

The Filson Historical Society

**Boston-Townes family
Papers, 1887-1920**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, see the Curator of Special Collections.

Size of Collection:
0.33 cubic feet and one volume

Location Number:
Mss./A/B747

Boston-Townes family Papers, 1887-1920

Scope and Content Note

The Boston-Townes family Papers consist of correspondence between members of the Boston and Townes families, chiefly Edna Townes (nee Boston), her husband Isaac Townes, and her mother Alice Boston. These papers document farm life, family life, and the professional life of a doctor during the years 1877-1920.

The correspondence is arranged chronologically, and features both original letters and a volume of transcriptions which contains additional letters not donated. The letters discuss life on the Boston family farm in lower McLean County, Kentucky, including harvesting, school, and selling crops. They also discuss classes and the cost of tuition for Edna Boston, who studied for one year at Eminence College in Eminence, Kentucky.

Edna later married Dr. Isaac "Ike" Townes, and letters frequently discuss his professional duties, a graduate school for medicine he attended in Chicago, and their family life. Later letters to their son, Fay, discuss his career prospects and mention his service in the United States Navy during World War I.

The transcription was a project to publish a book entitled *Edna Earle Boston Townes, March 27, 1871-October 24, 1920: An Autobiographical Biography*. It contains transcriptions of both the original letters and additional letters that were not donated. The letters in this volume are arranged by broad themes, and the volume also includes a chronology of Edna Earle Boston Townes' life, brief family histories and biographical sketches by various members of the family, and five recipes. Footnotes to the transcriptions provide additional context for events and individuals mentioned in the letters.

Much of the work of collecting the letters and creating the transcripts was performed by Edna Townes' grand-daughter, Martha Townes Grattan. After Grattan's death in 2007 the work of editing the volume was finished by Joyce Colony, a professional editor.

The collection also includes different versions of the transcription volume, as well as family trees (folders 13-14).

A CD containing digital copies of *Edna Earle Boston Townes, March 27, 1871-October 24, 1920: An Autobiographical Biography* and 76 photographs is included with the finding aid. Photos depict property, gravestones, and individuals associated with the Boston and Townes family. Many photos have captions describing the contents of the photo. Only one original photo, of an unidentified woman, is included within the collection. This photo is in the finding aid folder.

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Biographical Note

Alice Clay Harper married Charles Oliver Boston in 1870. Charles and Alice Boston lived in lower McLean County, Kentucky. Their daughter, Edna Boston (1871-1920), wrote the majority of the letters contained in this collection. Edna Boston attended Eminence College, Eminence, Ky., from September 1888 to June 1889. Edna Boston married Dr. Isaac Townes (1867-1944) in 1892, and the two were the parents of Dr. Charles Dwight Townes (1899-1972). Dr. Charles Townes was Chairman of the Division and Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Louisville from 1941 to 1965. Another child, Fay Townes, graduated from the University of Kentucky with a degree in Agriculture, and served in the United States Navy during World War I. Their daughter, Pauline Townes Finley (1910-1988), married Gordon B. Finley, Sr. (1908-1990) around 1935 and was a teacher in the Jefferson County Public School system. She and her husband were both in the Army, and are buried in the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky.

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Folder List

Box 1

Folder 1: Correspondence, 1887
Folder 2: Correspondence, 1888
Folder 3: Correspondence, 1889
Folder 4: Correspondence, 1890
Folder 5: Correspondence, 1891
Folder 6: Correspondence, 1899
Folder 7: Correspondence, 1910
Folder 8: Correspondence, 1911
Folder 9: Correspondence, 1918
Folder 10: Correspondence, 1919
Folder 11: Correspondence, 1920
Folder 12: Miscellaneous envelopes
Folder 13: Family genealogies
Folder 14: Earlier versions of *Edna Earle Boston Townes, March 27, 1871-October 24, 1920: An Autobiographical Biography*

Volume 15: *Edna Earle Boston Townes, March 27, 1871-October 24, 1920: An Autobiographical Biography*

**Boston-Townes Family
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Subject Headings

Alcoholism – Kentucky
Automobiles
Baking – Kentucky – Madisonville
Baptists – Illinois – Chicago
Boston family
Cable cars (streetcars) – Illinois – Chicago
Chicago (Ill.) – Description and travel
Christmas
Condolence notes
Contract labor – Kentucky
Courtship – Kentucky
Crops – Kentucky
Drugstores – Kentucky
Education
Education – Costs
Elections – Kentucky
Eminence College (Eminence, Ky.)
Farm life – Kentucky
Farms – Kentucky
Firearms accidents – Kentucky
Floods – Kentucky – Louisville
Formulas, recipes, etc. – Kentucky – Madisonville
Funeral rites and ceremonies – Kentucky – Louisville
Humorous poetry
Industrial Workers of the World
Influenza Epidemic, 1918-1919 – Kentucky – Madisonville
Kentucky – Social life and customs
Letterheads
Love-letters – Kentucky – Louisville
Medicine – Kentucky
Medicine – Practice – Kentucky
Mental health counseling
Music in churches – Kentucky
Ohio River
Parenting
Pharmacists – Kentucky
Physicians – Kentucky
Postcards

Preaching – Kentucky
Psychotherapy
Railroads – Kentucky
Religion
Robbery – Illinois – Chicago
School children – Kentucky
Schools – Kentucky – Henry County
Sewing
Sewing machines – Kentucky
Social life and customs
Strikes and lockouts – Washington (State) – Aberdeen
Teaching – Kentucky
Telephone – Kentucky
Tennis
Thanksgiving
Tobacco – Kentucky
Tornadoes – Kentucky – Louisville
Townes family
Traffic accidents – Illinois – Chicago
Transportation
Tuition
Women – Education – Kentucky
Women college students – Kentucky
World War, 1914-1918