



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Sadie P. Delaney papers

1921-1958

Sc MG 120

Processed by Susan Borenstein.

Summary

Creator: Delaney, Sadie P., 1889-1958

Title: Sadie P. Delaney papers

Date: 1921-1958

Source: Gift of Mrs. Grace P. Hooks, Dr. Delaney's stepdaughter, 1983.

Abstract: Incoming letters from W.E.B. Du Bois, Leigh Whipper, Mary McLeod Bethune, Langston Hughes, Ralph J. Bunche, James Weldon Johnson, Fannie Hurst, Booker T. Washington, Franz Boas, Benjamin Brawley, Countee Cullen, and others. Other letters from librarians and other professionals at black institutions; letters of congratulations on achievements, 1948-1950; and additional letters of a personal and professional content. Papers include programs, articles, text of a speech given at a commencement banquet, and minutes of the Bi-Racial Committee in which the motion to establish a separate Alabama Negro Library Association was passed, 1952. Several photographic portraits of Delaney are included in the collection.

Preferred citation: Sadie P. Delaney papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

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Creator History

Born in Rochester, New York in February 1889, Sadie P. Delaney attended Poughkeepsie High School, the College of the City of New York and received her professional training in the New York Public Library.

Mrs. Delaney was a pioneer in the field of bibliotherapy and organized the Veterans Administration Hospital Library in Tuskegee, Alabama. Before assuming the post of Chief Librarian at the Veterans Hospital in 1923, Mrs. Delaney began her career in librarianship at the 135th Street Branch of the New

York Public Library in 1920. There she found that immigrants and troubled children could be helped through bibliotherapy (the therapeutic use of reading materials). Her initial work in bibliotherapy received international attention. Mrs. Delaney also had a special interest in books dealing with black history and literature and wanted to develop a collection with such a focus. She thus came to know Arthur A. Schomburg, the bibliophile and collector. Mrs. Delaney was cited for exceptional work at the 135th Street Branch Library and founded the first black professional women's club in New York City. In 1928 she married Rudice A. Delaney.

Mrs. Delaney's innovative work at the Veterans Hospital in Tuskegee brought world recognition and acclaim. Bibliotherapy and group therapy for the mentally ill and disabled, special Braille therapy for the blind and other related activities at the hospital library were the primary focus of her life's work. She affiliated with others of the library profession, nationally and internationally. She was a member of the American Library Association and its committee for work with the blind; the International Library Association at Queens Garden, England; the International Hospital Library Guild; the League of Nations Library Committee; the Neuropsychiatric Journal Club at the Veterans Hospital in Tuskegee; and the Mental Hygiene Society of Tuskegee Institute. Mrs. Delaney also affiliated with organizations which addressed broader social concerns. She was a member of the National Council of Colored Women, a charter member of the "Women of Darker Races of America," a member of the Tuskegee Women's Club, and the founder of the Friendship League of America. She organized the College Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in New York City and served seven and one-half years on the advisory board of the New York City N.A.A.C.P. Mrs. Delaney was elected as the councilor for the Hospital Library Division of the American Library Association and served from 1946 until 1951.

For her pioneering work as a bibliotherapist, humanitarian and leader in professional and social circles, Mrs. Delaney received numerous awards, honors and citations. In 1934 she was selected by the Mitre Chambers, London, England as one of the important women in America and included in the book *Principal Women of America*. It was also during this period that she organized a special library department for the blind at the Veterans Hospital. In 1938 she was cited by the Carnegie Corporation, Pretoria, South Africa for exceptional work in hospital libraries. She was selected as Woman of the Year by the Iota Phi Lambda Sorority and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority in 1948 and 1949 respectively. In 1950 Mrs. Delaney received the National Urban League Award as Woman of the Year and an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humanities from Atlanta University. In 1952 she was honored at Howard University by the National Council of Negro Women. Dr. Delaney resided in Tuskegee, Alabama until her death in 1958.

Scope and Content Note

The Sadie P. Delaney Papers (1921-1958) consist primarily of incoming letters from such diverse notables as W.E.B. Du Bois (vol.1), Leigh Whipper (vol.3), Mary McLeod Bethune (vol.3), Langston Hughes (vol.1), Ralph Bunche (vol.3), James Weldon Johnson (vol.1) and Fannie Hurst (vol.1), as well as letters from librarians and other professionals at black institutions.

The seven bound volumes of correspondence include, "Letters Rich and Rare" (vol.1, 1921-1949), so titled by Mrs. Delaney, with letters from Booker T. Washington, Franz Boas, Benjamin Brawley, Countee Cullen, and others.

Volume 2, "Letters of Congratulations on Achievement," (1948-1950) include congratulations for Mrs. Delaney's honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities (1950) from Atlanta University, and her honors as "Outstanding Woman of the Southern Region" (1948) and as Tuskegee's "Woman of the Year" (1949), presented by the Iota Lambda Sorority and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority respectively.

Volumes 3-6 and an additional volume contain letters of personal and professional content and letters of congratulation. Mailgrams appear frequently, and photographs of Mrs. Delaney are included in each bound volume of letters.

Her papers also include programs, articles, the text of a speech given by Mrs. Delaney at the Commencement Banquet at Atlanta University on June 5, 1950 (vol.3), the minutes of the meeting of the Bi-Racial Committee, dated January 18, 1952 in which the motion to establish a separate Alabama Negro Library Association was passed (vol.5), and her curriculum vitae (vols.2, 3, 5). A bound Congressional Record, dated January 17, 1957, contains remarks by Senator James E. Murray of Fontana in which he asks unanimous consent to have Clyde C. Cantrell's article, "Sadie P. Delaney: Bibliotherapist and Librarian" printed in the appendix. In addition to the many congratulatory letters in the scrapbooks, Dr. Delaney's correspondence points to the difficulties she faced as a black professional librarian, particularly in the South.

Other correspondents of particular note and interest include George Washington Carver (vol.3), Dorothy B. Ferebee (vol.3), Georgia Douglas Johnson (vols.3, 5), J.A. Rogers (vol.5), William Grant Still (vol.6), Ernestine Rose (vol.1), Frederick D. Patterson (vols.3, 6 & unnumbered volume), Emmett J. Scott (vol.1), Matthew Henson (vol.1, letter accompanied with a photograph of Mr. Henson), Jessie Redmon Fauset (vol.1), and a letter from Club Imperial, Birmingham, Alabama (vol.5). Correspondence from schools within Tuskegee Institute and from Clyde C. Cantrell, Director of Libraries, Alabama Polytechnic Institute, appear in the volumes of letters. Volumes 3-6 and the unnumbered volume are dated: 1923-1953; 1951-1954; 1937-1956; 1965-1957; and 1950-1957, respectively.

Key Terms

Occupations

African American librarians

Subjects

African American women
African Americans -- Alabama -- Societies, etc
African Americans and libraries -- Alabama
African Americans in the professions
Libraries -- Alabama

Geographic Names

Alabama -- Race relations
Alabama -- Social conditions

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographic prints

Names

Delaney, Sadie P., 1889-1958
Bethune, Mary McLeod, 1875-1955
Boas, Franz, 1858-1942
Brawley, Benjamin, 1882-1939
Bunche, Ralph J. (Ralph Johnson), 1904-1971
Cullen, Countee, 1903-1946
Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963

Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967
Hurst, Fannie, 1889-1968
Johnson, James Weldon, 1871-1938
Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915
Whipper, Leigh Rollin, 1876-1975
Alabama Negro Library Association

Container List

“Letters Rich And Rare”

- b. 1 Aggrey, James Emman Kwegyir
- v. 1
- b. 1 Atlanta University, School Of Library Science
- v. 1
- b. 1 Boaz, Franz
- v. 1
- b. 1 Brawley, Benjamin
- v. 1
- b. 1 Carney, Mabel
- v. 1
- b. 1 Carter, Elmer A.
- v. 1
- b. 1 Cullen, Countee
- v. 1
- b. 1 Dixon, Claude M.
- v. 1
- b. 1 Dubois, W. E. Burghardt
- v. 1
- b. 1 Fauset, Jessie Redmon
- v. 1
- b. 1 Henson, Matthew A.
- v. 1
- b. 1 Hope, John
- v. 1
- b. 1 Hughes, Langston
- v. 1
- b. 1 Hurst, Fannie
- v. 1
- b. 1 Johnson, Charles S.
- v. 1
- b. 1 Johnson, James Weldon
- v. 1
- b. 1 Ovington, Mary White
- v. 1
- b. 1 Oxley, Lawrence A.
- v. 1
- b. 1 Rose, Ernestine
- v. 1
- b. 1 Scott, Emmett J.
- v. 1
- b. 1 Washington, Booker T.
- v. 1
- b. 1 Wood, L. Hollingsworth
- v. 1

“Letters Of Congratulations On Achievement”

- b. 1 Program, Atlanta University (Awarded Honorary Degree, Doctor Of
- v. 2 Humanities)
- b. 1 Record Of Accomplishments Of Dr. Sadie Peterson-Delaney, Chief
- v. 2 Librarian, Veterans Administration, Tuskegee, Alabama (Vita)

Letters: Personal, Professional And Congratulatory

- b. 1 Atlanta University, School Of Library Science
- v. 3

Letters: Personal, Professional And Congratulatory (cont.)

- b. 1 Bethune, Mary Mcleod
- v. 3
- b. 1 Bunche, Ralph
- v. 3
- b. 1 Cantrell, Clyde H.
- v. 3
- b. 1 Carver, George Washington
- v. 3
- b. 1 Curriculum Vitae
- v. 3
- b. 1 Ferebee, Dorothy B.
- v. 3
- b. 1 Herskovits, Melville J.
- v. 3
- b. 1 Johnson, Georgia Douglas
- v. 3
- b. 1 Journals And Books Citing The Work Of Dr. Sadie P. Delaney (Vita)
- v. 3
- b. 1 Patterson, Frederick D.
- v. 3
- b. 1 Program, National Council Of Negro Women, 1952 Honorees
- v. 3
- b. 1 Robinson, Bill
- v. 3
- b. 1 Roosevelt, Eleanor
- v. 3
- b. 1 Van Vechten, Carl
- v. 3
- b. 1 Whipper, Leigh
- v. 3
- b. 1 Text Of Speech Given At Commencement Banquet, Atlanta University
- v. 3

Letters: Personal, Professional And Congratulatory

- b. 1 Atlanta University School Of Library Science
- v. 3
- b. 2 Cantrell, Clyde H.
- v. 4
- b. 2 Curriculum Vitae
- v. 4
- b. 2 Davis, Alonzo J.
- v. 4
- b. 2 Dawson, William L.
- v. 4
- b. 2 Program, Library Service Celebration
- v. 4
- b. 2 Sprague, M.D.
- v. 4

Letters: Personal, Professional And Congratulatory

- b. 2 Cantrell, Clyde H.
- v. 5
- b. 2 Club Imperial
- v. 5
- b. 2 Davis, Bette
- v. 5
- b. 2 Derbigny, I.A.
- v. 5

Letters: Personal, Professional And Congratulatory (cont.)

- b. 2 Johnson, Georgia Douglas
- v. 5
- b. 2 Library School, George Peabody College For Teachers
- v. 5
- b. 2 Minutes Of The Meeting Of The Bi-Racial Committee
- v. 5
- b. 2 Presentation Of Data Of Dr. Sadie P. Delaney (Vitae)
- v. 5
- b. 2 Rogers, J.A.
- v. 5

Letters: Personal, Professional And Commendations

- b. 2 Bond, Horace M.
- v. 6
- b. 2 Cantrell, Clyde H.
- v. 6
- b. 2 Clement, Rufus
- v. 6
- b. 2 Dawson, William L.
- v. 6
- b. 2 Ebony May 6, 1957
- v. 6
- b. 2 Extension Of Remarks Of Hon. James E. Murray Of Montana In The Senate
- v. 6 Of The United States, Congressional Record
- b. 2 Foster, Luther H.
- v. 6
- b. 2 Hurst, Fannie
- v. 6
- b. 2 Patterson, F.D.
- v. 6
- b. 2 Still, William Grant
- v. 6
- b. 2 Walker, Saunders
- v. 6

Letters: Personal, Professional And Congratulatory

- b. 3 Cantrell, Clyde H.
- v. 7
- b. 3 Currie Institute
- v. 7
- b. 3 Derbigny, I.A.
- v. 7
- b. 3 Ebony June 26, 1957
- v. 7
- b. 3 "Librarian Hailed As Volunteer" (Christian Science Monitor," August 28, 1957
- v. 7
- b. 3 Patterson, F. D.
- v. 7
- b. 3 Roosevelt, Eleanor
- v. 7
- b. 3 Sprague, M. D.
- v. 7
- b. 3 Congressional Record: Proceedings And Debates Of The 85Th Congress,
- v. 8 First Session, Vol. 103, No. 9 (Washington: January 17, 1957 ([Bound])