

## Collection Contents

RG 196: Records of the Syphax Family, 1920-1993 (17 records)

## RG 196: Records of the Syphax Family, 1920-1993

The name Syphax has been present in northern Virginia since the early 1800s. Some historians believe that Maria Carter Syphax might have been the daughter of George Washington Parke Custis, the grandson of Martha Washington and adopted by George Washington. Maria grew up at Arlington House, the slave of Parke Custis, and married Charles Syphax, another slave owned by Parke Custis. After their marriage, they were granted 17 acres of land which was officially deeded to them by an act of Congress in 1866. William Syphax, one of Maria and Charles' ten children, became the first president of the trustee board of Colored schools in Washington, D.C. This William Syphax was the great-uncle of William Thomas Syphax.

William Thomas Syphax, who was born in Arlington, Virginia, became one of the leading black business entrepreneurs in the 1970s. His wife, Margarite Reed Syphax, was one of the first black business women to be designated a Certified Property Manager. This prominent couple started a real estate and construction business that was recognized in *Black Enterprise's* first list of the 100 Top Black Businesses in 1973. While building his business, William also found the time to get a Masters' Degree in Engineering Administration from George Washington University, and a PhD in Behavioral Philosophy from Pacific Western University. He had earned his Bachelor of Science degree from the Virginia State College for Negroes in 1942 and became its Rector in 1974.

William and Margarite met when both were serving the United States during World War II. William was a Group Electronics Officer in the United States Army Air Corps and Margarite toured as an acrobatic dancer with the USO. When William and Margarite returned to Arlington County after World War II, housing was still heavily segregated. In the early 1950s they started selling real estate and then filled a need by designing and building housing for other black residents who were then living in substandard housing in the area then known as "Johnson Hill" and now called Arlington View; William and Margarite lived at 1327 S Queen St. They also built an apartment complex that had an open rental policy – unlike other apartment buildings at the time that were race restrictive. Photographs of the first houses they built are found in the "The Syphax Story – Getting Started."

Margarite Syphax and Members of the Arlington Metropolitan Chorus Board of Directors

"A Day at the Office -- Working Together"

Wedding Day, 1945

Arlington Bicentennial "Get to Know Your Commission Margarite Syphax" Profile

Northern Virginia Sun March 23, 1972 "Syphax Groundbreaking National Children's Center"

Property Management Certificate

Margarite Syphax 1978 Professional Resume

Margarite Syphax, USO Dancer, 1943

LINKS, Inc. Honoring Margarite Syphax

Letter from Margarite Syphax to LINKS, Inc.

The LINKS, Inc. Honors "Black Women in Business" Program

Margarite Syphax and Female Co-worker

Margarite Syphax and a Mother and Daughter

Margarite Syphax and Female Co-worker, n.d.

Margarite and William Syphax

Margarite Syphax, 1976

Margarite Syphax at Luncheon

**Series 1: William Thomas Syphax, 1920-1989****Subseries 1: Personal Life**

**File 1: Birth and death certificates**

**File 2: Education**

**File 3: United States Army service**

**File 4: Letters to Jessie Thomas Syphax (Mother of William), 1943**

**File 5: Marriage, 1945**

**File 6: Death – Funeral Program and obituaries**

**File 7: Death – Condolence letters**

**File 8: Death – Burial arrangements**

## **Subseries 2: Professional Life**

**File 1: The Syphax Story: Getting Started – Building of Homes, Apartments and Jobs**

**File 2: The Syphax Story: Real Estate -- Black Business – Growing, Finances**

**File 3: The Syphax Story: Black Enterprise**

**File 4: The Syphax Story: Miscellaneous items found in front of binder**

**File 5: Syphax Enterprises – “A Unique Investment Opportunity”**

**File 6: Syphax Enterprises brochure**

**File 7: Phoenix Food Systems, Inc., 1984 – Phoenix Concept for Black Economic Progress**

**File 8: Phoenix Food Systems, Inc., 1984 -- A Unique Investment Opportunity**

**File 9: Phoenix Food Systems, Inc., [n.d.] – Business Concept -- J.J.’s Urban Foodcenter System**

**File 10: Blueprint for Economic Survival – Dissertation (draft) – 2 copies**

**File 11: Copyright Registration for Blueprint for Black Economic Survival, 1983**

**File 12: Vantage Press – Publishing Contract for Blueprint for Black Economic Survival, 1984**

**File 13: Resumes**

**File 14: Letters**

**File 15: Newspaper articles**

## **Series 2: Margarite Reed Syphax (b.1923)**

### **Subseries 1: Education**

### **Subseries 2: Professional Life** (3 records)

Letter from Margarite Syphax to LINKS, Inc.

Property Management Certificate

Margarite Syphax 1978 Professional Resume

**File 1: Certified Property Manager Certificate**

**File 2: Resumes**

**File 3: Honors** (2 records)

The LINKS, Inc. Honors "Black Women in Business" Program

LINKS, Inc. Honoring Margarite Syphax

**File 4: Newspaper articles**

## **Series 3: Photographs**

**File 1: William Thomas Syphax**

**File 2: Margarite Reed Syphax**

**File 3: Group photographs**

## **Series 4: Other Syphax Family Members**

**File 1: Jessie Thomas Syphax (1895-1984)**

**File 2: Archie Douglas Syphax (1921-1988)**

**File 3: Evelyn Frances Reid Syphax (1926-2000)**

**Series 5: History of Syphax Family**

**File 1: Maria Carter Syphax (1803?-1886)**

**File 2: William Syphax (1825-1891)**

**Series 6: Magazines**

**File 1: Black Enterprise, June 1973 (2 copies)**

**File 2: Black Enterprise, June 1975 (2 copies)**

**File 3: Black Enterprise, June 1976 and August 1976**

**File 4: Black Enterprise, June 1977 (2 copies)**

**File 5: Black Enterprise, November 1978 and January 1982**

**File 6: Black Enterprise, June 1973**

**File 7: Ebony, August 1977**

**Series 7: Miscellaneous Personal Items**

**College diploma of WTS – Virginia State College for Negroes, Ettrick, Virginia, 1942**

**Certificate of Merit to MRS – Virginia State College, Petersburg, Virginia, 1978**

**Dog tag of WTS**

**Drivers' licenses of WTS and MRS**

**US Civil Service Commission Annuitant Identification Card of WTS**

**Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., life membership card of WTS**

**Inter-Service Club Council, Past Recipient Man of the Year plaque, 2000**