



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Knights of Pythias files**

1914-1974

Sc MG 504

## Summary

**Creator:** Knights of Pythias

**Title:** Knights of Pythias files

**Date:** 1914-1974

**Size:** 19 linear feet (14 record cartons, 3 flat boxes)

**Source:** Gift, Denise Lamaute, 1988

**Abstract:** In 1869, the Knights of Pythias Supreme Lodge held a meeting in Richmond, Virginia, to discuss instituting a charter for an African-American lodge. Although the charter was denied, it prompted black men to create their own fraternal lodge. Dr. Thomas W. Stringer, was the founder of the black Order known as the "Supreme Lodge Knights of Pythias of North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa" (KPNSAEAA). Around 1880, the first black Orders were established in Mississippi: Lightfoot Lodge No. 1, Meridian Lodge No. 2 and Damon Lodge No. 3. KPNSAEAA's membership grew steadily. By 1897, 40,000 men had been initiated, including those in the West Indies and Central America; however, the majority of members were in the United States. The collection is primarily comprised of ledgers containing financial records, minutes and annual reports for the various lodges. The ledgers are organized by lodge, except for several oversized ledgers from different lodges that are housed together due to their size. Consult the finding aid for further details about specific lodges.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Knights of Pythias files, Sc MG 504, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

## Creator History

In 1869, the Knights of Pythias Supreme Lodge held a meeting in Richmond, Virginia, to discuss instituting a charter for an African-American lodge. Although the charter was denied, it prompted black men to create their own fraternal lodge. Dr. Thomas W. Stringer, was the founder of the black Order known as the "Supreme Lodge Knights of Pythias of North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa" (KPNSAEAA). Around 1880, the first black Orders were established in Mississippi: Lightfoot Lodge No. 1, Meridian Lodge No. 2 and Damon Lodge No. 3. KPNSAEAA's membership grew steadily. By 1897, 40,000 men had been initiated, including those in the West Indies and Central America; however, the majority of members were in the United States.

## Scope and Content Note

The collection is primarily comprised of ledgers containing financial records, minutes and annual reports for the various lodges. The ledgers are organized by lodge, except for several oversized ledgers from different lodges that are housed together due to their size. Consult the finding aid for further details about specific lodges.

Of particular note are the death claim files and beneficiary applications, which hold membership information across all lodges including the Sojourna Household of Ruth, an auxiliary of the Order. Additionally, there are administrative documents belonging to the governing bodies i.e., the Master of Works Council #1 and the Pycal Holding Corporation, publications created by the different lodges and the Sojourna Household of Ruth, as well as miscellaneous paraphernalia.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American fraternal organizations  
African American fraternal organizations -- Virginia -- Richmond  
African American Greek letter societies  
African Americans -- Social life and customs  
Women in charitable work -- United States

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Annual reports  
Ledgers  
Minutes

### Geographic Names

Richmond (Va.) -- Societies and clubs

### Names

Brave Club (New York, N.Y.)  
Grand United Order of Odd Fellows. Excelsior Lodge No. 7335  
Household of Ruth. Sojourna Lodge  
Knights of Pythias  
Knights of Pythias of North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia  
Knights of Pythias. Emanuel Lodge No. 3  
Knights of Pythias. Grand Lodge  
Knights of Pythias. Majestic Lodge No. 7  
Knights of Pythias. Manhattan Lodge No. 55  
Knights of Pythias. Master of Works Council No. 1  
Knights of Pythias. Reserve Fund Department  
Knights of Pythias. St. Paul Lodge No. 63