox spanning from 1892 to 1946. Estella's correspondence dates from 1931 and relates to her research on her father, Royal A. Briggs of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry. Estella exchanged letters with numerous agencies, including the United States War Department and the Washington D.C. Veterans Administration, in an attempt to locate information on her father's death and his burial location. As a member of the J.W. Hood Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, Estella was heavily involved in the planning and ceremonies surrounding the Chapter's 25th anniversary in 1912 and her papers include several newspaper articles and advertisements documenting the anniversary. Estella also collected a 1919 hospital bill for medical expenses from Buffalo (New York) for her brother, Archie Briggs. The bulk of Estella's collection, however, consists of two scrapbooks she compiled between the years 1892 and 1946. These scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings related to the graduation and school activities of her children, her involvement with the J.W. Hood Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, invitations to events, letters of recognition, and additional news about her children's lives and careers.

The collection also contains several materials related to William and Estella's five children: Alberta, Estella, William Jr., Lawrence, and Clinton. Alberta Knox Eatmon's papers date from 1906 to 1985 and consist primarily of correspondence and a scrapbook. Alberta's correspondence spans the years 1906 to 1926 and chiefly consists of childhood letters to family members in 1906 and letters dated 1926 regarding her teaching career, including a set of letters from March 1926 from several of her students wishing her well wishes as she recovered from a sickness that kept her out of the school. Alberta compiled her scrapbook during the years 1909 to 1926 and collected newspaper clippings, programs, photographs, and pamphlets documenting

her lived experiences during this time of her life. The scrapbook documents Alberta's time at New Bedford High School including her graduation in 1913, information on New Bedford High School graduating classes from 1909 to 1913, Alberta's classmates, Alberta's college career, invitations to events, postcards, and news related to her siblings and family members. Alberta's papers also contain a 1961 Burlington (New Jersey) teacher evaluation form on which she received superior feedback, and two biographical sketches from 1920 and 1985 about Alberta's life and career.

Papers related to Estella Knox Pritchett date from 1978 and include a copy of her obituary in addition to a letter from Reverend Murray Kenney of Christ Church in Cambridge written in remembrance of Estella. Materials related to William Knox Jr. include newspaper clippings from 1945 to 1984 documenting William Jr.'s life and career as a chemist and technician on the Manhattan Project in addition to his resume and curriculum vitae from 1986. Items related to Lawrence Knox consist of newspaper clippings describing his life and career as a scientist. Papers related to Clinton Knox date from 1973 to 1980 and consist his resume from 1973, a 1976 newspaper clipping documenting Clinton's recollections of New Bedford, and a copy of his obituary and funeral program from 1980.

Additional items in the Knox family papers relate to Harriet Jacobs, Elijah Knox's sister, and consist of her 1897 obituary and copy of Louisa M. Jacobs's 1907 will. Louisa was Harriett's daughter, and her will bequeathed \$100 each to William and Elijah H. Knox of New Bedford, the sons of Elijah and Julia Seals Knox. The collection also includes a newspaper clipping from 1986 noting the accomplishments of several members of the Knox family in addition to a written history compiled in 1991 detailing the history of the Knox family from Elijah Knox and Harriet Jacobs to Alberta Knox Eatmon and her siblings. Researchers should also note that this collection contains a copy of Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, 1861). This title has been cataloged and shelved discretely and is searchable through the Library's online catalog along with all other holdings.

Arrangement of Collection

- Series A: Elijah Knox Papers, 1846-1907
- Series B: Elijah H. Knox Papers, 1898
- Series C: William J. Knox Papers, 1892-1925
- Series D: Estella Knox Papers, 1892-1946
- Series E: Alberta Knox Eatmon Papers, 1906-1985
- Series F: Estella Knox Pritchett Papers, 1978
- Series G: William Knox Jr. Papers, 1945-1986
- Series H: Lawrence Knox Papers, 1948-1984
- Series I: Clinton Knox Papers, 1973-1980
- Series J: Knox Family Papers, 1897-1991

Collection Inventory

Box 1

Series A: Elijah Knox Papers, 1846-1907

- Folder 1: Documentation certifying Elijah Knox as a free man, 1846
- Folder 2: Last will and testament, 1902
- Folder 3: Resolution read in remembrance of Elijah Knox, 1907
- Folder 4: Photographic reproduction of Elijah Knox, undated

Series B: Elijah H. Knox Papers, 1898

- Folder 1: Newspaper clippings regarding Knox in the Spanish-American War, 1898

Series C: William J. Knox Papers, 1892-1925

- Folder 1: Correspondence, 1913-1925
- Folder 2: List of graduates from New Bedford High School Class of 1894, 1894
- Folder 3: Marriage certificate, 1894
- Folder 4: United States Civil Service Commission notice of eligibility, 1903
- Folder 5: Resolution written in remembrance of William J. Knox, 1933
- Folder 6: Photographic reproductions of William J. Knox, 1892

Series D: Estella Knox Papers, 1892-1946

- Folder 1: Correspondence, 1931
- Folder 2: Documentation about the Order of the Eastern Star's 25th anniversary, 1912
- Folder 3: Hospital bill for Archie Briggs, 1919
- Folder 4: Scrapbook, 1892-1951
- Folder 5: Scrapbook, 1931-1946

Series E: Alberta Knox Eatmon Papers, 1906-1985

- Folder 1: Correspondence, 1906-1926
- Folder 2: Teacher evaluation record, 1961
- Folder 3: Biographical documentation, 1920-1985
- Folder 4: Scrapbook, 1909-1926

Series F: Estella Knox Pritchett Papers, 1978

- Folder 1: Letter written in remembrance of Estella Knox Pritchett, 1978
- Folder 2: Obituary, 1978

Series G: William Knox Jr. Papers, 1945-1986

- Folder 1: Resume and curriculum vitae of William Knox Jr., 1986
- Folder 2: Newspaper clippings documenting William Knox Jr., 1945-1984

Series H: Lawrence Knox Papers, 1948-1984

- Folder 1: Newspaper clippings on life and career of Lawrence Knox, 1948-1984

Series I: Clinton Knox Papers, 1973-1980

- Folder 1: Resume of Clinton Everett Knox, 1973
- Folder 2: Newspaper clipping documenting Knox's recollections of New Bedford, 1976
- Folder 3: Obituary and funeral program, 1980

Series J: Knox Family Papers, 1897-1991

- Folder 1: Obituary printed for Harriett Jacobs, 1897
- Folder 2: Last Will and testament of Louisa M. Jacobs, 1907
- Folder 3: Newspaper clippings regarding Knox family accomplishments, 1986
- Folder 4: Written history of the Knox family, 1991

Subject Headings

African American chemists
African American diplomats
African American postal service employees--Massachusetts--New Bedford
African American scientists
African American teachers--Massachusetts--New Bedford
Ambassadors
Bridgewater State College--Students
Briggs, Archie
Briggs, Royal A.
Children of freed persons
Eatmon, Alberta Knox, 1896-1991
Freed persons
High school students--Massachusetts--New Bedford
High school students, Black--Massachusetts--New Bedford
Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Petomska Lodge #1518 (New Bedford, Mass.)
Jacobs, Harriet A. (Harriet Ann), 1813-1897
Jacobs, Louisa M.
Jacobs family
Knox, Clinton, 1908-1980
Knox, Elijah
Knox, Elijah H.
Knox, Estella Briggs, 1873-1951
Knox, Lawrence, 1906-1964
Knox, William J., 1875-1933
Knox, William Jacob Jr., 1904-1995
Knox family
New Bedford High School (New Bedford, Mass.)--Students
New Bedford High School (New Bedford, Mass.). Class of 1894
New Bedford High School (New Bedford, Mass.). Class of 1913
Obituaries
Order of the Eastern Star. J.W. Hood Chapter (New Bedford, Mass.)
Pritchett, Estella Knox, 1902-1978
Scrapbooks
Stenographers--Massachusetts--New Bedford
Students, Black
Teachers--Rating of
War stories, Spanish American
Wills