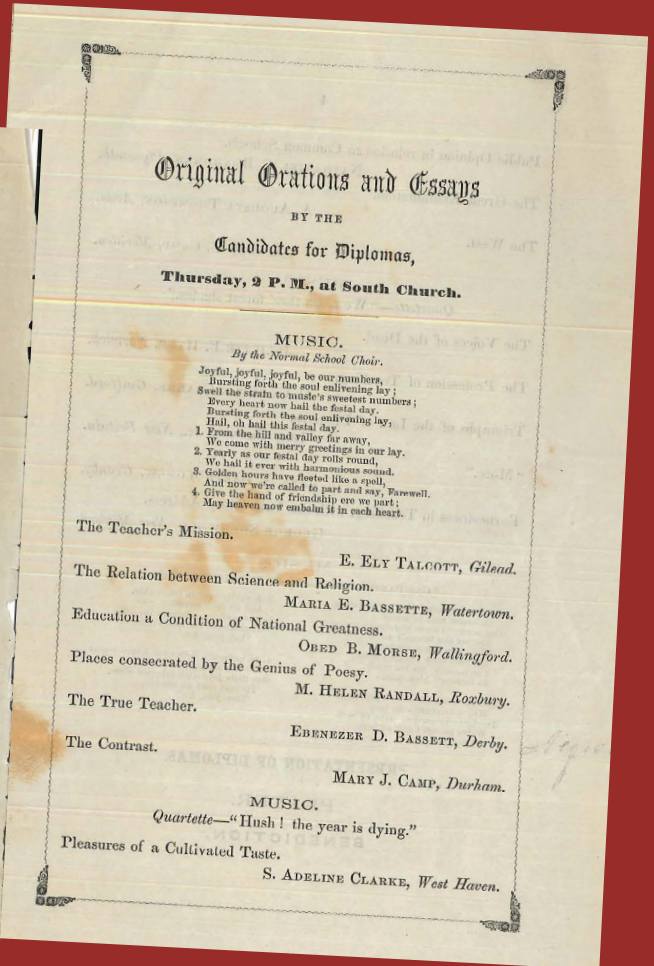
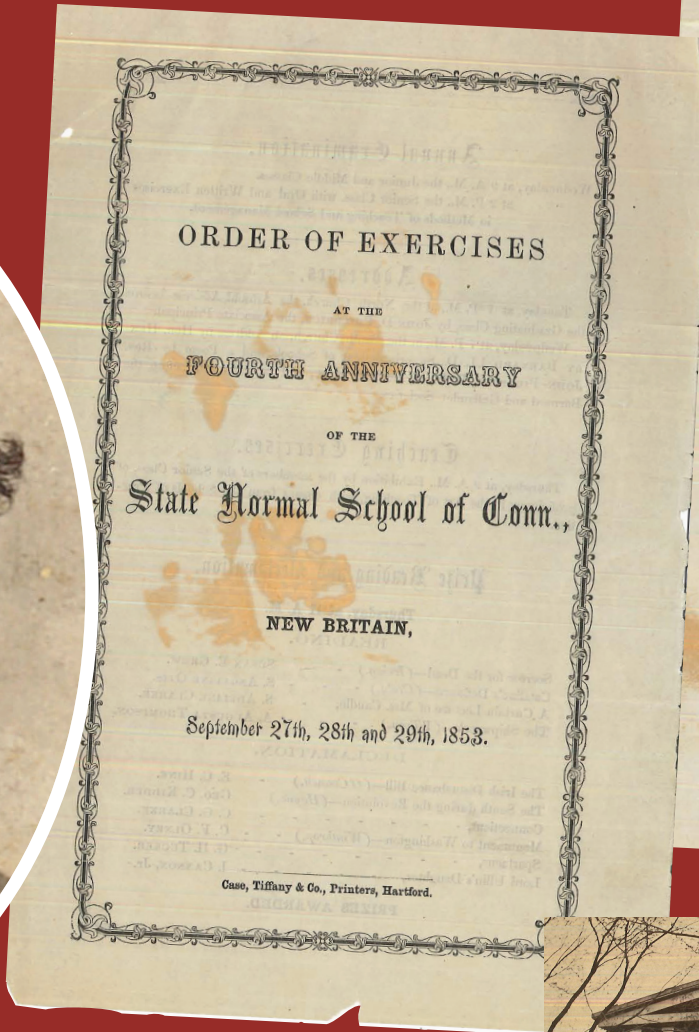
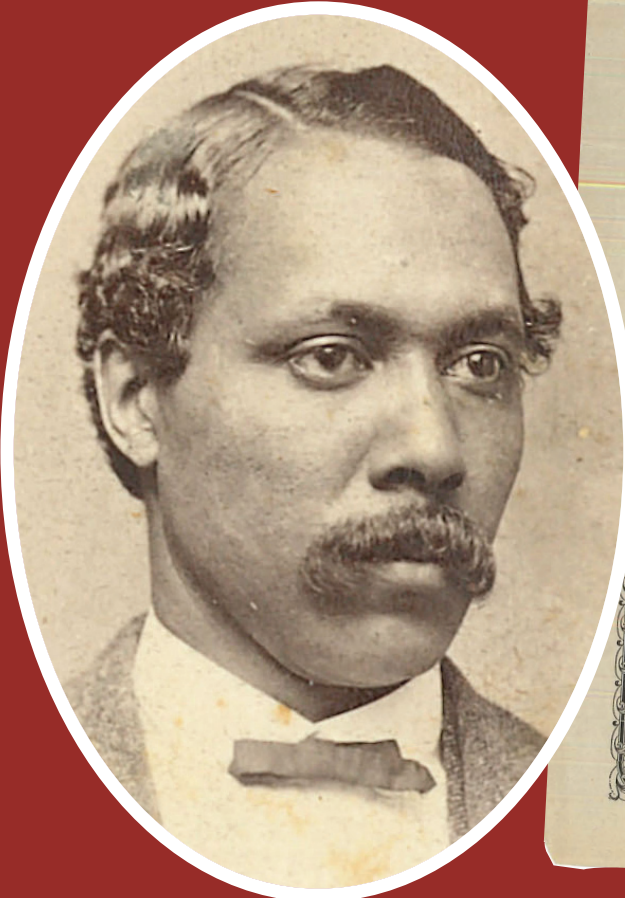


# CONNECTICUT Archives Month, October 2022

## ARCHIVES PRESERVE THE STORIES OF THOSE WHO GO FIRST ...

**Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett** (October 16, 1833 – November 13, 1908) was the first African American to attend and graduate from the Connecticut State Normal School (now Central Connecticut State University). He was an educator, abolitionist, humanitarian, civil rights leader, and close friend of Frederick Douglass. President Ulysses S. Grant appointed him as Minister Resident [United States Ambassador] to Haiti from 1869 to 1877 making him the first African American diplomat.



**Colored Ambassadors.**  
—Two colored men have been appointed to represent the United States abroad. John R. Clay, of Louisiana, was appointed minister resident at Liberia, and Ebenezer D. Bassett, of Connecticut, minister resident at Hayti. The former has declined the honor, while the latter accepts, which facts may, perhaps, be accounted for by the different latitudes they inhabit, refusal of office being unknown to the denizens of Yankeedom. The *Baltimore Sun* gives the following particulars in reference to the appointees:  
"Clay is a resident of New Orleans, and belongs to the upper ten of negro society there. His income is said to be about \$20,000 per annum. He was educated abroad and speaks several languages with great fluency. It is said that the position has been tendered him without his request, and those who know him here have some doubts of his acceptance. Ebenezer D. Bassett, is a Connecticut Yankee, and a scholar of some eminence. He is at present the principal of the Philadelphia high school for colored youths. He, too, is a linguist, and speaks German and French as fluently as he does English. Bassett's nomination was secured through the efforts of George T. Downing, Frederick Douglass and others of that class of colored men. Downing, who keeps the Horse restaurant in the Capitol, was very jubilant when he heard that Bassett's name had come in, and dealt out wine and refreshments to his friends."  
Mr. Lincoln's Sentiments towards Rebels

**OUR CONGO CONSUL—THE GENTLEMAN FROM AFRICA WHO GOES TO AFRICANS.**—The Hon. Ebenezer D. Bassett, Minister Resident and Consul-General of the United States to Hayti, was given a public reception by the colored citizens of New York last evening, at Shiloh Church, corner of Prince and Marion streets. The church, which is not a very large one, was well filled, and quite a delegation of whites dropped in, anxious to catch a glimpse of the black Ambassador. At 8:30 o'clock the honored guest of the evening appeared at the head of a small procession proceeding from the lecture room. He was well dressed in a suit of black, over which he wore a neat and fashionable spring over coat. He carried a glossy silk hat in his right hand, and a small carpet-bag, containing his instructions from the State Department, in the other. On ascending the platform, in company with the pastor and elders of the church, he was greeted with a loud outburst of applause, and several bouquets were presented from female friends. The Ambassador is quite a promising negro, if in fact he may be claimed as a negro, for he is not black, but copper-colored, and wears long hair. He stands about five feet and a half, is squarely built, and his features are quite regular. Bassett was born in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1834, and is, therefore, thirty-five years old. He received quite a liberal education in the Nutmeg State, and lived there until he was grown up. For several years past he has been the principal of the colored schools of Philadelphia.  
The reception last evening was presided over by Professor Wm. P. Powell. The Colored pastor, Rev. Charles B. Ray, made a prayer and gave out several hymns during the meeting, which were sung with much vigor, the dusky audience all rising and joining in the singing. The Ambassador also sang, in a deep bass voice. The welcome address was delivered by John J. Zimmerman. The Haytian Minister then replied in a set speech of about twenty minutes' length, thanked his fellow-citizens for the flattering ovation, and hoped he would faithfully represent their interests.  
*New York World, 26th ult.*



For more information on Ebenezer D. Bassett visit <https://www.ccsu.edu/bassett/biography.html> or <https://diplomacy.state.gov/u-s-diplomacy-stories/ebenezer-d-bassett-champion-of-human-rights/>



Sponsored by the Connecticut State Historical Records Advisory Board [CTSHRAB] and Special Collections and Archives, Elihu Burritt Library, Central Connecticut State University with funding from the Connecticut State Library.

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