

C Tolson, Fannie Marie (1911-2005), Papers, 1890s-2005
1704 2.3 linear feet, 3 audio cassettes, 2 video cassettes, 1 dvd

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INTRODUCTION

Fannie Marie Tolson was the first African-American educator to teach in the desegregated schools of Fayette, Missouri. Her papers include family correspondence and photographs, memorabilia from Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri, teaching aids, documents concerning St. Paul's Methodist Church in Fayette, and recordings of two interviews conducted with Tolson.

DONOR INFORMATION

The Fannie Marie Tolson Papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Tolson on 14 July 2005 (Accession No. 6078). Additions to the collection were made on 21 July 2005 by John Viessman; 28 September 2005 by the State Historical Society of Missouri; and 16 November 2005 by her nieces, Dawn Harrison and Gwen Jackson.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Fannie Marie Tolson was born on 20 August 1911 to Ernest Willoughby Tolson and Anne Bell Hill Tolson. Her father owned a farm outside of Fayette, Missouri and her mother had been a school teacher prior to her marriage.

Tolson attended Lincoln School in Fayette until 1928. Because Fayette did not have a high school for African-Americans, Tolson sued and the school district was forced to pay her tuition and room and board at Lincoln University High School in Jefferson City, Missouri. She continued her education at Lincoln University after high school and earned a degree in teaching in 1934. She was the first in her family to earn a college degree.

She taught at Bowling Green (Missouri) High School in 1936 and then at Sumner High School in Boonville, Missouri, from 1937 to 1949, when she returned to Fayette to care for her mother. In 1952, she began teaching at Lincoln School in Fayette and served as principal there from 1960 to 1966. When the schools were integrated in 1966, Tolson moved to Fayette Intermediate School where she remained until her retirement in 1977, although she substituted in the school system for many more years.

She helped form the Human Development Corporation in Howard County and also the Human Enterprise Organization, for which she served as Vice-President in 1990. In 1965, she helped organize Howard County's first Head Start program.

Tolson was a lifelong member of St. Paul's Methodist Church and served as its historian and co-chair of the administrative board. She later became certified as a lay speaker for the United Methodist Church.

In 1976, Governor Kit Bond made her an honorary Bicentennial Commissioner and in 2000, she was a speaker at the opening of an exhibit at the State Capitol on Missouri Segregated Schools. In 2005, she was selected as the first recipient of the

“Missouri Treasure Award” and was the co-grand marshal of Fayette’s Juneteenth parade.

Tolson died on 27 August 2005.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Fannie Marie Tolson Papers contain family correspondence and photographs, memorabilia from Lincoln University, teaching aids, documents concerning St. Paul’s Methodist Church, and recordings of two interviews conducted with Tolson. They are divided into six series: **Family, Personal, Teaching, Lincoln University, St. Paul’s Methodist Church, and Subject Files.**

The **Family** series contains correspondence and photographs of Tolson and her family and a scrapbook and other materials documenting the education of Tolson’s siblings at Lincoln School in Fayette and Lincoln University and High School in Jefferson City. There are also photographs of Tolson’s students from Lincoln School and the Fayette schools. One of the highlights of this series includes a wide variety of holiday greeting cards from the early part of the 20th century. The correspondence and photographs are arranged chronologically and the school documents are arranged topically.

The **Personal** series documents Tolson’s education, teaching career, and work within her church. The series contains her writings, awards and publicity clippings, two interviews with Tolson, and correspondence. It is arranged alphabetically by topic.

The **Teaching** series contains teaching aids Tolson used in the classroom and programs from school events. The series is arranged chronologically by school where she taught.

The **Lincoln University** series consists of student newspapers, bulletins, and programs from campus events. The materials document life on campus for both university and high school students in the 1930s and 1940s. The series is arranged alphabetically by topic.

The **St. Paul’s Methodist Church** series contains programs from United Methodist Women meetings and other church conferences, materials on race and the Methodist Church, and histories of St. Paul’s. The series is arranged alphabetically by topic.

The **Subject Files** series contains copies of the periodical, *The Negro History Bulletin*, published materials on African-Americans, a history of Fayette produced for their sesquicentennial in 1973, movie advertisements from the 1930s and 1940s, and miscellaneous items including baseball stamps from the 1960s, Indian Chewing Gum trading cards, and a Harlem Globetrotters program.

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- f. 8-14 Photographs of family, c. 1890s-1990s
- f. 15-17 Photographs of students, 1956-1977, n.d.
- f. 18 Alma Tolson
- f. 19 Merrill Tolson Scrapbook
- f. 20 Tolson family, Miscellaneous

Personal Series

- f. 21 Awards, Publicity, Miscellaneous
- f. 22 Education
- f. 23 Interviews
- f. 24 Lincoln University Scrapbook
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Teaching Series

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