Guide to the Joseph C. Manning letters
MSS.3818

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August 01, 2014
Describing Archives: A Content Standard
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## Summary Information

| **Repository** | University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama |
| **Creator - Author** | Manning, Joseph C., (Joseph Columbus), 1870- |
| **Creator - Correspondent** | Scott, Charles H., Captain |
| **Creator - Correspondent** | Scott, Thomas J. |
| **Title** | Joseph C. Manning letters |
| **Date [bulk]** | Bulk, 1902-1906 |
| **Date [inclusive]** | 1902-1912 |
| **Extent** | 0.1 Linear feet (57 letters, written on letterhead and on versos of broadsides) |
| **General Physical Description note** | Overall, the collection is in very good condition |
| **Language** | English |
| **Abstract** | Letters showing Manning's efforts to stop the disenfranchisement of African American voters in Alabama in early twentieth century. |

### Preferred Citation note

Joseph C. Manning letters, University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama
Biographical/Historical note

Joseph Columbus Manning, son of Henry Allen and Martha B. Manning, was born on May 21, 1870, in Lineville, Alabama. Growing up in rural Alabama, he witnessed how continually declining cotton prices forced many of his father's (a general supply merchant) customers to lose their lands and become tenant farmers or sharecroppers. This influenced Manning's early support of populist agrarian movements. After graduating from the Florence Normal School (now the University of North Alabama) in 1888, he moved to Texas where he worked as a book salesman.

In 1891, he returned to the Deep South, moving to Atlanta, where he was a supporter of the radical agricultural and political reformer Thomas E. Watson and the People's Party (or Populists). In 1892, he was sent by the party leaders back to Alabama as an "evangel," or political organizer. His job was to create enthusiasm for the movement and to recruit new members. He was an effective organizer, but many of his efforts were undermined by extensive voter fraud in Alabama's Black Belt counties.

He married Zoe Duncan in 1894; the couple had three sons and two daughters. Also in 1894, Manning was elected to the state House of Representatives from Clay County. He was able to engineer a 1894 convention that merged the Jeffersonian Democrats and the People's Party. Speaking in northern cities, he managed to embarrass the Bourbon Democrats by exposing their fraudulent election practices, but no good came of it. Rather than a U.S. Senate investigation, the hope of any reformist party in Alabama was completely shattered when thousands of farmers voted for Williams Jennings Bryan, a candidate of the Free Silver wing of the Democratic Party. When he faced the fact that the Populist movement was - to all intents and purposes - over in Alabama, Manning became a Republican.

Manning secured an appointment as postmaster of Alexander City, Alabama, from President William McKinley's administration. He supported Booker T. Washington's successful effort to undercut the power of Alabama's overtly racist Republican faction. Manning left the postal service when William Howard Taft was elected president in 1908.

Manning spent his remaining years as a lobbyist for civil rights, a journalist for African American newspapers, a correspondent with early leaders of the NAACP, and a commentator on the racial politics of the south in general and of Alabama specifically. Very late in his life, he moved to New York where he died of cancer on May 19, 1930.

Scope and Contents note

The collection is made up of fifty-seven letters written by Manning that show his efforts to stop the disenfranchise ment of the African American voter in the Republican Party of Alabama in the early twentieth century. Most of the letters are written to Captain Charles H. Scott of Montgomery. While some
are written on Southern American letterhead (the newspaper Manning helped begin), many of the letters are written on the versos of copies of broadsides published at the time.

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**Administrative Information**

**Publication Information**

University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama August 1, 2014

**Conditions Governing Access note**

None

**Conditions Governing Use note**

None

**Provenance**

Purchased from Bartleby's Books, 2014

**Processed by**

Martha Bace, 2014

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**Related Materials**

**Related Archival Materials note**

Related materials in:

Thomas J. Scott and Sons records [mss_2552], University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama

Charles H. Scott papers [mss_3060], University Libraries Division of Special Collections, The University of Alabama
Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- Correspondence

Geographic Name(s)

- Alabama--Politics and government

Subject(s)

- Civil rights--Alabama
- Political parties
- Populist Party (Ala.)
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