

Guide to the Bessie Emanuel Papers

JWJ MSS 389



by Elise Riley

September 2024

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: JWJ MSS 389

CREATOR: Emanuel, Bessie , author

TITLE: Bessie Emanuel papers

DATES: 1914-1979

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.67 linear feet (2 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Correspondence, personal papers, and other papers created by or relating to Bessie Emanuel.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.emanuel>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.emanuel>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from William Reese Co. on the Frederick W. and Carrie S. Beinecke Fund for Western Americana, 2024.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Bessie Emanuel Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Bessie Emanuel Papers. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

These materials have been arranged and described according to national and local standards. For more information, please refer to the Beinecke Archival Description Unit Processing Manual.

Bessie Emanuel

Bessie Emanuel (1902-1984), later Bessie Emanuel Smith, was a teacher and activist. She was raised in White Plains, New York by her father Christopher H. Emanuel, a Baptist minister, and her mother Lucy Kittrell Emanuel. She attended an integrated high school, and then received an elementary education degree from Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in 1925. Emanuel later received a master's degree in education at Columbia University. She had a long career in elementary education teaching at schools such as the New York City School for the Blind. She returned to White Plains in 1945 where she was the first Black teacher in the town's history. She served as vice president of the White Plains chapter of the NAACP and received the National Sojourner Truth Award, the highest honor offered by the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains a mix of correspondence and ephemera from Bessie Emanuel's early life. The bulk of the materials relate to Emanuel's elementary and higher education at White Plains High School and Hampton Institute.

'Early school papers' contains notebooks, assignments and essays from elementary school and her diary captures daily activity from her junior year of high school. Correspondence with Jacob Smith, her eventual husband, were written while Smith was studying to be a teacher at Hampton Institute, the University of Iowa, and Shaw University in North Carolina. Other letters are from Philadelphia and Sayville, Long Island.

'General correspondence' and 'School and professional correspondence' contain letters to family and friends as well as communication about potential jobs and school updates.

'Hampton Institute printed ephemera' and 'Personal papers' focus on Emanuel's time at the Hampton Institute and beyond and include resumes, class schedules and records.

Arrangement

Materials in this collection maintain order found at acquisition.

Collection Contents

b. 1, f. 1	Diary	1921
b. 1, f. 2-3	Early school papers	1914
b. 1, f. 4	Jacob Smith correspondence	1926-1929
b. 1, f. 5	Envelopes for Jacob Smith correspondence	1926-1929
b. 1, f. 6	General correspondence	1917-1957
b. 1, f. 7	School and professional correspondence	1927-1976
b. 2, f. 1	Hampton Institute printed ephemera	1925-1979
b. 2, f. 2	Personal papers	1932-1976

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

African American college students
African American educators
African Americans -- Social life and customs
African American women teachers
Educators
Teachers -- United States -- 20th Century
Women teachers

Genres / Formats

Diaries -- United States -- New York -- 20th Century

Occupations

Teachers

Acquired From

William Reese Co. , bookseller
Swann Auction Galleries , auctioneer