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SARAH WILLIAMSON COLEMAN Papers
Collection 204-1 to 204-2

Prepared by
Zora Martin Felton
March 2001

MANUSCRIPT DIVISION

Scope Note

Sarah Williamson Coleman 1899-1986, missionary and educator, devoted her life to service in America and abroad.

In 1922 she began her missionary work in Liberia for the Missionary Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. Assigned first to the Bible Industrial Academy in Grand Bassa, she was later sent to the Seuhn Industrial Mission where she completed her tenure. At Seuhn, she cleared away much of the brush surrounding the Mission, dug its first well, set up its first laundry, built a dining hall, and started a cattle raising program. With the help of Mrs. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. Mrs. Coleman was also able to erect additional new buildings on the site.

Temporarily called back to the United States during the Depression by the Convention's Missionary Board, she helped raise funds and then returned to her post in Seuhn, where she served until 1932.

Mrs. Coleman later became the director of education for the Retreat for Foreign Missionaries, a gift to the Foreign Mission Board by the Woman's Convention of the National Baptist Convention. The Retreat was under the direction of Dr. Nannie Helen Burroughs. Located in northeast Washington, D.C., the Retreat was a center for foreign missionaries and diplomats, and guests of the State Department who wished to rest and recuperate, study, or participate in conferences and institutes. It was also the headquarters for the Missionary Committee of the Woman's Committee.

Scope Note continued

The papers reflect Mrs. Coleman's wide-ranging missionary activities, including primarily photographs and slides documenting her work in Liberia. They span the period from 1953 to 1983.

The papers were donated by E. Pauline Myer in 1986.

Biographical Sketch

Sarah Williamson Coleman

1899 December 8 Born in Norfolk, VA on December 8 to Eli and Kizzie Williamson.

n.d. Attended the Hampton University Normal School and the University of Rochester.

n.d. Married the Rev. Roger W. Coleman of Selma, Alabama.

n.d. Served as the Columbus (Ohio) YWCA Secretary.

1922 Made her first missionary voyage to West Africa for the Missionary Board of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. Assigned first to the Bible Industrial Academy at Grand Bassa, and later to the Seuhn Industrial Mission, both in Liberia.

1932 Left Seuhn Industrial School to return to Washington, D.C.

n.d Served as administrator of the National Baptist Retreat for Foreign Missionaries, located at 1022 Maryland Avenue, N.E.

1973-1983 Although officially retired, she continued to work as the program coordinator for senior citizens' programs at Crawford Hall in the Edgewood Terrace Senior Citizens Program in Washington, D.C.

1986 November 19 Died in Washington, D.C. on November 19, at the age of 86.

Source: Sarah Coleman Papers, MSRC

Series Description

Series A

Box 204-1

Personal Papers

Highlights include Mrs. Coleman's funeral program and her booklet describing various African missions. Also includes brochures of The Retreat for Foreign Missionaries, and a study of the controversy between Nannie Helen Burroughs' school trustees and the Women's Convention.

Series B

Box 204-1

Awards, Certificates

Contains numerous awards and certificates for her work in the community and with senior citizens.

Series C

Box 204-1

Photographs and Slides

Contains photographs of numerous individuals affiliated with Mrs. Coleman, including Nannie Helen Burroughs and others. Also includes photos of visitors and activities at the Retreat for Foreign Missionaries. Slides are primarily of people, programs and buildings in Africa, ca. 1956; and of The Retreat in Washington, D.C., ca. 1953-1961.

Series D

Box 204-2

Audio Tapes

Consists primarily of speeches by Mrs. Coleman.

Container List

| Series A | | Personal Papers |
|--------------------------|-------------|--|
| Box 204-1 | Folder 1 | Funeral Program of Sarah Williamson Coleman Solicitation letter from Mrs. Coleman regarding dedication of the Edgewood Terrace Apartments Community Hall, 1974; "Africa Today" Missions in Africa) by Mrs. Coleman, 1962; Invitation to surprise salute for Mrs. Coleman, 1983; Peace Corps Training Program manual, 1962; "Lost Equity," a study of the status of the National Trade and Professional School, Inc. and its relationship to the Woman's Convention, by Eunice V. Baker, 1962; brochures of the Retreat for Foreign Missionaries. |
| Series B 204-1 | 2 | Awards, Certificates Certificates from Senior Neighbors and Companions Club, 1969 and 1977 Certificate of Award from National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1962 (two) Certificate for Outstanding Community Service, 1982 Certificate from Crawford Edgewood Managers, Inc., 1982 Health Advocate Course Completion Certificate, 1974 Mayoral Citation, 1974 Notable Americans plaque, 1976-1977 Edgewood Senior Citizens award plaque for service from 1973-1983 |
| Series C 204-1 | 3 | Photographs and Slides Mrs. Coleman, n.d. (four photographs) Mrs. Coleman, 1973, 1976, 1983 Mrs. Coleman and unidentified female, n.d. Mrs. Coleman and unidentified female, n.d. Mrs. Coleman and unidentified male, n.d. Mrs. Baker, Mrs. ? Gaines, Mrs. Lady Bird Johnson, and Mrs. Coleman, n.d., (two photographs) Mrs. Coleman and First Annual Baptist Leadership Conference participants, 1962 (3 photographs) Mrs. Coleman entertaining in her apartment, n.d. Mrs. Coleman at Zion Baptist Church, Denver, Colorado, 1965 (four photographs) |

intelligible)

10 Conversation among Mrs. Coleman, and unidentified Woman, n.d.