

Guide to the Ella Barksdale Brown Papers

JWJ MSS 41



by Bergis Jules

July 2008

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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 41

CREATOR: Brown, Ella Barksdale, 1871-1966

TITLE: Ella Barksdale Brown Papers

DATES: 1885-1952

BULK DATES: 1906-1926

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2.98 linear feet (9 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Ella Barksdale Brown Papers consist of correspondence, writings, financial papers, newspapers and other materials that document her work as an educator, anti-lynching activist, suffragist, and journalist. The bulk of the papers provide evidence of Brown's activism and involvement with numerous schools, youth groups, war relief, civil rights and community organizations.

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

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.ellabrown>.

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 Company on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund, 2007.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Ella Barksdale Brown Papers are 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

Ella Barksdale Brown Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

Two small folders of disintegrated newspaper clippings were discarded during processing.

This collection was processed as part of Beinecke Library's Summer Internship Program in 2008.

Ella Barksdale Brown (1871-1966)

Ella Barksdale Brown, educator, anti-lynching activist, suffragist, and journalist, was born in Milledgeville, Georgia, and was a member of the first graduating class of Spelman Seminary (later Spelman College) in 1887. According to her obituary, she was born to former slaves, Jefferson Barksdale and Julia Lamar Barksdale on June 22, 1871. Ella Barksdale married John M. Brown in Georgia in 1898, and they moved to Jersey City, New Jersey in 1901 where John worked for the Pullman Company. The couple had four children: Marcia, Jefferson Barksdale, Mildred, and Miriam. Among Brown's accomplishments as an educator and activist, she is credited with introducing the study of African American history to Jersey City public schools. She is also credited with persuading the New Jersey Federation, in 1949, to designate March fifth as Crispus Attucks Day in New Jersey.

Brown was also a journalist who wrote for well known African American newspapers of the early twentieth century including *The Chicago Defender* and *The New York Amsterdam News*. A devoted educator, she was sought after by area Jersey City high schools and community organizations to deliver lectures on African American history. Her community and national activism gained her personal acquaintance with some of the leading civil rights proponents and African American leaders of the early twentieth century including W. E. B. Dubois, Booker T. Washington, Paul Robeson and James Weldon Johnson. Some of the community organizations she was most involved with were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Circle for Negro War Relief, the New Jersey Civil Rights Bureau and the National Association of Colored Women.

Additional biographical information obtained from Spelman College is filed in Box 1.

Scope and Contents

The Ella Barksdale Brown Papers document her life as an educator, anti-lynching activist, suffragist and journalist, and span the dates 1885 to 1952, although the bulk is from 1906 to 1926. The papers consist of correspondence, printed material and financial papers documenting Brown's involvement with war relief efforts, teaching, women's rights, civil rights and other social issues mostly pertaining to African Americans during the early twentieth century.

The correspondence documents Ella Barksdale Brown's personal and professional relationships including those with figures and organizations prominent in the civil rights movement. The printed materials document her interest in education and particularly her life as an educator. Her personal writings include two speeches/essays entitled "The Negro's Burden" and "The Negro's Contribution" (both undated) plus other short writings that document her work as a civil rights activist, educator and anti-lynching activist. A group of financial papers document Brown's and her family's ownership of property in New Jersey and Georgia.

Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Correspondence. II. Printed Material. III. Personal Papers.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1885-1952

1.25 linear feet (3 boxes)

The series contains Ella Barksdale Brown's personal and professional correspondence. The bulk of her correspondence is with various youth organizations, schools, and civil rights and war relief organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Circle for Negro War Relief. The correspondence also documents Brown's personal acquaintance with several leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. Other personal correspondents include George E. Cannon, prominent African American physician and clergyman, and H. R. Butler, physician and one of the founding members of the National Medical Association.

Among the correspondence is a typed letter, signed by Booker T. Washington, thanking Brown for making good use of some pictures the Tuskegee Institute sent her; a letter from Sarah L. Hunt describing the funeral of Booker T. Washington; and a hand-written letter, signed by Paul Robeson, apologizing for missing a dinner given by Brown.

There is also financial correspondence including letters from various mortgage companies and banks. Ella Barksdale Brown and John M. Brown were home owners and the financial correspondence indicates that they may have owned at least two properties in New Jersey. There is also some financial correspondence regarding land and a home mortgage in Georgia, probably belonging to her father.

Some correspondence is to John M. Brown and to the Browns' children.

Organized into three subseries: Individuals, Organizations and Financial.

Individuals

b. 1, f. 2	Adams, Cora	1916
b. 1, f. 3	Belcher, May	1919
b. 1, f. 4	Berry, J. C.	1919
b. 1, f. 5	Blackshear, J.	1919
b. 1, f. 6	Bowles, Eva	1919
b. 1, f. 7	Brisbane, A.	1913
b. 1, f. 8	Brown, Carrie	1920, 1922
b. 1, f. 9	Brown, Jefferson Barksdale	1925, 1927
b. 1, f. 10	Brown, J. T.	1919
b. 1, f. 11	Butler, H. R.	1919
b. 1, f. 12	Byrd, William A.	1918
b. 1, f. 13	Cannon, George E.	1916, 1918
b. 1, f. 14	Clemmons, S. C.	1914
b. 1, f. 15	Collier, N. W.	1914

Individuals (continued)

b. 1, f. 16	Daniel, M.	1915
b. 1, f. 17	Dubois, W. E. B.	1918
b. 1, f. 18	Fisher, W.	1914
b. 1, f. 19	Flint, Rachel	1885
b. 1, f. 20	Freeman, Charles S.	1916
b. 1, f. 21	Gibson, Chas	1914
b. 1, f. 22	Green, E. E.	1915
b. 1, f. 23	Gregory, N. B.	1915
b. 1, f. 24	Gunnell, J. C.	1917
b. 1, f. 25	Hamblin, William	1915
b. 1, f. 26	Hartgrove, Robert S.	1919
b. 1, f. 27	Hayes, Elizabeth Hart	1916
b. 1, f. 28	Holland, Edward	1926
b. 1, f. 29	Hooper, Warren G.	1914-1918
b. 1, f. 30	Hunt, Sarah L.	1915
b. 1, f. 31	Hunton, A. W.	1914, 1919
b. 1, f. 32	Jones, A. J.	1916
b. 1, f. 33	Jones, C. Bion	1914
b. 1, f. 34	Jones, C. M.	1952
b. 1, f. 35	Jones, Emma	1918
b. 1, f. 36	Jones, Mrs. John	1917
b. 1, f. 37	Layton, Julia M.	1918
b. 1, f. 38	Maddox, Victoria	1921
b. 1, f. 39	Mottley, Fitz W.	1914
b. 1, f. 40	Moylan, James J.	1914
b. 1, f. 41	Owens, J. H.	1916
b. 1, f. 42	Pratt, Clyde A.	1918
b. 1, f. 43	Proctor, Henry H.	1917
b. 1, f. 44	Randolph, Florence	1916
b. 1, f. 45	Rice, Melvin A.	1918

Individuals (continued)

b. 1, f. 46	Rice, R. Anderson	1918
b. 1, f. 47	Robeson, Paul	1916
b. 1, f. 48	Saunders, Selena	1916
b. 1, f. 49	Schwinn, Mrs. P.	1919
b. 1, f. 50	Sears, Adelaide E.	1919
b. 1, f. 51	Simpson, M.	1903, 1908
b. 1, f. 52	Snyder, Henry	1914, 1917
b. 1, f. 53	Spraggins, Traverse A.	1914
b. 1, f. 54	Stoney, Rosa	1908
b. 1, f. 55	Tapley, Lucy Hale	1914, 1920
b. 1, f. 56	Walker, C. T.	1914
b. 1, f. 57	Washington, Booker T.	1914
b. 1, f. 58	Washington, J. M.	undated
b. 1, f. 59	White, William J.	1914
b. 1, f. 60	Williams, Marcia Brown	undated
b. 1, f. 61	Williams, Thomas H.	1917
b. 1, f. 62	Worthy, Maud	1910
b. 1, f. 63	Unidentified	1915-1918
b. 1, f. 64	Postcards	1906-1933
Organizations		
b. 2, f. 65	37th Infantry Welfare League	1917
b. 2, f. 66	American Bar Association	1918
b. 2, f. 67	American Jewish War Relief and Welfare Board	1918
b. 2, f. 68	Box Office Attractions Company	1915
b. 2, f. 69	Chicago Advertising Agency	1918
b. 2, f. 70	<i>The Chicago Defender</i>	1918
b. 2, f. 71-73	Circle for Negro War Relief	1918-1920
b. 2, f. 74	Committee of One Hundred of Hudson County	1919
b. 2, f. 75	Federation of Colored Organizations of New Jersey	1918, 1919
b. 2, f. 76	Frederick Douglass Film Company	undated

Organizations (continued)

b. 2, f. 77	<i>The Jersey Journal</i>	1914, 1916
b. 2, f. 78	Lincoln Institute (now Lincoln University)	1914
b. 2, f. 79	Manual Training and Industrial School for Youth (Bordentown, N.J.)	1917
b. 2, f. 80	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	1917-1925
b. 2, f. 81	National Medical Association	1918, 1919
b. 2, f. 82	Negro Welfare League	1917-1919
b. 2, f. 83	New Jersey Civil Rights Bureau	1919
b. 2, f. 84	New International Yearbook	undated
b. 2, f. 85	<i>The New York Age</i>	1919
b. 2, f. 86	Southern Sugar Company	undated
b. 2, f. 87	Spelman Seminary (now Spelman College)	1914
b. 2, f. 88	Young Men's Christian Association	1914-1917
b. 2, f. 89	Envelopes	1914-1952
Financial		
b. 2, f. 90	A. T. Holt & Company	1914-1917
b. 2, f. 91	C. Howard Slater Real Estate and Insurance	1921
b. 2, f. 92	Commercial Investment Trust Incorporated	1925
b. 2, f. 93	Commonwealth Insurance Company	1923, 1924
b. 2, f. 94	Continental Casualty Company	1917-1927
b. 2, f. 95	Department of Streets and Public Improvements of Jersey City	1918-1921
b. 2, f. 96	E. O. Smith Real Estate and Insurance	1919-1926
b. 2, f. 97-98	Faulkner & Cook Real Estate Company	1921-1926
b. 3, f. 99	Federal Land and Improvement Company	1909
b. 3, f. 100	Fisk & Fisk	1922
b. 3, f. 101	J. S. Bartlett and Company	1921-1923
b. 3, f. 102	Lincoln State Bank of Chicago	1916-1921
b. 3, f. 103	Metropolitan Life Insurance Company	1921
b. 3, f. 104	National Union Fire Insurance Company	1925
b. 3, f. 105	Ocean & Bay Realty Corp.	1915
b. 3, f. 106	O. L. Schwencke Land and Investment Company	1921-1922

Financial (continued)

b. 3, f. 107	Phoenix Assurance Company Limited	1924
b. 3, f. 108	Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company	1914
b. 3, f. 109	R. M. O'Brien and Company	1918-1923
b. 3, f. 110	Trust Company of New Jersey	1926, 1937
b. 3, f. 111	Union Trust and Hudson County National Bank	1926
b. 3, f. 112	W. A. Barclay Sanitary Plumbing, Steam and Hot Water Heating	1916-1918
b. 3, f. 113	West-Rogers Realty Company	1916
b. 3, f. 114	Winship Insurance Company	1915
b. 3, f. 115	Unidentified	1892-1926

Series II. Printed Material, 1906-1931*1 linear foot (4 boxes)*

This series consists of university periodicals, brochures and other informational flyers from institutions such as Atlanta University, Fisk University and Lincoln Institute that document Brown's interests as an educator and activist, as well as her children's education. The series also contains copies of literary and news publications including *Crisis*, *Dispatch*, and *Colored American*, and a collection of newspapers and newspaper clippings. The clippings further show her interests and concerns including lynchings, African-American cultural events, World War I, and other stories covering race issues during the early twentieth century.

Organized into two subseries: Academic Institutions and Other Printed Material.

Academic Institutions		
b. 4, f. 116-120	Atlanta University	1913-1926
b. 4, f. 121	Fisk University	1918
b. 4, f. 122	Lincoln High School (New Jersey)	1916
b. 4, f. 123	Lincoln Institute (now Lincoln University)	1914
b. 4, f. 124	Reed Home and Industrial School	1916
b. 4, f. 125	Rice Industrial and Literary Institute	1914
b. 4, f. 126	Spelman Seminary	1911-1922
b. 5, f. 127	Unity School of Christianity	1914
Other Printed Material		
b. 5, f. 128	<i>The Atlantic Monthly</i>	1919
b. 5, f. 129	Business Cards	undated
b. 5, f. 130	<i>The Colored American Magazine</i>	1906
b. 5, f. 131-132	<i>The Crisis</i>	1915-1931
b. 5, f. 133	Delta Sigma Theta Bulletin	1931
b. 5, f. 134	<i>The Dispatch</i>	1917
b. 5, f. 135	Event Flyers	1909-1920
b. 5, f. 136	<i>The Literary Digest</i>	1915
b. 5, f. 137	Pamphlets	1914-1926
b. 5, f. 138	<i>Roth Memory Course</i>	1918
b. 5, f. 139	<i>St. Mark's Messenger</i>	1918
b. 5, f. 140	<i>Town Topics</i>	1915
b. 8, f. 141-146	Clippings	1914-1930

Other Printed Material (continued)

b. 9, f. 147-160

Newspapers

1914-1930

Series III: Personal Papers, 1906-1924*0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)*

This series contains a small number of Ella Barksdale Brown's writings. They include two undated handwritten speeches/essays discussing various issues pertaining to African Americans during the early twentieth century. The series also includes some checks, check receipts, income tax forms and organization payment books.

Organized into two subseries: Writings and Financial Papers.

Writings

b. 6, f. 161	"Jersey City Notes"	1919, 1920
b. 6, f. 162	"The Negro's Burden"	undated
b. 6, f. 163	"The Negro's Contribution"	undated
b. 6, f. 164-165	Personal writings and related material	undated, 1919

Financial Papers

b. 6, f. 166-169	Checks	1921-1924
b. 7, f. 170	Checks	1921-1924
b. 7, f. 171	Knights of Pythias Financial Book	1906-1919
b. 7, f. 172	The Commonwealth Beneficial Association	1922-1923
b. 7, f. 173	Receipts	1914-1929
b. 7, f. 174	Taxes	1921-1926

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.

Preferred Titles

Atlantic monthly
Chicago defender
Crisis
Dispatch
New York age (New York, N.Y. : 1887)
New York Amsterdam news

Subjects

African American newspapers -- History --
20th Century
African Americans
African Americans -- Civil rights
African Americans -- Education
African American women
African American women -- Civil rights --
History -- 20th Century
African American women journalists
Civil rights
Civil rights -- New Jersey
Educators
Journalists
Lynching
Suffrage

Geographic Names

Jersey City (N.J.) -- Social life and customs --
20th Century

Occupations

Suffragists

Names

Brown, Ella Barksdale, 1871-1966
Brown, John Marcus, 1872-1952
Butler, H. R.
Cannon, George Epps, 1869-1925
Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt),
1868-1963
Robeson, Paul, 1898-1976
Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915

Corporate Bodies

American Bar Association
American Jewish War Relief and Welfare Board
Atlanta University
Circle for Negro War Relief
Fisk University
Lincoln University (Jefferson City, Mo.)
National Association for the Advancement of
Colored People
National Medical Association (U.S.)
Spelman College