

PENNSSTATE



Guide to the Vivian Virtue Papers, 1932-2000

Accession number: 1998-0381R
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Table of Contents

1 Descriptive Summary	1
2 Administrative Information	1
2.1 Access	1
2.2 Preferred Citation	1
3 Arrangement	1
4 Biographical Note	1
5 Scope and Content	3
6 Index Terms	4
6.1 Personal Name Subjects	4
6.2 Correspondents	4
6.3 Corporate Subjects	4
6.4 Topical Subjects	4
6.5 Form/Genre Terms	4
7 Container List	4
7.1 Personal Series	5
7.1.1 Address Books.	5
7.1.2 Awards.	5
7.1.3 Biographical Sketches.	5
7.1.4 Correspondence.	5
7.1.5 Diaries.	6
7.1.6 Financial Records.	6
7.1.7 Licenses.	6
7.1.8 Newspaper Clippings.	6
7.1.9 Obituaries.	6
7.1.10 Personal Interest.	6

7.1.11 Photographs.	6
7.2 Research Series	7
7.3 Writings Series	7
7.3.1 Broadcasts.	7
7.3.2 Original Poems.	7
7.3.3 Signed Copy.	9
7.3.4 Translations.	9

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Virtue, Vivian, 1911-1998
Title:	Vivian Virtue Papers, 1932-2000
Accession:	1998-0381R
Provenance:	Gift of Alan McLeod, 1998-2000
Extent:	3 cubic feet
Language:	Some poems are in Spanish and French.
Repository:	Pennsylvania State University, University Libraries, Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Access

Unrestricted access.

Preferred Citation

Vivian Virtue Papers, 1932-2000, Accession 1998-0381R, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, Pennsylvania State University.

Arrangement

The collection is organized into three series: Personal, Research, and Writings.

The files are arranged alphabetically, thereunder chronologically.

Biographical Note

Vivian Lancaster Virtue was a poet, translator, and broadcaster. He was born in Kingston, Jamaica on November 13, 1911, the son of Daniel and Mary Barnes Virtue.

Vivian Virtue was educated at Half Way Tree Primary School and then, for just three years, at Kingston College, a selective high school, to which he always remained loyal. His education consisted mainly of learning Latin and other languages, Greek poetry and mythology, religion, and literature, all taught by the headmaster, Dr. P.W. Gibson. The influence of Kingston College was long lasting, which is reflected in his traditional style of poetry, described as "Parnassian," since he was so fond of writing in the sonnet, villanelle, or rondeau form. Kingston College always instilled in Virtue a fondness of languages, since his translations are often preferred to his original poems. The original poems are mostly classical in content as well as style, addressing themes such as European and London scenes, and reflections on nature and on specific cultural events, like concerts or art exhibits. He also wrote various poems on current political topics such as South Africa, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King's assassination, as well as past events, like the Toussaint L'Ouverture's revolt, Marcus Garvey's achievements, and Jamaica's Morant Bay rebellion.

Upon completing his education, he then became employed as a clerk in the Department of Public Works. He was the assistant secretary and librarian of the Poetry League of Jamaica and, he was later elected vice-president. Virtue was also a founder member and later vice-president of the Jamaican Center of the International PEN Club and a member of the Royal Society of Literature (Great Britain). He later represented Jamaica at the PEN congresses in Lausanne (1951), London (1956), Brussels (1962), and in Oslo (1964).

Virtue was a co-founder of the New Dawn Press in Jamaica, created to encourage young black writers. He began his own career as a writer in November 1938 with the publication of his first volume of poetry in an edition of 500 copies. *Wings of the Morning* includes 47 poems, featuring one of his most famous villanelles, "King Solomon and Queen Balkis." After the publication of *Wings of the Morning*, Virtue found himself hailed in the 1930s and 1940s as the successor to Claude McKay, the Jamaican national poet, and his father-in-law. In 1942, Virtue married McKay's only daughter, Rhue Hope McKay.

In addition to original poetry, Virtue also translated a large number of works by Caribbean and European poets. He preferred the sonnet form and some have argued that his translations have more life to them than his original poems. Among his translations include the Cuban-born French Parnassian, Jose-Maria de Heredia's *Les Trophees*.

In 1950, Virtue's poetic work won the Constance Hollar Memorial Prize for Poetry by the Poetry League of Jamaica. In 1960, Virtue was awarded the Silver Musgrave Medal for Poetry by the Institute of Jamaica, and in 1965 he participated in the Commonwealth Arts Festival in London. Virtue's poem "Salute to a National Hero" (Marcus Garvey) was commissioned and read at the Royal Court Theatre recital, "Voices of the Caribbean."

Virtue's works have been included in numerous poetry anthologies and periodicals published in the West Indies, United Kingdom, and the United States, including *Poetry*

of the Negro (1949), *A Treasury of Jamaican Poetry* (1949), *Caribbean Quarterly* (1958), *Independence Anthology of Jamaican Literature* (1962), *Verse and Voice* (1965), *New Poems* (1966), *Caribbean Voices* (1966, 1970), *New Voices of the Commonwealth* (1968), and *West Indian Poetry* (1971). His poems have also appeared in countless newspapers and magazines, such as *Crisis*, *Focus*, *Life and Letters*, *London Mercury*, *New African*, *Poetry Review*, and *The Treasury of Jamaican Poetry*.

By the time he retired from the Jamaican Civil Service in 1961, Virtue had become a highly recognized and acknowledged member of the literary establishment in Kingston, and his name had long been associated with the poetry of Jamaica. After his retirement, Virtue moved to London where he became a frequent broadcaster in the Caribbean Voices radio program of the BBC. Virtue settled in England so that he could consult books in the British Library that were unavailable elsewhere. Virtue died on December 17, 1998.

Scope and Content

The Vivian Virtue Papers, spanning over sixty years, includes correspondence (1932-1992), original works, publications, translations, broadcasts, newspaper clippings, research, and photographs. Prominent correspondents include Harlem Renaissance poets Claude McKay and Langston Hughes, Arthur Guiterman (playwright, poet), Edna Manley (sculptor), John Hearne (composer), Michael Anthony (novelist), Virtue's family, and many others. Many Christmas cards and postcards are included within the series. Original works include verse written in the more traditional forms, such as the sonnet, the villanelle, and the rondeau. The bulk of the original poems series consists of each poem in various stages of completion with both holograph and fair copies of each poem. The Vivian Virtue Papers offers an accurate picture of the writing process in all stages of composition. Some poems are on the backs of concert and lecture programs, while others are on onionskin, bond, and lined letter-paper. Many of the poems are dated and some include Virtue's initials.

Publications include collections of anthologies featuring Virtue's poems, as well as smaller collections of poems such as *High Horse Riderless* (1937-67). A signed copy of Virtue's only volume of poetry, *Wings of the Morning* (1938), is also present in the collection. In addition, the publication series consists of a song based on Virtue's poem "Nocturne," composed by Granville Campbell. Translations include works in the French and Spanish by Jose-Maria de Heredia, Charles Baudelaire, Luc Grimard, Jose Santos Chocano, and others. Many of the translations contain both holograph and final drafts of each poem. Broadcasts for the BBC consist of scripts on Marcus Garvey, William Wordsworth, the history of the British West Indies, and commentary on Virtue's own poetic process. Also included in the collection are address books, diaries only partially filled in, and biographical sketches and reviews on Virtue's volume of poetry, *Wings of the Morning*. The clippings from 1960-1993 relate to Virtue's two awards and also about life in Jamaica and the West Indies, notably the 1980 election for prime minister. Research consists of notes for corrections to be made, or for future use, an outline of thirty variations on the Petrarchan form of the sonnet, and notebooks filled with both drafts and ideas for poems. The photographs in the collection encompass wedding

photos (December 1942), and portraits of Vivian both alone and with various friends and family members. There are also many photos of Hope McKay Virtue, mostly early 1990s.

Index Terms

These materials are indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Pennsylvania State University. Researchers wishing to find related materials should search the catalog under these index terms.

Personal Name Subjects

Virtue, Vivian, 1911-1998

Heredia, Jose-Maria de, 1842-1905. Les Trophees.

Correspondents

Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967

McKay, Claude, 1890-1948

Corporate Subjects

PEN (Organization)

Poetry League of Jamaica

Topical Subjects

Jamaican poetry

Parnassianism

Form/Genre Terms

Poems

Translations

Container List

Personal Series

Personal, 1938-1995.

Address Books.

Box 1
Folder 01
Address Books (2)

Awards.

Box 1
Folder 20
Prize Regulations for Casa de las Americas Award, 1978

Biographical Sketches.

Biographical Sketches, 1938-1995.
Box 1
Folder 02
Biographical sketches and notes of his friends, 1938-1995
Box 1
Folder 03
Biographical sketches on Vivian Virtue, 1945-1991

Correspondence.

Correspondence, 1932-2000.
Box 1
Folder 09
Correspondence A-Bo, 1933-1992
Box 1
Folder 10
Correspondence Bu-M, 1934-1990
Box 1
Folder 11
Correspondence N-P, 1938-1991
Box 1
Folder 12
Correspondence R-W, 1932-1978
Box 1
Folder 13
Letters of Appreciation (book, awards), 1938-1960
Box 1
Folder 14
Letters about *Les Trophees*, 1967-1969
Box 1

Folder 15
Letters of Hope McKay Virtue, 1973-1992
Box 1
Folder 16
Letters to Alan McLeod regarding Vivian Virtue, 1989-2000
Box 1
Folder 17
Letters from Vivian Virtue, 1965-1990

Diaries.

Box 1
Folder 04
Diaries (3), 1969-1974

Financial Records.

Box 1
Folder 05
Financial Records, 1961-1997

Licenses.

Box 1
Folder 06
Licenses (2), 1942-1993

Newspaper Clippings.

Box 1
Folder 18
Newspaper Clippings (30), 1960-1993

Obituaries.

Box 1
Folder 07
Obituaries (12), 1998

Personal Interest.

Box 1
Folder 08
Personal Interest

Photographs.

Box 1
Folder 19

Photographs, 1942-1990s

Research Series

Box 1
Folder 21
Research items for poems

Writings Series

Writings, 1930-1991.

Broadcasts.

Broadcasts.
Box 1
Folder 21
Broadcasts (10), 1944-1974

Original Poems.

Original poems, 1930-1991.
Box 1
Folder 23
Original Poems A-C, 1946-1991
Box 1
Folder 24
Original Poems D-I, 1939-1991
Box 1
Folder 25
"Homage to Virgil" with drafts, 1982
Box 1
Folder 26
Original Poems J-N, 1946-1990
Box 1
Folder 27
Original Poems O-R, 1946-1991
Box 1
Folder 28
Original Poems S-T, 1940-1990
Box 1
Folder 29
Original Poems U-Y, 1941-1986
Box 1
Folder 30
Collection of unpublished works, 1949
Box 1
Folder 31
Collected verse, 1930-1962

Box 2
Folder 01
Manuscript entered for competition
Box 2
Folder 02
Miscellaneous poetry drafts
Box 2
Folder 03
Notebooks, unpublished, 1962
Box 2
Folder 04
Notebooks, unpublished, 1948-1987
Box 2
Folder 05
Notebooks, unpublished, 1962-1972
Box 2
Folder 06
Parody of *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, 1986-1991
Box 2
Folder 07
Parody of *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, 1986-1991
Box 2
Folder 08
Parody of *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, 1986-1991
Box 2
Folder 09
Poetry reading, 1974
Box 2
Folder 10
Publication, "Affirming Flame: Poems," 1941-1951
Box 2
Folder 11
Publication, "Amityville" (Portrait of a Jamaican Village), 1934-1964
Box 2
Folder 12
Publication, *Caribbean Quarterly: An Anthology of West Indian Poetry*, 1958
Box 2
Folder 13
Publication, 1965
Box 2
Folder 14
Publication, Facsimile copies of poems published after *Wings of the Morning*,
1940-1991
Box 2
Folder 15
Publication, "Flowers of Fire," 1966
Box 2
Folder 16
Publication, "High Horse Riderless: Selected Poems," A-N, 1937-1967

Box 2
Folder 17
Publication, "High Horse Riderless: Selected Poems," P-V, 1937-1967
Box 2
Folder 18
Publication, "Last Poems," 1968-1991
Box 2
Folder 19
Publication, *Life and Letters and the London Mercury*, 1948
Box 2
Folder 20
Publication, "Models for Phidias" drafts (a.k.a. "Attic Frieze"), 1981-1982
Box 2
Folder 21
Publication, *Poetry League Year Book*, 1940-1941
Box 2
Folder 22
Publication, *Wings of the Morning*, drafts, 1938
Box 2
Folder 23
Publication, *Wings of the Morning*, original typescript, 1938
Box 2
Folder 24
Publication, *Wings of the Morning*, original copy, signed, 1938
Box 2
Folder 25
Publication, *Wings of the Morning*, review and recital program, 1938
Box 3
Folder 01
Publication, *The Poetry of the West Indies: An Anthology*, compiled by Wycliffe Bennett and W. Adolphe Roberts
Box 3
Folder 02
Song, "Nocturne," 1938-1976
Box 3
Folder 03
Sonnets written after first visit to Europe, 1951
Box 3
Folder 04
Unpublished poems, 1946-1984

Signed Copy.

Box 3
Folder 05
Claude McKay's poem "Flameheart"

Translations.

Translations, 1950-1976.
Box 3
Folder 06
Rafael Alberti, Spanish, 1966
Box 3
Folder 07
Guillaume Apollinaire, French, 1974
Box 3
Folder 08
Charles Baudelaire, French, 1962
Box 3
Folder 09
Bonifacio Byrne, Spanish, 1950
Box 3
Folder 10
Alejo Carpentier, Spanish, 1970
Box 3
Folder 11
Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Spanish, 1966
Box 3
Folder 12
Aime Cesaire, French, 1969-1974
Box 3
Folder 13
Jose Santos Chocano, Spanish
Box 3
Folder 14
Ruben Dario, Spanish, 1950-1975
Box 3
Folder 15
Salvador Diaz Miron, Spanish, 1966
Box 3
Folder 16
Birago Diop, French, 1969
Box 3
Folder 17
Joachim Du Bellay, French, 1966
Box 3
Folder 18
Theophile Gautier, French
Box 3
Folder 19
Lopez Golderas, Spanish, 1950
Box 3
Folder 20
Enrique Gonzalez Martinez, Spanish, 1966
Box 3
Folder 21
Luc Grimard, French, 1950

Box 3
Folder 22
Jose-Maria Heredia, French, 1960-1976
Box 3
Folder 23
Jose-Maria Heredia, French, 1960-1976
Box 3
Folder 24
Jose-Maria Heredia, French, 1960-1976
Box 3
Folder 25
Jose-Maria Heredia, French, 1960-1976
Box 3
Folder 26
Jose-Maria Heredia, French, 1960-1976
Box 3
Folder 27
Jose-Maria Heredia, French, 1960-1976
Box 3
Folder 28
Jose-Maria Heredia, French, 1960-1976
Box 3
Folder 29
Miguel Hernandez, Spanish, 1966
Box 3
Folder 30
Horace, 1975-1976
Box 3
Folder 31
Leconte de Lisle, French, 1965
Box 3
Folder 32
Marion Lohead, French
Box 3
Folder 33
Manuel Machado, Spanish
Box 3
Folder 34
Martial, 1975
Box 3
Folder 35
Juan Ramon Molina, Spanish, 1950
Box 3
Folder 36
Manuel Jose Othon, Spanish, 1966
Box 3
Folder 37
Saint-John Perse, French
Box 3

Folder 38
Manuel Serafin Pichardo, Spanish, 1950
Box 3
Folder 39
Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo, French
Box 3
Folder 40
Emile Roumer, French
Box 3
Folder 41
Leopold Sedar Senghor, French
Box 3
Folder 42
Duracine Vaval, French
Box 3
Folder 43
Ramon Manuel Valverde, Spanish, 1948
Box 3
Folder 44
Paul Verlaine, French, 1974
Box 3
Folder 45
Francois Villon, French, 1976
Box 3
Folder 46
Arthur Waley