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### TURNER, Geneva Townes

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Geneva Townes Turner Papers  
Collection 212-1 to 212-3

Zora Martin Felton  
April 2004

MANUSCRIPT DIVISION

## Scope Note

The papers of Geneva Townes Turner primarily detail the successful collaborative efforts of three elementary school educators and the Associated Publishers of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) in publishing and distributing two children's books between 1941 and 1969. Of interest are numerous typed and handwritten drafts, galley sheets, financial records, reviews, and correspondence among the writers and the Associated Publishers. The collection also contains scrapbooks, Howard University yearbooks, photographs, plaques and award certificates, diplomas, Alpha Kappa Alpha and Zeta Phi Beta sorority memorabilia, and television and radio scripts by the author.

Also included are diplomas and awards for Justine Townes Maloney, sister of Geneva Turner as well as diplomas belonging to Edward A. Townes and dating back to 1882 from Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute.

The papers were donated to MSRC by Eugene Maloney in 1993. They comprise 3 linear feet.

Mrs. Turner, at the time an elementary school teacher at the George Bell Elementary School in southwest Washington, teamed with fellow teacher Jessie Hailstalk Roy and their administrative principal Elise Palmer Derricotte. The two teachers wrote the stories for both books under the direction of Dr. Carter G. Woodson of ASNLH and from facts he had supplied them. Mrs. Derricotte wrote the preface and forwards. The renowned African American artist Lois Mailou Jones served as illustrator for the first book and also agreed to illustrate the second.

### Scope Note continued

The first book, published in 1941, was titled *Word Pictures of the Great*. The Washington Star newspaper called it "inspirational, entertaining, and informative." On the other hand, the Afro-American newspaper surprisingly suggested that Mrs. Jones's thirty black and white illustrations "do not measure up to the well planned scholarly book itself." The later revised and expanded edition (1964) was retitled *Word Pictures of Great Negroes* and sold for \$1.50.

Financial records are meticulously recorded and annual royalties ranging from \$3.77 to \$212.72 over the years are duly noted.

The second book, *Pioneers of the Great*, was published in 1951 and sold for \$4.00. Dr Carter G. Woodson himself wrote the foreword. According to the authors, the books "were not informational, but inspirational to avoid biographical sequence." They were stories with plots designed to hold the interest of children. Accordingly, the three educators held weekly meetings to review and critique the materials.

The correspondence shows the wide involvement of Association officials of the times: Carter G. Woodson, Benjamin Quarles, Benjamin Mays, Charles Wesley and others. Important local school officials are also included: Garnet C. Wilkinson, A. Kiger Savoy, Edith A. Lyons, and Alice B. Finlayson.

Active in community life, Mrs. Turner served as chairperson of the board of trustees of the Washington Conservatory of Music and School of Expression, and as the editor of the church bulletin of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church. She was a member of the Zeta Phi Beta

Sorority, Inc., and contributed regularly to the *Negro History Bulletin* published by the

Scope Note continued

Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

Mrs. Turner traveled extensively with her husband, and continued her studies in music and French. Working with her husband, she studied the international phonetic system, and the Gullah dialect on the islands off Georgia and South Carolina, making recordings of their songs and their speeches. She further studied literature and English at Chicago University and Brown University.

## Biographical Sketch

- 1893 August 13      Born Geneva Calcier Townes, daughter of Edlow A. Townes and Letitia Polina Coleman Townes in Warren, Albermarle County, Virginia.
- 1910                      Graduated from M Street High School, Washington, D.C.
- 1914                      Graduated cum laude from Howard University College of Arts and Sciences.
- 1916                      Graduated at the top of her class from the Myrtilla Minor Normal School, Washington, D.C.
- Appointed to teach school at the Garfield Elementary School, D.C. public schools.
- 1919                      Married (Dr.) Lorenzo Dow Turner, an M Street School classmate.
- 1937                      Traveled abroad with husband to France, England, Scotland.
- 1938                      Divorced Lorenzo Dow Turner.
- 1941                      Co-authored *Word Pictures of the Great*.
- 1945                      Began serving as editor of the weekly bulletin of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church of Washington, D.C.
- 1951                      Co-authored *Pioneers of Long Ago*.
- 1952-1956              Served on the editorial staff of the *Negro History Bulletin* of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.
- 1954                      Retired from the Bell-Fairbrother Elementary School of the D.C. public school system.
- 1983                      Died in June.

Source: Geneva Townes Turner Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center

## Series Description

- Series A**  
Box 212-1
- Family and Personal Papers**  
This series contains biographical sketches, Turner's marriage license, academic records: letters of recommendation, and award certificates for sister, Justine Maloney; programs and other printed material from Howard University, Myrtilla Miner Normal School, M Street High School and other institutions, such as the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Also included are news clippings about local figures and issues, and programs.
- Series B**  
Box 212-1
- Correspondence**  
Personal correspondence, invitations to speak, and correspondence related to her writings from the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and Others. Also contains correspondence of Justine Maloney.
- Series C**  
Box 212-1
- Writings by Turner**  
Found here are a documentary, "Unto the Least of These"; a script for a television play, "The Past is Present"; other radio and television scripts, some of which were assignments for a class at American University; lesson plans and class notes; short biographical sketches of notable African Americans after whom some local schools were named; and speeches.
- Series D**  
Box 212-1  
to Box 212-2
- Writings by Turner and Jessie Hailstalk Roy**  
Contains various versions, galley proofs and edited copies of the two books  
*Word Pictures of the Great* and *Pioneers of Long Ago*, as well as a script for a television documentary titled "Bridging the Gap."
- Series E**  
Box 212-2
- Financial and Contractual Records**  
Contains the financial records related to the publication of the two books.
- Series F**  
Box 212-2  
to Box 212-3
- Photographs**  
Photographs show sorors of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority attending a 1927 regional conference; and a Scurlock photograph of Shaw Junior High School teachers at lunch in 1935. Two disassembled scrapbooks, containing photographs and other ephemera, describe the Turners' travels in Europe and her retirement celebration.

Series Description continued

**Series G**  
Box 212-3

**Oversize**

Includes rolled diplomas of Justine Maloney, Geneva Townes and Edward Townes, and memorabilia from the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.



Container List

<b>Series A</b>		<b>Family and Personal Papers</b>
Box	Folder	
212-1	1	Biographical material
	2	Howard University letters of recommendations from Kelly Miller, G. David Houston Howard University academic record, 1914 Myrtilla Miner Normal School academic record, 1914-15 Marriage license of Justine Townes Maloney and Charles F. Maloney,
1923		Columbia University Academic records, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1936
	3	Certificates and Awards - Geneva C. Turner The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History of Appreciation, 1978 Nineteenth Street Baptist Church: Pastoral Citation (1946); Certificate of Reconsecration (1967); Certificate of Appreciation (1975)
Certificate	4	Award Certificates - Justine Maloney United States Navy Certificate of Appreciation United Givers Fund Award of Merit Membership: Nova Scotia Order of the Good Time The War Hospitality Committee certificate
	5	Printed Matter <i>Negro History Bulletin</i> , 1965 Commencement Bulletin (Justine Townes), 1937 Howard University Alma Mater M Street High School drama program, 1911
	6	Programs Banquet of the Junior Class, College of Arts and Sciences, Howard University, 1914 Book Fair, Junior High School 181, Baltimore, Maryland, 1954 Annual Commencement, Myrtilla Miner Normal School, 1916 Tuskegee Alumni Club Rose Bud Musical Tea, 1955 The Negro History Study Group of Division Thirteen, 1942
<b>Series B</b>		<b>Correspondence</b>
	7	A-Z Butler, Grace, n.d. Derrick, G.E., and Smith, J.H., 1942

Container List

<b>Series B</b>		<b>Correspondence</b> continued
Box	Folder	
212-1	7	Decamatrons Jones, Lois Mailou, 1944 Lash, Irving P., 1959 Phyllis Wheatley YWCA Quarles, Benjamin, 1964 Roach, Sammie, 1965 Turner, Geneva, 1962, 1969 Watkins, Elise Z. 1946 Wilkinson, Garnett C., 1946 Wilson, Beth P. Werner, H.O., 1953 Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
	8	Correspondence - Association for the Study of Negro Life and History Brewer, 1961 Mehlinger, Louis B, 1950, 1951 Quarles, Benjamin, 1964 Wesley, Charles H., 1954, 1963, 1969,1970 Woodson, Carter G., 1941, 1946
<b>Series C</b>		<b>Writings by Turner</b>
	9	Radio and TV Writing (American University classwork)
	10	"When Past is Present," "Unto the Least of These"
	11	Negro History WOOK radio script
	12	Lesson Plans and Class Notes Notes on American literature, games, music, the modern house
	13	Speech, Word Pictures of the Great, an inspirational talk before school group
<b>Series D</b>		<b>Writings by Turner and Jessie H. Roy</b>
	14	"Bridging a Gap," a documentary for television, n.d.
	15	<i>Word Pictures of the Great</i> typescript
212-2	1	Reviews, critiques of Word Pictures of the Great, 1941
	2	Pioneers of Long Ago galley sheets
	3	Pioneers of Long Ago - various versions, with bibliography, vocabulary list, questions, activities, 1945

## Container List

<b>Series D</b>		<b>Writings by Turner and Jessie H. Roy</b> continued
Box	Folder	
212-2	4	Pioneers of Long Ago - reviews, requests for reviews
	5	Pioneers of Long Ago - changes and edited copy with signed introduction by Dr. Carter G. Woodson
<b>Series E</b>		<b>Financial and Contractual Records</b>
	6	Word Pictures of the Great contract, 1940
	7	Pioneers of Long Ago contract, 1945
	8	Royalty and Financial Records - 1942, 1944 - 1954, 1956 -1961, 1969
<b>Series F</b>		<b>Photographs</b>
	9	Geneva Turner, n.d. Two unidentified women, one receiving an award (?) in a church setting, n.d. Dr. Turner with unidentified group, n.d.
	10	Justine Maloney at Howard University Justine Maloney, n.d. Justine Maloney, n.d.
212-3	1	The Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. regional conference, 1927 (photograph by Scurlock)
	2	Shaw Junior High School teachers' luncheon, 1935 (photograph by Scurlock)
	3	Travel, 1937 (disassembled scrapbook)
	4	Retirement Photographs (disassembled scrapbook)
	5	Retirement Program and related items
	6	Retirement congratulatory letters
		Travel Scrapbook (disassembled)
	7	Stratford-on-Avon, 1937 (postal cards, news clippings)
	8	Scotland, 1937 (postal cards, travel brochures)
	9	Oxford, Canterbury, Cambridge, 1937 (travel brochures)
	10	London, 1937 (programs, brochures)
	11	Europe, 1937 (cards, brochures, programs)
	12	France, 1937 (photographs, postal cards)
	13	France, 1937 (publications)

## Container List

### Series G

### Rolled Items and Artifacts

Box

212-4

M Street High School diploma, 1910 (Geneva C. Townes)  
Howard University, 1916 (Justine O. Townes)  
Myrtilla Minor Normal School, 1916 (Geneva C. Townes)  
Washington Normal School #2, 1913 (Geneva C. Townes)  
Columbia University, 1936 (Justine Townes Maloney)  
M Street High School, 1911 (?) (Justine Townes Maloney)  
Edward A. Townes  
Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute diploma, 1882  
Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute- Headquarters Battalion of Cadets,  
1882  
Hampton Normal School Debating Club, 1882  
Peabody Normal Institute, 1887  
Howard University Centennial Medallion  
Metal name tag for Justine T. Maloney  
Badge - Association for Childhood Education, Oakland, CA, 1941 (Justine  
Maloney)  
Medallion, Howard University Alumni Federation, 1964  
Plaque - Geneva C. Turner for editorial services, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church  
Plaque - Midway Civic Association award for outstanding contributions to  
community  
Commemorative retirement plate for Geneva Turner from school faculty, 1954  
Nineteenth Street Baptist Church Commemorative plate, 1839-1959 (Geneva  
Turner)  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Plate (Geneva Turner)