

**Roanoke Public Libraries
Gainsboro Branch Library
Virginia Y. Lee Celebrity Memorabilia Collection**

Collection Description

Repository: Gainsboro Branch of Roanoke Public Libraries

Title: Virginia Y. Lee Celebrity Memorabilia Collection

Physical Characteristics: One (1) Document Storage Box

Arrangement: Items are arranged in folders alphabetically by the last name of the person who the items relate to. Like-items are then arranged chronologically. **Addendum:** Book is placed in the back of the collection.

Creator: Virginia Dare Young Lee

Reproduction Restrictions: No known restrictions on publication. Gainsboro Library copy fees apply.

Processor: Megan Koehler Mizak, February 2019, updated May 2020. **Addendum:** Caylin Wigger 22 April 2025

Historical Background:

Virginia Dare Young Lee was born 22 November 1906 in McComas, West Virginia to Robert D. and Lula B. Young. She was raised in Roanoke, Virginia and attended Lucy Addison High School, graduating as class Valedictorian in 1924. After graduating from the Hampton Institute's School of Library Science she worked at LeMoyne Junior College in Memphis, Tennessee and later Gilmer School in Roanoke, Virginia. In 1928 she became the fourth librarian of the Gainsboro Branch Library of Roanoke Public Libraries.

Virginia Y. Lee immediately began to develop a Black History Collection and create library displays of the accomplishments of African Americans at the Gainsboro Library. Later she continued to grow the library's collection by writing to prominent African Americans who would donate signed copies of books, photos and other materials to the library.

In the mid-1940s, Lee faced opposition from city officials, demanding that she dispose of the library's growing collection on black history. Lee defied the officials and hid the collection in the basement of the library and continued collecting materials.

After 43 years of service, Virginia Y. Lee retired from the Gainsboro Library in 1971. Upon retirement, she gifted 3,500 books and other items on black history that she collected to the library.

Scope and Content:

- The Virginia Y. Lee Celebrity Memorabilia Collection is comprised of one (1) record storage box.
- Items in the collection were collected by librarian Virginia Y. Lee. The items in the collection relate to celebrities Paul Laurence Dunbar, W. C. Handy, Langston Hughes and Philippa Schyule.
- The collection consists of letters, sheet music, photographs and images, pamphlets, programs, a poem, writings and various other ephemera.
- Many of the items in the collection are signed by the celebrities they relate to.
- Items relating to W. C. Handy, Langston Hughes and Philippa Schyule were donated to the library by these individuals.
- The collection dates from 1892 to 1963, with the majority of items dating between 1940 and 1963.

Container List:

Box 1 of 1

Folder 1 - Paul Laurence Dunbar - Correspondence

- Correspondence: To Ed. American Press Association from Paul Laurence Dunbar, in regards to manuscript submissions, 9 May 1892.

Folder 2 - W. C. Handy - Correspondence

- Correspondence: To Virginia Y. Lee from Chas Handy of Handy Brothers Music Co., Inc, regarding items donated to the Gainsboro Library and signed by W. C. Handy, 24 March 1942.

Folder 3 - W. C. Handy - Sheet Music

- Sheet Music: "I'll Never Turn Back No More," Negro Spiritual, arranged by W. C. Handy, signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, March 1942.
- Sheet Music: "John Henry Blues," by W. C. Handy, signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.
- Sheet Music: "The Memphis Blues" or "Mr. Crump," by W. C. Handy, lyrics by George A. Norton, signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.
- Sheet Music: "Nobody Knows the Trouble I see," Traditional Negro Spiritual, arranged by W. C. Handy, signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.

- Sheet Music: W. C. Handy's "Saint Louis Blues," in two part arrangement for male or female voices, for use in public schools, by J. Rosamond Johnson, signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.
- Sheet Music: "W. C. Handy's "Saint Louis Blues," Handy Brothers Music Co, Inc., signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.
- Sheet Music: W. C. Handy's "Saint Louis Blues," Chicago World's Fair Edition, as sung in the pageant "O, Sing a New Song," Handy Brothers Music Co, Inc, signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.
- Sheet Music: "Vesuvius (There's a Red Glow in the Sky Above Vesuvius), poem by Andy Razaf, title and music by W. C. Handy, Handy Brothers Music Co., Inc., signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.
- Sheet Music: "Way Down South Where the Blues Began," by W. C. Handy, Handy Brothers Music Co., Inc., signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.

Folder 4 - W. C. Handy - Images

- Photograph: "W. C. Handy after publishing *Father of the Blues*," signed on the back of the photograph by W. C. Handy..
- Photograph: W. C. Handy's office, signed to the Gainsboro Library by W. C. Handy, 28 March 1942. Reprint, original is missing.
- Print: Drawing of W. C. Handy, signed by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.

Folder 5 - W. C. Handy - Various Ephemera

- Article: "Trailing down the Father of Modern Blues," Boston Evening Transcript, 11 October 1933.
- Order Form: *We are Americans Too*, Handy Brothers Music Co. Inc., 1941.
- Order Form: *We are Americans Too*, Handy Brothers Music Co. Inc., 1942.
- Pamphlet: Negro Authors and Composers of the United States, by W. C. Handy, published by Handy Brothers Music Co., Inc., signed by W. C. Handy, 23 March 1942.

Folder 6 - Langston Hughes - Poem

- "Ultimatum: Kid to Kid," by Langston Hughes, signed by Langston Hughes.

Folder 7 - Langston Hughes - Photographs

- Photograph: Langston Hughes profile, signed to the Gainsboro Library by Langston Hughes. Reprint, original is missing.
- Photograph: Langston Hughes with three dogs, "Langston Hughes, 1940, Carmel Valley, California, during the writing of *The Big Sea*," signed to the Gainsboro Library by Langston Hughes.
- Photograph: Langston Hughes dressed as a busboy, "Langston Hughes, as a busboy in the

Wardman Park Hotel, D. C., December 1926, the day after he was 'discovered' by Vachel Lindsey. (See *The Big Sea*, page 210, for the story)," signed to the Gainsboro Library by Langston Hughes.

- Photograph: Langston Hughes posing in front of a statue, photographer: M. Smith, signed to the Gainsboro Library by Langston Hughes, 1942.

Folder 8 - Langston Hughes - Sheet Music

- Sheet Music: "The Ballad of the Brown King: a Christmas Cantata," text by Langston Hughes, music by Margaret Bonds, signed by Langston Hughes, April 1963.
- Sheet Music: "A Boy Like You," music by Kurt Weill, lyrics by Langston Hughes, signed to the Gainsboro Library by Langston Hughes, April 1963.
- Sheet Music: "At the Feet of Jesus," Hall Johnson Songs, melody by Toy Harper, signed by Langston Hughes, April 1963.
- Sheet Music: "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," music by Margaret Bonds, words by Langston Hughes, as sung by Etta Moten, signed to the Gainsboro Library from Langston Hughes, April 1963.

Folder 9 - Langston Hughes - Programs

- Program: Eta Iota Chapter, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity presents Langston Hughes, 29 August 1945.
- Program: Hamilton Grange Branch of the New York Public Library Community Night, 14 May 1958.
- Program: Alfred Duckett Associates presents Langston Hughes, 31 January 1960.
- Program: Second Annual Negro History Week Program of the Lawndale Civic & Educational Club, Langston Hughes, guest speaker, 7 February 1960.
- Program: The Grand Rapids Study Class presents Langston Hughes, Fountain Street Baptist Church, 14 February 1960.
- Program: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Berkshire Music Center, 4 August 1960.
- Program: The New Brunswick Urban League Women's Guild presents Langston Hughes, 24 March 1961.
- Program Magazine: Philharmonic Hall Lincoln Center, "Black Nativity," signed by Langston Hughes, 1962-1963.

Folder 10 - Langston Hughes - Various Ephemera

- Bookmark: Langston Hughes.
- Order Form: *Fight for Freedom: the story of the NAACP*, by Langston Hughes.
- Poster: Alfred Duckett Associates presents Langston Hughes reading his poetry in Month O' Sundays: a ninety minute spiritual spectacular, Antioch Baptist Church, 31 January 1960.

- Flyer: Langston Hughes reads his works in a Spiritual Spectacular with Westminster Church of the Master, N.Y., 19 March 1961.

Folder 11 - Langston Hughes - Writings

- “Here to Yonder: the song Writing Game,” by Langston Hughes, reprinted from the Chicago Defender, 21 April, 1945.
- “Ten Ways to Use Poetry in Teaching,” by Langston Hughes, reprinted from the CLA Bulletin, Volume VII, Number 2, 1951, signed to the Gainsboro Library from Langston Hughes.
- “Langston Hughes on Writing,” reprinted from *Overview*, Vol 2, No 7, Bittenheim Publishing Corporation, N. Y., July 1961, signed by Langston Hughes.

Folder 12 - Langston Hughes - Sign

- Sign: Compliments of Langston Hughes, Author, hand-drawn by Virginia Y. Lee.

Folder 13 - Philippa Schuyler - Sheet Music

- Sheet Music: “Three Little Pieces, by Philippa Schuyler, signed by Philippa Schuyler, circa 1930s.

Addendum:

Folder 14 - Langston Hughes - Book

- Book: *The First Book of Negroes*, by Langston Hughes and illustrated by Ursula Koering, copyrighted 1952, signed by Langston Hughes 1953.