

Finding aid for the Dr. Eugene S. Browning papers Collection 378

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department

April 2011

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Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Creator	Browning, Eugene S, 1883-1955
Title	Dr. Eugene S. Browning papers
Date [inclusive]	1905-1950s
Extent	2.0 Linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Dr. Eugene Shelley Browning (1883-1955) was a physician in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Browning was the only African American in his 1905 class at the Detroit Medical College. He broke racial barriers by obtaining admitting privileges in Grand Rapids hospitals and is recognized as the pioneer of present day well-baby clinics. Dr. Browning also studied medicine at Lincoln University, the University of Michigan and the University of Vienna, Austria. The collection contains many of his diplomas and certificates, family photographs and a set of letters written by Dr. Browning to his family from Europe in 1926.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

Eugene Shelley Browning was born on October 9, 1883 in Orangeburg, South Carolina. He attended Lincoln University, dedicated to the higher education of African Americans, chartered in 1854 as the Ashmun Institute, changing its name to Lincoln University in 1866. He attended the University of Michigan and the Detroit Medical College, graduating in 1905, the only African American in a class of 54 students. He continued his education throughout his career studying for brief periods in Chicago, New York and at the University of Vienna, Austria, gaining expertise in urology and dermatology

He moved to Grand Rapids in 1906 and began his medical practice with offices located in the Powers Theater building. He broke racial barriers by obtaining admitting privileges in Grand Rapids hospitals. During World War I Dr. Browning taught Red Cross medical training classes. In 1923, Browning opened the Master's Clinic for infants in First Community AME Church, and he donated his time to give physical exams to children attending summer camps in the area.

Frequently asked to be a speaker on health issues at public events, he also lectured at the Grand Rapids Medical College. He was the first African American to serve on the Michigan State Board of Health.

In 1918, Eugene married Gertrude Corbin, daughter of Thomas and Eliza Corbin. They had four children, Kathryn E (Jeffries), Jean C. (Johnson), Shelley May, and Eugene S., Jr., raised in a home at 637 Franklin SE. It was in that home that Dr. Browning died in 1955, shortly after receiving his golden diploma, along with sixteen other members of the class of 1905, from his alma mater, now named Wayne State University College of Medicine.

Scope and Contents note

Contains diplomas, photographs and letters related to Dr. Eugene S. Browning (1883-1955), an African American doctor from Grand Rapids. The bulk of the collection are Dr. Browning's diplomas and a set of letters written by Dr. Browning to his family in the 1926.

Two purses belonging to Gertrude Browning were also included in the accession. The purses were transferred to the Grand Rapids Public Museum.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department April 2011

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Shelley Johnson, accession 2011.020.

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- personal papers

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

Subject(s)

- African American physicians -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- African Americans -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Physicians -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids

Series I: Photographs

Collection Inventory

Series I: Photographs

Scope and Contents note

A few family photographs, ranging from 1914 to the 1940s/1950s. Also includes photographs of diplomas from the Universität Zu Wien (University of Vienna) and New York Skin and Cancer Hospital.

	Box	Folder
Special Course, Eugene Browning, M.D., New York Skin and Cancer Hospital, 1928	1	1
Zeugnis (Certificate), Eugene S. Browning, M.D., Universität Zu Wien (University of Vienna), 1926	1	1
“Sis + Dr.”, Corner Mason and North Ionia Ave, Ira J. Johnson, Jr., July 9, 1914	1	1
Eugene and Gertrude Browning with daughters Kathryn and Jean and friends, July 4, 1923	1	1
Eugene Browning and daughter Jean, late 1940s early 1950s?	1	1
Eugene and Gertrude Browning and daughters Jean and Shelley, late 1940s early 1950s?	1	1

Series II: Letters, Dr. Browning to Gertrude and family

Eugene Browning with daughters, standing Kathryn, seated Jean, circa 1922	1	1
Series II: Letters, Dr. Browning to Gertrude and family 1926		
Scope and Contents note		
A set of letters written by Dr. Browning to his wife and family in 1926, when he studied at the University of Vienna. The letters, although mostly personal, talk about his experiences while traveling and what he is studying.		
	Box	Folder
Letter, April 27, 1926	1	5
Letter, April 30, 1926 [postmark]	1	6
Letter, April 30, 1926 [postmark]	1	14
Letter, May 2, 1926	1	7
Letter, May 31, 1926	1	8
Letter, no date [1926]	1	9
Letter, June 15, 1926	1	10
Letter, August 3, 1926	1	11

Series III: Diplomas and Certificates

Letter, August 9, 1926	1	12
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Telegram, August 14, 1926	1	13
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Series III: Diplomas and Certificates

Scope and Contents note

Original diplomas and certificates awarded to Dr. Browning. Also includes the marriage license and certificate for Eugene and Gertrude Browning.

	Box	Folder
Marriage License and Certificate, Eugene Browning and Gertrude Corbin, 1918	2	1
Life Membership, Eugene S. Browning, M.D., Michigan State Medical Society, 1955	2	2
Lincoln University, Eugene S. Browning, 1900	2	3
Certificate of Medical Registration, Eugene Shelley Browning, State of Michigan, 1905	2	4
Doctoris in arte medica, Eugene Shelley Browning, Detroit Medical College, 1905	2	5
Clinical Bacteriology, Eugene S. Browning, Post Graduate Medical School and Hospital of Chicago, 1920	2	6

Series IV: Miscellaneous

Series IV: Miscellaneous**Scope and Contents note**

This series contains an invitation to a reception at the Browning home in 1920, newspaper articles relating to Dr. Browning and an inventory of the collection prepared by the donor.

	Box	Folder
Invitation to wedding reception, 1920	1	2
Newspaper Articles, 1955	1	3
Inventory prepared by donor	1	4