

Collection #  
M 0589

## PHYLLIS WHEATLEY WATERS PAPERS, 1910–1971

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Processed by

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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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### COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	2 manuscript boxes
COLLECTION DATES:	Inclusive, 1910–71 (bulk 1910–19, 1950s)
PROVENANCE:	Jean Spears, 849 Camp Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202, February 1991
RESTRICTIONS:	None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: None

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1991.0264

NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Phyllis Wheatley Waters (ca. 1898–30 December 1973), a native of West Virginia, lived most of her life in Indiana. She graduated from Ann Arbor (Michigan) High School in 1913, continuing on to receive a BA in French from the University of Michigan in 1917. During her college career, she played on the girls' basketball team. Following graduation from Michigan, she headed up the Language Department at West Virginia State University.

One year later she relocated to Indianapolis where she began employment with the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). She received a Masters degree from Butler University and taught at Crispus Attucks High School and School #17, retiring in 1968 after working with the school district for 48 years. The last three years with IPS she served as a psychological consultant to fifteen grade schools.

Waters was a precinct committeewoman and ward chairman, who ran unsuccessfully for the state legislature in 1960. Active in Republican Party politics, she served out an unexpired term on the Indianapolis City Council in 1967. She participated in several local and national educational associations. She served as the vice president of the Indiana State Teachers' Association and on the executive boards of the Indianapolis Education Association and the Indianapolis Grade School Teachers' Association.

She was a charter member of the Indianapolis Zoological Society and the Fall Creek Parkway Young Men's Christian Association. She was on the boards of the Indianapolis Marion County Public Library, Marion County Cancer Society, and the Children's Museum. A member of numerous organizations, she was active with Citizens Forum, Inc., Senate Avenue Young Men's Christian Association, and the Business and Professional Women's Club.

Waters received several community service awards. The honors were from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the United Negro College Fund, Indiana State Teachers Association, Indianapolis Urban League, and the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce. The month before her death, she was presented the University of Michigan Outstanding Achievement Award.

Waters is buried in the Anatomical Section (Section 41A) of Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis.

Sources:

Materials in the collection.

Obituary, *Indianapolis News*, 31 December 1973, p. 6.

Obituary, *Indianapolis Recorder*, 5 January 1974, p. 1.

Telephone Interview with Sue Buckner, genealogist, Crown Hill Cemetery, 16 March 1999.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Phyllis Wheatley Waters Papers are contained in two manuscript boxes. Box 1 includes biographical information about Waters and correspondence dating from 1910 to 1971. Much of the correspondence is written between Waters and family members, most notably Phil Waters, her father. Some of it dates from her college days at the University of Michigan. On the occasion of her 35<sup>th</sup> college graduation anniversary in 1952, a former classmate wrote to Waters (box 1, folder 17). She recounted reunion activities and lamented Waters's absence from the festivities. Earlier the same year, after attending a college alumni function, Phyllis Waters received a letter (28 March 1952) from David Strack, Assistant Basketball Coach at the University of Michigan. Strack comments on Bob Jewell, a University of Michigan basketball player who formerly played for Crispus Attucks High School (CAHS) in Indianapolis. He also mentions CAHS coach Ray Crowe and tells Waters that Michigan is interested in recruiting Hallie Bryant. (A member of the CAHS basketball team, Bryant later played with the Harlem Globetrotters.)

There are about a dozen letters (dated from 1910 to 1922) addressed to Phyllis W. Waters from journalist T. Thomas Fortune. Signing his letters "Uncle Tim," Fortune offers advice to Waters, often writing from the offices of the *Washington Eagle* and *Norfolk Journal and Guide*. During World War I, Waters regularly corresponded with Wilbur F. "Sgt. Hop" Brown, a United States Army soldier. Brown was stationed at Camp Custer and later he writes Waters from St. Maurice, France. He professes his love and tells her that he looks forward to their impending marriage. Brown served in Europe with Co. B, 339<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

Waters graduated from Ann Arbor (Michigan) High School in 1913. A copy of her yearbook is in box 2, folder 1. In 1918, Phyllis W. Waters got a job offer (that she declined) to teach French at Howard University. Box 1, folder 15 contains several letters pertaining to the job offer—many are from individuals advocating for Waters's appointment.

Waters was a school teacher with the Indianapolis Public Schools for nearly 50 years. She was a card-carrying member of several organizations. (See membership cards in box 2, folder 3). A small sampling of her community service awards is in box 2, folder 4. Waters was especially active in educational organizations including the Indianapolis Education Association, Indiana State Teachers Association, National Educational Association, English Teachers' Club of Indianapolis, the Indiana Council of Teachers of English, and the Indiana Classroom Teachers Association. She was also a member of several social organizations including Flanner House, the Senate Avenue Young Men's Christian Association, and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. The collection contains minutes, correspondence, and other material pertaining to many organizations. Beginning with folder 6 in box 2, the organization files are arranged alphabetically.

Waters was a property owner. There are materials in the collection that relate to her ownership of two Indianapolis houses located at 2212 Brookside Dr. and 941 N. California St. The records (box 2, folders 13–16) include receipts from hardware and paint stores, lumber companies, and utilities. There are also paid bills from electrical and plumbing work, insurance, and an array of home repairs.

Phyllis Wheatley Waters gave to numerous causes and organizations including medical associations and institutions, schools, educational and community funds, and youth agencies. She donated to the American Red Cross, the Community Chest, Boy Scout Troop #32, *Indianapolis Recorder* Charities, Crossroads, Korean Teacher Relief, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, United Negro College Fund, Indianapolis Fisk Club, Crispus Attucks High School Faculty Scholarship, University of Michigan Alumni Association, Senate Avenue Young Men's Christian Association, and Father Flanagan's Boys Town. Disregarding denominational labels, Waters gave to many religious institutions including the Living Church, All Saints Episcopal Church, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Capitol Avenue 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist School, St. Monica's Guild and St. Philip's Episcopal Church. Documentation of her charity donations is in box 2, folder 17.

## SERIES CONTENTS

### Series 1: Biographical Notes and Correspondence, 1910–71

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Biographical Notes	Box 1, Folder 1
Correspondence, 1910–11	Box 1, Folder 2
Correspondence, Jan.–Nov. 1913	Box 1, Folder 3
Correspondence, Dec. 1913	Box 1, Folder 4
Correspondence, Jan. 1914	Box 1, Folder 5
Correspondence, Feb.–Apr. 1914	Box 1, Folder 6
Correspondence, May 1914	Box 1, Folder 7
Correspondence, June–Dec. 1914	Box 1, Folder 8
Correspondence, Jan.–June 1915	Box 1, Folder 9
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Correspondence, Jan.–June 1916	Box 1, Folder 11
Correspondence, July–Dec. 1916, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 12
Correspondence, 1917	Box 1, Folder 13
Correspondence, 1918	Box 1, Folder 14
Correspondence, Jan.–Mar. 1918 (related to employment at Howard University)	Box 1, Folder 15
Correspondence, 1919	Box 1, Folder 16
Correspondence, 1921–1971	Box 1, Folder 17
Correspondence, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 18
Correspondence, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 19

## **Series 2: Yearbook, Speeches, and Organizations, 1913–61**

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<i>The Omega</i> (Ann Arbor High School yearbook), 1913	Box 2, Folder 1
Speeches, 1955, n.d.	Box 2, Folder 2
Membership cards	Box 2, Folder 3
Awards	Box 2, Folder 4
Programs	Box 2, Folder 5

Alpha Kappa Alpha	Box 2, Folder 6
Indiana Classroom Teachers Association	Box 2, Folder 7
Indiana State Teacher's Association, 1956–61	Box 2, Folder 8
Indianapolis Public Schools, 1952–66	Box 2, Folder 9
National Education Association, 1956–57, n.d.	Box 2, Folder 10
United Negro College Fund	Box 2, Folder 11

### **Series 3: Financial Records, 1907–62**

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Financial Records, Property, 1907–20	Box 2, Folder 12
Financial Records, Property, 1949–50	Box 2, Folder 13
Financial Records, Property, 1951–54	Box 2, Folder 14
Financial Records, Property, 1955–57	Box 2, Folder 15
Financial Records, Property, 1958–62	Box 2, Folder 16
Financial Records, Charity and Church	Box 2, Folder 17
Financial Records, Education, 1955–58	Box 2, Folder 18

### **CATALOGING INFORMATION**

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://157.91.92.2/>
2. Click on the "Traditional Search" icon.
3. Click on the "Call Number" radio button.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0589).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.