Guide to the Arna Bontemps Collection

JWJ MSS 6

by Beinecke Staff

August 1996

P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
beinecke.library@yale.edu
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/
# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .................................................................................................................. 3
Requesting Instructions .................................................................................................................. 3
Administrative Information ........................................................................................................... 3
  Immediate Source of Acquisition ............................................................................................... 3
  Conditions Governing Access ..................................................................................................... 3
  Conditions Governing Use .......................................................................................................... 4
  Preferred Citation ....................................................................................................................... 4
  Processing Information .............................................................................................................. 4
ARNA BONTEMPS (1902-1973) .................................................................................................. 4
Scope and Contents ...................................................................................................................... 4
Collection Contents ...................................................................................................................... 5
  Series I. Correspondence .......................................................................................................... 5
  Series II. Writings ....................................................................................................................... 7
      Black Thunder ....................................................................................................................... 7
      Bubber Joins the Band ............................................................................................................. 7
      Drums at Dusk ....................................................................................................................... 7
      The Fast Sooner Hound ......................................................................................................... 7
      Father of the Blues ............................................................................................................... 7
      God Sends Sunday ................................................................................................................. 7
      Poor Frizzly Chicken ............................................................................................................. 7
      Purple Island ......................................................................................................................... 7
      St. Louis Woman .................................................................................................................... 7
      Slappy Hooper ....................................................................................................................... 8
      The Story of the Negro .......................................................................................................... 8
      They Seek A City .................................................................................................................... 8
      Tom-Tom Treasures ............................................................................................................... 8
      "The Two Harlems" ............................................................................................................... 8
      "Remarks in Presenting..." .................................................................................................... 8
      We Have Tomorrow .............................................................................................................. 9
      You Can’t Pet a Possum ....................................................................................................... 9
      "White Haitians" .................................................................................................................... 9
Selected Search Terms .................................................................................................................... 11
Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/

**CALL NUMBER:** JWJ MSS 6

**CREATOR:** Bontemps, Arna, 1902-1973

**TITLE:** Arna Bontemps Collection

**DATES:** 1934–1957

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 4 linear feet (6 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The Arna Bontemps Collections contains writings and correspondence presented to the James Weldon Johnson Collection by Mr. Bontemps.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.bontemps

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 http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.bontemps.

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**

The Arna Bontemps Collection contains items presented to the James Weldon Johnson Collection by Mr. Bontemps.

**Conditions Governing Access**

The materials are open for research.
Conditions Governing Use

The Arna Bontemps Collection 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

Arna Bontemps Collection. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

This finding aid was produced from a previously existing manuscripts inventory. All pertinent information has been retained.

ARNA BONTEMPS (1902-1973)

Arna Bontemps was a teacher and writer whose novel *God Sends Sunday* appeared at the end of the Harlem Renaissance in 1931. He continued writing and editing anthologies and served as librarian at Fisk University.

Scope and Contents

The papers contains materials documenting the life of Arna Bontemps, including Series I, *Correspondence*, and Series II, *Writings*.
### Collection Contents

#### Series I. Correspondence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 1</td>
<td>Blount, Mildred E. Includes letter from Ruby Bontemps and two autobiographical sketches</td>
<td>1942–45, n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 2</td>
<td>Butain, Anne M. To: 2 / From: 0</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 3</td>
<td>Cambell, E. Simms To: 2 / From: 1</td>
<td>1944–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 4</td>
<td>Cayton, Horace R. To: 1 / From: 0</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 5</td>
<td>Collins, Leslie Includes notes on interview of Mrs. Jelliffe To: 1 / From: 0</td>
<td>1944 Oct 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 6</td>
<td>Conroy, Jack Correspondence re: They Seek A City To: 21 / From: 9</td>
<td>c. 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 7</td>
<td>Conroy, Jack Correspondence re: They Seek A City To: 25 / From: 26</td>
<td>c. 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 8</td>
<td>Conroy, Jack Correspondence re: Slappy Hooper To: 3 / From: 0</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 9</td>
<td>Dabney, Wendell P. To: 5 / From: 0</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 10</td>
<td>Davis, Benjamin O. Sr. Fragment To: 1 / From: 0</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 12</td>
<td>Dixon, Dean Includes short description of the Dixon counting method. To: 2 / From: 1</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 13</td>
<td>Henry, Algernon P. To: 1 / From: 1</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 14</td>
<td>Houghton Mifflin Co. To: 1 / From: 0</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 15</td>
<td>Hughes, Langston Carbon of letter to Guggenheim Foundation re: AWB</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 16</td>
<td>Jackman, Harold Original AWB letters To: 0 / From: 6</td>
<td>1934–42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| b. 1, f. 17 | Lem and Ed  
Correspondence re: *St. Louis Woman* To: 1 / From: 1               | n.d.             |
| b. 1, f. 18 | LuValle, James E.  
To: 2 / From: 2                      | 1944             |
| b. 1, f. 19 | May, Mrs. Emmett  
To: 3 / From: 2             | 1944             |
| b. 1, f. 20 | Moore, Alfred D.  
To: 21 / From: 1            | 1944–45, n.d.    |
| b. 1, f. 21 | Palfi, Marion  
To: 3 / From: 2            | 1944             |
| b. 1, f. 22 | Frederick A. Stokes Company  
Letter to Maxim Lieber re: AWB | 1936             |
| b. 1, f. 23 | Trammell, Guy R.  
To: 3 / From: 0              | 1945             |
| b. 1, f. 24 | Van Vechten, Carl  
To: 3 / From: 0              | 1941–47          |
| b. 1, f. 25 | Walker, Margaret  
To: 0 / From: 1              | 1944             |
| b. 1, f. 26 | Walters, Vernon N.  
To: 2 / From: 0              | 1945             |
| b. 1, f. 27 | Watkins, Sylvestre  
To: 2 / From: 2              | 1942, 1944       |
| b. 1, f. 28 | Watson, Douglas C.  
To: 1 / From: 0              | 1944             |
| b. 1, f. 29 | Young, P. Bernard Jr.  
To: 3 / From: 0              | 1944             |
### Series II. Writings

**Black Thunder**
- b. 1, f. 30
  - Typescript, corrected of unfinished rewrite of book, with revisions and explanatory note by AWB
  - n.d.

- b. 1, f. 31
  - Dramatization by Roland Mulhauser, typescript, corrected
  - Includes: explanatory note by AWB
  - 1937

**Bubber Joins the Band**
- b. 1, f. 32
  - Typescript, carbon
  - Unpublished children's story with explanatory note by AWB
  - [ca. 1932–33]

**Drums at Dusk**

  See: Purple Island, Box 1, folder 36

**The Fast Sooner Hound**
- b. 1, f. 33
  - Typescript corrected
  - First version of children's story By AWB and Jack Conroy with explanatory note by AWB
  - 1942

**Father of the Blues**
- b. 1, f. 34
  - Typescript carbon
  - Part of AWB's version of W. C. Handy's autobiography with explanatory notes by AWB
  - n.d.

**God Sends Sunday**

  See: St. Louis Woman, Box 2, folder 37

**Poor Frizzly Chicken**
- b. 1, f. 35
  - Typescript carbon
  - Unpublished children's story, original unrevised version, with illustrations and explanatory note by AWB
  - 1934

**Purple Island**
- b. 1, f. 36
  - Typescript, corrected
  - First draft of book Drums at Dusk with explanatory note by AWB
  - n.d.

**St. Louis Woman**
- b. 2, f. 37
  - Typescript carbon
  - Play by AWB and Countée Cullen with revisions, an explanatory note by AWB, and inscription by Countée Cullen
  - n.d.

- b. 2, f. 38
  - Mixture of typescript and carbon versions, corrected
  - n.d.

- b. 2, f. 39
  - Typescript carbon, corrected
  - n.d.

- b. 2, f. 40
  - Typescript carbon, corrected
  - With new Prologue by Langston Hughes
  - n.d.
### Series II. Writings

#### St. Louis Woman (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 41</td>
<td>Holograph notes for revision</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 42-45</td>
<td>Holograph and typescript revisions and rewrites</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 46</td>
<td>“How ‘St. Louis Woman’ Was Born” handwritten draft of publicity statement</td>
<td>1946 Jan 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Slappy Hooper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 48</td>
<td>Typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 49</td>
<td>Typescript and carbon revisions</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### The Story of the Negro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 50</td>
<td>Typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 51-52</td>
<td>Typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 53</td>
<td>Index (on 3 x 5 cards) with corrections</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 54</td>
<td>Galley proofs, corrected</td>
<td>1947–48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### They Seek A City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 55</td>
<td>Notes, drafts, outlines, etc.</td>
<td>1945, n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 56-58</td>
<td>First draft, typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4, f. 59-61</td>
<td>First draft, typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4, f. 62-66</td>
<td>Final draft, typescript, corrected</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4, f. 67</td>
<td>Bibliography and index, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 69</td>
<td>Typescript, corrected</td>
<td>1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 70</td>
<td>Typescript carbon article for <em>American Scholar</em></td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Tom-Tom Treasures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 69</td>
<td>Unpublished children’s story</td>
<td>1938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### “The Two Harlems”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 70</td>
<td>Typescript carbon article for <em>American Scholar</em></td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### “Remarks in Presenting...”

Full title: “Remarks in Presenting American Library Association’s Liberty and Justice Award in Imaginative Literature to James Thurber”
"Remarks in Presenting..." (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 71</td>
<td>Typescript carbon</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>We Have Tomorrow</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 72</td>
<td>Research notes, clippings, and typed manuscript of biographical sketch of Dean Dixon</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 73-74</td>
<td>First draft, typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 75</td>
<td>Second draft, typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 76-77</td>
<td>Setting typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 78</td>
<td>Galley proofs</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 79</td>
<td>Typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First version of children's story (original title <em>Shine Boy</em>) with revisions and explanatory notes by AWB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 80</td>
<td>Typescript, corrected, of unpublished article</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>“White Haitians”</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6, f. 81</td>
<td>Galley proof for <em>They Seek a City</em></td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 authors -- 20th Century --
Archives
Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Archives

Names
Bontemps, Arna, 1902-1973