INTRODUCTION

This finding aid focuses on the papers of Rev. Ambrose Allen Bennett, African American minister, born in Davidson County, Tennessee. Spanning the years 1918-1996, although the bulk is largely concentrated between 1937-1957, the papers contain numerous sermons given by Rev. Bennett while minister at Westwood Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. Also contained within the collection are many photographs of the Bennett family as well as Nashville scenes in the early half of the twentieth century. Other items in the collection include certificates, clippings, estate papers, land records, legal documents, obituaries, plaques, programs, school records, a scrapbook of memoirs, and several miscellaneous items.

The materials in the collection is not limited to the family of Ambrose Allen Bennett but also includes documents on the allied family lines of William Henry Fort, Jr. (1911-1974), and William Jennings Hale, Jr., (1914-1989), both prominent African American families in Nashville (see genealogical chart). The materials were donated by Dr. Jane Fort (1938- ), the granddaughter of Rev. Bennett. It should be noted that the unprocessed materials had been stored for several years within conditions which lacked humidity and temperature control prior to their transfer to the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

The materials in this finding aid measures 9 linear feet. There are no restrictions on the material. Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Ambrose Allen Bennett Family Papers may be made for scholarly research.
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Ambrose Allen Bennett Family Papers, containing approximately 500 items, span the period 1918-1996, although the bulk is concentrated between 1937-1957. The collection is composed of certificates, clippings, estate papers, land records, legal documents, obituaries, plaques, programs, school records, a scrapbook of memoirs, and several miscellaneous items.

A major portion of the collection consists of sermons and speeches which were given by Rev. Bennett, an African American, during his years in the ministry, the last twenty-five years which were spent at Westwood Baptist church in Nashville, Tennessee. These sermons and speeches have been alphabetically arranged by topic or subject.

There are many photographs in the collection. Most of these depict Rev. Bennett and his family in the early 1900s, but also include Nashville scenes and national points of interest. Among the photographs are several showing training exercises at various military bases during the Joint Orientation Conference in 1950 in which Rev. Bennett was a civilian participant (see Box 2, Folder 5 and Box 3, Folder 6).

Among the funeral programs contained in the collection are those related to the Bennett family. These include Chester Starnes Allen (1923-1982), Reuben Walter Allen, Sr. (1890-1975), Reuben Walter Allen, Jr. (1912-1986), Exum Louis Smith (1915-1997), and Mary Bennett Smith (1920-2002).

In addition to the Ambrose A. Bennett family there is material on two prominent African American allied lines: William Henry Fort, Jr. (1911-1974), and William Jennings Hale, Jr. (1914-1989), both of which were descendents of families that were associated with higher education in Nashville. They were also husbands of Geraldine Bennett Fort-Hale, daughter of Rev. Ambrose Bennett (see genealogical chart), a professor at Tennessee State University for twenty-eight years.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ambrose Allen Bennett

1884  June 18, born in Davidson County, Tennessee, the only son of Charles C. and Mary Allen Bennett

Removed with his family to Bowling Green, Kentucky

Returned with his family to Nashville, Tennessee

Educated in Nashville Public Schools

Graduated from Rogers Williams University in Nashville

Professor of Mathematics at Rogers Williams University

1916  January 17, ordained a minister of the First Baptist Church, East Nashville

Married to Jennie B. Smith

1918  August 1, married to Mattie K. Carter

1918-1943  Served successively as secretary, administrative assistant and sales manager with the Sunday School Publishing Board

1919-1923  Served as pastor of Roger Heights Baptist Church

1923-1928  Assistant pastor at First Baptist Church, East Nashville

1928-1953  Served as pastor of Westwood Baptist Church

1957  March 30, died in Nashville and interred in Greenwood Cemetery
CONTAINER LIST

Microfilm Roll #1

BOX 1
1. Baby’s record—Jane Geraldine Fort
2. Biographical sketch—Geraldine Bennett Fort
3. Candidate for City council—Ambrose Bennett, 1947
4. Cards—Greeting—A. A. Bennett
5. Certificates—Statue of Liberty Ellis Island Centennial Commission—Geraldine Fort Hale
6. Certificates—Students’ Army Training Camp—Ambrose Bennett, 1918
7. Church records—Westwood Baptist, Nashville, Tennessee
8. Clippings—Ambrose Bennett
9. Clippings—Fisk University
10. Clippings—Geraldine Bennett Fort
11. Correspondence—A. A. Bennett, 1937-1957
12. Correspondence—Geraldine Fort Hale, 1984
13. Diploma—Dunbar (Okmulgee, OK) High School—Wm. Henry Fort, 1924
14. Estate papers—Ambrose Bennett, 1957
15. Estate papers—Mattie Bennett, 1951

BOX 2
1. Financial documents—Promissory notes—Alice Mai Oglesby
3. Guest register—Anniversary Celebration—William and Geraldine Bennett Fort Hale, 1978
4. Invitations—Miscellaneous
5. Joint Orientation Conference—History, list of participants, photographs, etc., 1950
6. Land records—Deed—Bransford Realty Co., to Ambrose Bennett, et ux, 1950
7. Land records—Deed of Trust—Alice Mai Oglesby to Ambrose Bennett, 1954
8. Land records—Deed of Trust—Alice Mai Oglesby to E. A. Goodloe, 1950
9. Land records—Warranty Deed—J. C. Carter to J. R. Evans, 1950
10. Land records—Warranty Deed—J. R. Evans, et ux, to Ambrose Bennett, et ux, 1944
11. Land records—Warranty Deed—P. L. McConnico, et vir, to Ambrose Bennett, et ux, 1949
12. Legal documents—Indenture—James Dixon and wife to W. W. Wilhoite, 1951
15. Legal documents—Will—Leona I. Hampton, 1948, 1951
16. Legal documents—Will—John Kennedy, 1949
17. Legal documents—Will—Alice Mai Oglesby, 1955
18. Legal documents—Will—Malinda White, 1952
19. Lists—Household articles destroyed by fire at 2712 Meharry Blvd., Sept. 18, 1952
21. Memorials—Mattie Kate Bennett, 1951

**BOX 3**
1. Obituaries—Ambrose A. Bennett (1884-1957)
2. Obituaries—Ambrose A. Bennett, Jr. (1914-1941)
3. Obituaries—Jane E. Benson Fort ( -1938)
4. Obituaries—William Henry Fort, Sr. (1871-1939)

**Microfilm Roll #2**
5. Photographs (4 ½ x 5 ½)—Ambrose A. Bennett—Nashville, Tenn.
6. Photographs (4 ½ x 5 ½)—Baltimore, MD—Joint Orientation Conference, 1950
7. Photographs (5 ½ x 7 ½)—Ambrose A. Bennett—Unknown
8. Photographs (8 ½ x 10)—Allen Family—Unknown

**BOX 4**
   Plaques—“What Is A Mason?”
4. Playlets—Miscellaneous
5. Poetry—Miscellaneous
7. Programs—Anniversary Celebrations, etc.
8. Programs—Annual Women’s Day, Apr. 29, 1973
9. Programs—“The College Woman and The Sorority,” Mar. 4-7, 1957
11. Programs—54th annual Commencement, Fisk Univ., 1928
12. Programs—Funerals—Allen, Smith, and miscellaneous families
13. Programs—Marion Anderson Concert, Feb. 11, 1957
14. Programs—National Home Demonstration Club Week, Apr. 27, 1952

**BOX 5**
1. Publications—Booklet—“The Church With the Finger—Prints of Jesus”
3. Publications—Booklet—“Here’s Zelma”
4. Recommendations—A. A. Bennett
5. School records—Ambrose Bennett
6. School records—Geraldine Bennett
7. School records—Dorothy Fort

**Microfilm Roll #3**

**BOX 6**
1. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“A”
2. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“B”
3. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“C”
4. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“D”
5. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“E”
6. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“F”
7. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“G”
8. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“H”
9. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“I-J-K”
10. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“L”

**Microfilm Roll #4**

**BOX 7**
1. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“M”
2. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“N-O”
3. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“P-Q”
4. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“R”
5. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“S”
6. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“T”
7. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“U-V”
8. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“W”
9. Sermons/Speeches—A. A. Bennett—“X-Y-Z”
11. Writings—Mattie K. Bennett

**BOX 8**
**Oversize**
1. Photographs—Dorothy K. Fort and Jane G. Fort

**BOX 9**
**Oversize**
1. Photographs—Jane Benson Fort
2. Photographs—William Henry Fort, Sr.

**BOX 10**
**Oversize**
1. Scrapbook—School (Fisk University) Memories—William Henry Fort, Jr. 1928
BOX 11

Oversize

1. Certificates—Admirals Club—William H. Fort
2. Certificates—Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority—Mattie Bennett, 1939
5. Certificates—Free Masonry—32 degree—William H. Fort, 1948
7. Certificates—Honorary Sergeant-At-Arms—William H. Fort, 1973
8. Certificates—Meharry Medical College Fund—William Fort, 1973
9. Certificates—Shriners—William H. Fort, 1948
10. Diplomas—A. & I. State Teachers College—Mattie K. Bennett, 1930
11. Diplomas—Columbia University—Geraldine Phillips Bennett, 1934
13. Diplomas—Harvard University—Guiliemum Henricum Fort, CCLXXXXIII
14. Drawing (charcoal)—Ambrose Bennett
15. Paintings—Ambrose A. Bennett
16. Paintings—Miscellaneous (3)
17. Photographs—Tenn. State Univ., Agriculture and Home Economics—Hall of Fame Inductees—Geraldine Fort Hale, 1996
18. Photographs—Unknown (4)
19. Prints—Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, AL (3)