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Letter, June 1882, written from Buffalo, New York by Johnson Chesnut Whittaker (1858–1931) to Martin I. Townsend (1810–1903) informs the recipient of his upcoming trip to Troy, New York, and describes his kind treatment in Buffalo. Whittaker informed Townsend that he had been asked to “repeat my lecture here,” which meant that he would not arrive in Troy until the following week. He hoped that he would be able to secure the opera house in Troy to deliver a lecture and would be “more than pleased to have you preside.” Whittaker concluded his letter by declaring that unlike in “snobby West Point,” in Buffalo he had been “*made to feel that I am a man.*”

Johnson C. Whittaker was born enslaved on Magnolia, the Chesnut family plantation near Camden, South Carolina, before studying at the University of South Carolina when the institution was integrated during Reconstruction. In 1876, he received an appointment to the United States Military Academy in West Point, becoming only the third Black cadet in the institution’s history. In April 1880, Whittaker was violently assaulted by white classmates, but authorities determined that he had inflicted the injuries upon himself, and he was subsequently found guilty by a court of inquiry. In March 1882, President Chester A. Arthur invalidated the trial and released Whittaker from arrest. He embarked on a speaking tour of New York shortly after his release. Whittaker returned to South Carolina in the mid-1880s, where he studied law and taught at the Avery Institute and what is now South Carolina State University. In 1908 he left South Carolina for Oklahoma where he taught high school but returned to his native state in 1925.

Martin Ingham Townsend was a lawyer and Republican politician who was appointed to manage Whittaker’s inquiry on behalf of the federal government by President Rutherford B. Hayes. **Acquired for the Library by the University South Caroliniana Society and through the John C Hungerpillar Library Research Fund and the Lumpkin Foyer Endowment Fund at the South Caroliniana Library.**