



Smithsonian

Anacostia Community Museum

Geneva Townes Turner Papers

ACMA.06-069

Kendra Jae

Funding for partial processing of the collection was supported by a grant from the Smithsonian Institution's Collections Care and Preservation Fund (CCPF).

2017 July



Anacostia Community Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Anacostia Community Museum Archives
Title:	Geneva Townes Turner Papers
Date:	1895-1999 (bulk 1930-1970)
Identifier:	ACMA.06-069
Creator:	Turner, Geneva Calcier
Extent:	1.8 Cubic feet (consisting of 1 box and 3 oversized flat boxes.)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection, which dates from circa 1895-1999, contains the personal papers of Geneva Townes Turner and documents her family and her life with Dr. Lorenzo Dow Turner. Materials include clippings, correspondence, marriage certificates, photographs, portraits, programs and scrapbooks.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated by Eugene Townes in 2010.

Related Archival Materials

Lorenzo Dow Turner papers in the Anacostia Community Museum Archives.

Processing Information

In 2016, with funding provided by the Smithsonian Institution's Collections Care and Preservation Fund, the Archives at the Anacostia Community Museum implemented the use of minimal level processing standards to increase information about and facilitate access to more of our collections. For this subject, minimal processing included arrangement to the folder level, based on prior processing and preservation action, with retention of the pre-existing arrangement when possible, if applicable. Otherwise, an order was imposed by the Processing Archivist. Some materials were consolidated to eliminate excess bulk but items within folders were not arranged further. The guide may or may not include a more refined lists of folder contents. Non-archival housing was replaced for long-term stability, but staples and other fasteners have not all been removed.

Minimal level processing and machine-readable finding aid completed by Kendra Jae, 2017 July.

Preferred Citation

Geneva Townes Turner Papers, Anacostia Community Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Eugene Townes.

Restrictions

Use of the materials requires an appointment. Please contact the archivist at acmarchives@si.edu.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical Note

Geneva Calcier Townes Turner was born August 13, 1893 in Warren, Virginia to Edlow Anderson Townes and Letitia Polina Coleman Townes.

She moved to Washington D.C. in 1902. She graduated from Myrtilla Miner Normal School in 1916 after receiving training to teach and later took additional graduate courses in teaching methodology at Howard University. She was appointed to the Washington D.C. Public School System in September 1916 at the Garfield School and taught elementary school students.

In 1919, she married former Howard University classmate Lorenzo Dow Turner, who was an academic and linguist. Lorenzo Turner's work included groundbreaking research on the Gullah language of coastal South Carolina, Georgia, and the Sea Islands. Geneva Townes Turner assisted in making recordings of the Gullah dialect, and served as her husband's associate and scribe during this time. She took phonetics courses to prepare for the research. The pair separated with the intention of divorcing in 1938. Townes Turner returned to Washington D.C.

In 1941, Townes Turner collaborated with Elise P. Derricotte and Jessie H. Roy in writing a book titled *Word Pictures of the Great* and was later revised in 1961 to *Word Pictures of Great Negroes*. She also co-authored a book titled *Pioneers of Long Ago* in 1953. Additionally, Townes Turner was instrumental in establishing the Washington Conservatory of Music and School of Expression.

Geneva Townes Turner died in 1983 at the age of 89.

Scope and Contents

The papers of Geneva Townes Turner measure 1.8 cubic feet and date from 1895 to 1999 with the bulk of material dating from 1930 to 1970. Included are biographical files, writings, correspondence, scrapbooks, photographs, and monographs and booklets.

Biographical files include records from Townes Turner's life and records of her family members. These include vital documents and related correspondence, scrapbooks, family member lists, and awards. Scrapbooks feature photographs and texts that are related to Townes Turner's relatives and herself.

Writings include miscellaneous handwritten material in a journal that includes allegories and myths. The original journal is in fragile condition. Use photocopies of some pages are present.

Correspondence includes personal and professional cards and letters. Correspondents include Townes Turner's father Edlow Townes, and letters to Townes Turner's nephew Eugene, and unspecified correspondence from Lyon, Roache and Horan Title Settlements Incorporated.

Photographs feature personal snapshots of individuals and groups, plus one image of a wedding. Individuals in the photographs are not identified.

Monographs and booklets consist of the publication *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* by Lorenzo Dow Turner that Geneva Townes Turner assisted in researching, and small booklets of writings by Silas N. Berry.

Arrangement

The Geneva Townes Turner Papers are arranged in 5 series.

Series 1: Biographical Files

Series 2: Writings

Series 3: Correspondence

Series 4: Photographs

Series 5: Monographs and Booklets

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Types of Materials:

- Clippings
- Correspondence
- Marriage certificates
- Photographs
- Portraits
- Programs
- Scrapbooks

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Files, 1895-1999

Scope and Contents: Material related to the life and family history of Geneva Townes Turner. Includes scrapbooks featuring photographs and texts related to Townes Turner and relatives, copies of vital documents and correspondence, Townes Turner's autobiographical account of her life and family tree, and awards for outstanding service.

Scrapbooks, 1895-1967, undated

Notes: Scrapbooks assembled by Townes Turner and originally housed in individual boxes with subjects labeled. Volumes include photographs of Geneva Townes Turner, her father Edlow A. Townes, and other relatives. Scrapbooks also include collected texts and programs.

Oversize 2	Turner, Geneva C.T., 1910-1967 Notes: Labeled "Geneva C.T. Turner." Includes portraits of Townes Turner, event programs, and group pictures photographed outdoors with unidentified individuals.
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Oversize 3	Townes, Edlow A., 1895-1918 Notes: Labeled "Edlow A. Townes." Includes portraits of Edlow A. Townes, written quotes, copies of poems, and a school report card for Townes Turner.
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Oversize 3	Relatives, undated Notes: Labeled "Relatives." Features black and white portraits of unknown individuals.
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Vital Documents, 1919-1976

Notes: Includes copies of vital documents and correspondence related to birth, employment, marriage, and divorce as well as a copy of Townes Turner's passport. Vital documents related to the marriage and divorce of her sister Justine Townes Maloney have been filed separately.

Box 1, Folder 1	Birth Records, 1937 Notes: Two birth record affidavits issued by the Notary Public for the District of Columbia attesting that Letitia P. Townes is the mother of Geneva Townes Turner and Justine Townes Maloney.
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Box 1, Folder 2	Divorce Records, 1967-1976 Notes: Correspondence and document copies related to Geneva Townes Turner's divorce from Lorenzo Dow Turner. Includes Appearance on Proof of Will and Waiver of Interest in Estate related to the estate of Lorenzo Dow Turner following his death, and Release of Dower related to subdivision lots. Correspondence between the attorney
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Julian B. Wilkins and Geneva Townes Turner address a missing divorce decree. Townes Turner describes how Lorenzo Down Turner filed for divorce in Nashville, Tennessee in 1937 however in 1967 she discovered that the decree had not been completed. In lieu of a divorce decree copy, Townes Turner provided the Proof of Will and Waiver of Interest in Estate.

Box 1, Folder 3	Divorce of Justine Townes Maloney, 1931-1932 Notes: Includes correspondence related to Justine Townes Maloney's divorce from Charles Franklin Maloney and changing her last name back to her maiden name, and a copy of the divorce decree.
Box 1, Folder 4	Employment Records, 1939-1954 Notes: Contains application and approval for retirement from the Board of Education of the District of Columbia as well as listed beneficiaries provided to the Public Schools of the District of Columbia.
Box 1, Folder 5	Marriage Records, 1919 Notes: Certificate of Marriage issued to Geneva Townes Turner and Lorenzo Dow Turner.
Box 1, Folder 6	Marriage of Justine Townes Maloney, 1933 Notes: Marriage certificate of Justine Townes' marriage to James H. Fletcher issued in Stafford, Virginia.
Box 1, Folder 7	Passport, 1937 Notes: Passport of Geneva Townes Turner, issued in 1937. Note accompanying passport informs that the passport is not valid for travel in Spain.
	Family Research Files, undated Notes: Autobiographical narrative about Geneva Townes Turner's life including information about her early life, education, and marriage. Includes Townes Turner's list of relatives and a drawing of her family tree. Material also includes transcribed and printed recreations of the family tree and photocopies of original documents.
Box 1, Folder 8	Biographical Sketch, undated Notes: Written accounts of the life of Geneva Townes Turner. Most accounts are autobiographical. One item features a sketch portrait and short biographical note about Townes Turner published by the Associated Publishers for an unknown project.
Box 1, Folder 9	Family Tree and Relatives List, undated Notes: Lists of family members, sketches of family trees, and a typed transcription of a family tree.

Box 1, Folder 10

Awards, 1964

Notes:

Award certificates from the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated for outstanding service to Zeta and to the Washington D.C. community.

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Series 2: Writings, undated

Scope and Contents: Contains handwritten material written by Geneva Townes Turner. Includes an original journal labeled "Essays" and photocopies. Writings include allegories and myths.

Box 1, Folder 11	Essays, undated Notes: Use photocopies of select pages from Townes Turner's journal labeled "Essays."
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Oversize 4	Essays, undated Notes: Townes Turner's original journal labeled "Essays." Journal is in fragile condition.
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Series 3: Correspondence, 1914-1999

Scope and Contents: Includes Christmas card, unspecified correspondence from Lyon, Roache and Horan Title Settlements Incorporated related to a claim statement, correspondence to Geneva Townes Turner's nephew Eugene, and correspondence from Townes Turner to her father.

Box 1, Folder 12 Correspondence, 1914-1999

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Series 4: Photographs, 1939-1948, undated

Scope and Contents: Includes images of individuals or groups outside of houses, standing on lawns, standing beside landmarks, and one image of a wedding. Individuals are not identified.

Box 1, Folder 13 Photographs, 1939-1948, undated

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Series 5: Monographs and Booklets, 1935-1949, undated

Scope and Contents: Collected books and small independent publications. Includes writings of Silas N. Berry, and the publication *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* by Lorenzo Dow Turner that Geneva Townes Turner assisted in researching.

Box 1, Folder 14 *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, 1949
Notes: Written by Lorenzo Dow Turner and published in 1949. Handwritten note inside cover reads "To Geneva with kindest regards of Lorenzo, August 5, 1949."

Box 1, Folder 15 *Memories of Reverend R.D. Merchant*, 1935
Notes: Compiled by Silas N. Berry.

Box 1, Folder 16 *School Life and Other Incidents in the Life of Silas Nashpy Berry*, undated
Notes: Autobiography. Includes list of former students, sheet music, and portrait of Berry.

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