



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

Guide to the

Ida Jones collection

1931-1988 [bulk 1951-1988]

Sc MG 414

Summary

Creator: Jones, Ida, 1874-1959

Title: Ida Jones collection

Date: 1931-1988 [bulk 1951-1988]

Size: .2 linear feet

Source: Gift, Townsend, Roberta, 1991

Abstract: The Ida Jones Collection consists of letters Jones wrote to her friend and sponsor Roberta Townsend (1931-1958) concerning her artwork, personal matters and her health. There is also correspondence following her 1959 death between her daughter, Ida J. Williams, Roberta Townsend and representatives from various American art museums and civic organizations concerning the sale and exhibit of Jones' paintings.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Ida Jones collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Ida Ella Ruth Jones, primitive American folk painter, was the daughter of a former slave who began her artistic career in 1945 at age 72. Most of her early years were spent working on her parents' farm and caring for her younger brothers and sisters. In 1892 she married William Jones, minister of the Church of Christ in Ercildoun, Pennsylvania and the village blacksmith. Together they raised ten children, including Ida J. Williams, who also became her biographer.

Jones devoted her time to her family, church and community until she began painting in both oil and watercolor. A "primitive," with only three formal lessons in oil painting, she painted the things around her that she loved most: houses, fields, landscapes, flowers, fruit and animals, as well as biblical parables. Her work was discovered which led to several exhibitions and one-woman shows. She first exhibited at the Chester County (Pa.) Art Association's 19th Annual Spring Show in 1950. In 1951 her first one-woman show was held at Lincoln University. Two years later Mr. and Mrs. Walter P. Townsend, friends

and patrons of the artist, sponsored another one-woman show in Pennsylvania. In 1952 Jones' paintings were exhibited with the work of 115 other artists at the Pyramid Club Art Show in Philadelphia. In addition, her work was shown at the Art Alliance in that city, where a New York collector took interest in her painting. In all, Jones completed over three hundred paintings in her fourteen years as an artist.

Scope and Content Note

The Ida Jones Collection consists of letters Jones wrote to her friend and sponsor Roberta Townsend (1931-1958) concerning her artwork, personal matters and her health. There is also correspondence following her 1959 death between her daughter, Ida J. Williams, Roberta Townsend and representatives from various American art museums and civic organizations concerning the sale and exhibit of Jones' paintings.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American painters
African American women artists

Titles

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

Names

Jones, Ida, 1874-1959
Townsend, Roberta
Williams, Ida J