

**Abbott, Anderson Ruffin fonds.—1871-1950.—19 vol. and 48 pieces of textual and graphic records.**

**Biographical sketch:**

Anderson Ruffin Abbott [1837-1913] was the son of Wilson Ruffin Abbott [b. 1801 in Richmond, Virginia], a Black steamboat captain and businessman who emigrated with his family from the United States in 1835 and settling in Toronto where he became a successful real estate broker owning properties in Toronto, Dundas, and Hamilton by 1875.

Anderson Abbott began his education at William King's school in the Black settlement in Buxton, Ontario near Chatham. From there he continued his studies at the Toronto Academy and also attended school in Ohio at Oberlin College for three years. He then returned to Toronto and received a Bachelor of Medicine from Trinity College at the University of Toronto and graduated from the Toronto School of Medicine in 1857 at the age of 23. He then went to study under the Black doctor, Alexander Thomas Augusta and become the first Canadian-born African American doctor in 1861 when he received a license to practice from the Medical Board of Upper Canada. After his time spent in the army, he returned to school and attended primary medical classes at the University of Toronto in 1867. He never graduated from this program, but he established his own practice in 1871 and was also admitted into the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Toronto that same year.

In 1863, he joined the United States army and became the First African American major in that army. In that same year, he applied and was appointed as a medical cadet in one of the "coloured" regiments of the Union Army and worked as a surgeon at the Contraband Hospital at Camp Baker and then at Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C. and subsequently had charge of a hospital in Arlington, across the Potomac from Washington. He served as a high ranking surgeon for the United States army until 1865, but continued to have an interest in the American Civil War for the rest of his life and continued to receive honours for his service in the years 1891 and 1892. In 1891, Abbott was elected a member of the James S. Knowlton Post No. 532, Grand Army of the Republic and was one of the few Civil War veterans in Toronto to wear the GAR badge. The following year, Abbott was appointed aide-de-camp on the Staff of the Commanding Officers Department of New York, the highest military honour ever bestowed to a person of African descent in Canada or the United States at that time. Abbott resigned from the army in 1866.

He played other important roles during his time in Washington, D.C. where he also contributed to the founding of Howard University and where he became friends with President Abraham Lincoln. He was one of the first African Americans to attend a White House Levee and was present in the city the night of Lincoln's assassination and was among the select group to stand vigil over the dying President. After the President's death, Abbott was given the shawl worn by Lincoln at his first inauguration by the first lady, Mary Todd Lincoln. While in Washington, he was also a key figure in the Horse-Car crisis.

In 1871, he married Mary Ann Casey and the two settled in Chatham, Ontario eventually giving birth to two daughters and three sons. Abbott resumed his practice in Chatham and in 1874 was appointed the coroner for the Kent County. While in Chatham, he continued to be a prominent member of the community and pursued his writing career as a contributor to the Chatham Planet, and as associate editor of the Messenger, the journal of the local British Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1878, he was

made president of both the Chatham Literary and Debating Society and the Chatham Medical Society. In 1881, Abbott moved his practice to Dundas, Ontario, where he once again secured a number of high ranking positions in his community including high school trustee and chairman of the town's internal management committee. The family moved to Oakville in 1889 and back to Toronto the following year, 1890. In 1894, Abbott again left Canada when he accepted an appointment as surgeon-in-chief at Provident Hospital in Chicago. He was appointed as the hospital's medical superintendent in 1896. He retired to Toronto in 1897, where he continued to focus on his writing and editorials and his interest in these pursuits and in poetry can be seen in the notebooks contained in this fonds. Within in his editorials he commented on both the Canadian and American African American experience and was published in notable civil rights periodicals such as the *New York Age*.

Other biographical information that is relevant to this fonds is information regarding the life of William Peyton Hubbard. The Abbott and Hubbard families were joined when Abbott's daughter Grace married Frederick L. Hubbard, son of William Peyton Hubbard. William Peyton Hubbard was born in Toronto in 1842, two years after his family arrived from Virginia as freed slaves. In 1894, Hubbard was elected the alderman of Ward 4 in Toronto, Ontario, and was elected to the Board of Control in 1898. In 1904, he was elected vice chairman of the board and served as acting Mayor during this time. Hubbard died in 1935.

#### **Custodial history:**

The fonds came to the library as a gift from Mrs. Grace (Abbott) Hubbard in 1963. In 1976 an original illuminated manuscript was returned to Mr. Fred Hubbard. In 2019, two family bibles belonging to Robert Allan Lightfoot and Clarence Victor Lightfoot were donated by Lauren Lightfoot.

#### **Scope and content:**

The Anderson Ruffin Abbott fonds consists of drafts of Dr. Abbott's articles, speeches and letters; scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, articles [many written by Abbott], obituaries, birth announcements, theatre programs, art collection catalogues, programs, poetry, scientific figures and invitations; account book of Mrs. Ellen (Toyer) Abbott; copy of Wilson Ruffin Abbott's will; Abbott family biographical notes including wedding announcements, obituaries, and letters of reference; photographs and daguerreotypes of the Abbott family and extended family; invitations and programs for the University of Illinois College of Dentistry and a summer term schedule for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Chicago, University of Illinois; issue of the *Journal of the National Medical Association* vol. 72, no. 7 (1980); issue of the *Westend Express*, vol. 5, no. 2 (March 4, 1995) which contains an article on Abbott entitled "The Man Who Knew Abe"; legal documents including indentures of mortgage, insurance agreements, deeds, grant releases, cemetery plots, reference letters, military discharges, tax certificates, wills (Anderson Ruffin Abbott and Wilson Ruffin Abbott), correspondence, leases, decrees, and statutory declarations; proposal for the Canadian Mill and Mercantile Company.

Photographs included in the fonds contain images of the Abbott family, Hubbard family, Casey family, Nightengale family, Stevenson family, Kavanaugh family, Watkins family, and Dr. W. Tuck.

Fonds also contains several notebooks belonging to Abbott which include: tallies of receipts and expenditures, disbursements, tax and insurance payments, debts, drafts for essays on poetry, civil rights,

religion, African American culture and place in society, political economy, anarchy and political issues of the day such as temperance and suffrage, philosophy (individualism, collectivism, morality), and other immigrant populations such as the Irish, drafts of letters, personal measurements, medical studies, personal history, experiences in Washington, drafts of marriages and death notices, and drafts of speeches.

Items in the fonds that relate to Hubbard include a letter of reference from the Mayor of Toronto (1905), newspaper clippings, addresses of recognition, a photocopy of the illuminated book presented to Hubbard by the City Council on his retirement, and photographs.

2019 addition: two family bibles; one given to Robert Allan Lightfoot by Mary Ann Casey and the other to Clarence Victor Lightfoot by members of the Soldier's Christian Association while he was stationed at Exhibition Camp, Toronto, dated November 16th, 1914. Robert Allan was Mary Ann Casey's nephew, and served as a medic in a white unit during World War 1. Clarence Victor Lightfoot was Robert Allan's father; his bible is in fragile condition and the front cover is detached.

**Subject headings:**

Abbott, Anderson Ruffin [1837-1913]

Abbott, Wilson Ruffin [1801-1876]

Augusta, Alexander T.

Hall, William [1832-1904]

Hubbard, William Peyton [1842-1935]

Abbott, Ellen (Toyer)

Chatham [ON]

Dundas [ON]

Toronto [ON]

United States – History – Civil War [1861-1865]

Elgin Settlement [ON]

The Messenger

Planet

Methodist Church – Canada

Methodist Church – Toronto [ON]

Blacks – Canada

Blacks – United States



Niagara Movement

Medicine – History – [1857-1913]

NOTEBOOKS OF DR. ANDERSON RUFFIN ABBOTT

S90

<u>Notebook I</u>	ca <u>1898</u>
Pages	
7-23	Speech to Literary and Musical Home Circle, about running an organization
23-25	Letter to newspaper about Southern Negroes
27-33	Notes on Wm. P. Hubbard
37-71	Poetry--Browning & Tennyson
71-73	Genesis & modern science
74-87	Discussion at Bond Street Church, July 14, 1898, on state support of denominational schools
89-103	Missing
105-123	General principles of Political Economy

Notebook II

ca 1899

Pages	
* 1- 7	Future of the Negro
* 8-32	Negro emigration (to Africa)
32-60	Negroes' rights in Southern U.S. --attack on Rev. Sam Jones
25a-26a	Irish immigration
* 62a-65	Negro labour--slavery
scattered ) throughout ) notebook )	Individualism and collectivism Astronomy

NOTEBOOKS OF DR. ANDERSON RUFFIN ABBOTT

Notebook III ca 1900

Pages

- 7-123 Negro and politics  
--interspersed with Browning, etc.  
The flux of parties -- Bryan
- 127-135 Bridal toast--daughter  
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Lyons Stevenson
- 137-139 Toast to groom.
- 141-151 The race question
- 153-171 Pre-historic man--backward races

Notebook IV ca 1903

Pages

- \* 1-19 Elgin settlement
- 20-22 Letter concerning sale of land  
29 July 1903
- 27-51 Swedenborg
- 52-26 Answer to letter of Mr. Sheppard  
(paging concerning disfranchisement of  
changes) Negroes in Southern U.S.
- Opposite Side
- 37-41 Site of Library (T.P.L.)
- 43-65 Biology
- 81-81 Jap. & Negro

NOTEBOOKS OF DR. ANDERSON RUFFIN ABBOTT

Notebook V

ca 1906

Pages

25-37

Report of questionnaire  
Negroes in Ontario Schools

38-52

Wedding toast--Home life

53-54

Letter to Florence (daughter-in-law)  
9 July 1906

\* 55

GAR (Grand Army of the Republic)

\* 65-76

Colour Prejudice in Canada

77-141

Wedding address

142-161

Niagara Movement & Booker T. Washington

162-186

Seaman Hall

pages missing

Notebook VI

ca 1913

\* 1-73

The Negro soldier

\* 75-end

- GAR address

81-85

missing

Notebook VII

ca 1913

\* 1-45

Canada

49-71

GAR address June 20, 1907

\* 79-91

Response to toast to the GAR  
on behalf of Canada 20 March 1913

NOTEBOOKS OF DR. ANDERSON RUFFIN ABBOTT

Notebook VIII

Pages

- \* 1-95 Coloured soldiers and sailors in the  
Civil War
- \* - --Reminiscences of Dr. Augusta

Notebook IX

- \* 1-81 History of Negro immigration to Canada
- last Biography of W. R. Abbott  
2 pages

Notebook X

- ca 1913
- Notes on the Riverdale Zoo 10 leaves

Notebook XI

- ca 1913
- 1-6 Negroes in Canada
- 7-9 Notes on the Riverdale Zoo

Notebook XII

- Notes on Browning (complete)

Notebook XIII

- 1-12 Notes on Browning
- 15-21 Notes for letter concerning expropriation  
of land on Terauley Street



Notebook XIV

Parts of various notebooks  
with notes on Browning and Tennyson

Miscellaneous Notes

- on:
- Survival of the fittest
  - Number of Negroes in U.S.
  - Speeches to G.A.R.
  - Biology
  - Various missionaries
  - History of the Coloured Wesleyan  
Methodists in Toronto