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John Henry Bias
(1879-1939)
Papers, 1928-1939

Volume: 1 Linear Foot

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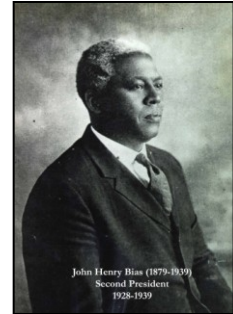
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Biographical Note:

John Henry Bias was born in Palmyra, Missouri on June 11, 1879. His father, James W. Bias, was employed by the C.B. & Q. Railroad. John H. Bias' mother, Dinah Arnold Bias, was originally from Kentucky. John H. Bias was educated in the public schools of Marion County, Missouri and later attended Lincoln Institute, in Jefferson City, Missouri from which he was graduated with the B.S.D. and A.B. degrees in 1901. He attended University of Chicago for two and a half years for post-graduate study.



Bias returned to Lincoln and taught mathematics and drawing during the 1903-1904 school year. In 1904, he became professor of mathematics and science at Elizabeth City State Normal School, and remained there until 1910. Professor Bias was married on August 30, 1907 to Miss Frances Lenora Lane of Baxter Springs, Kansas, formerly of Tennessee. Frances Lane Bias was also educated at Lincoln Institute. The couple would have seven children: John, Bernice, James, Leon (deceased at an early age), Charles, Elizabeth, and Lillian.

Professor Bias left Elizabeth City to become the chair of the department of natural sciences at Shaw University, where he taught for ten years. During the last two years of existence of the medical school at Shaw, Professor Bias served as head of the department of Medical Chemistry.

In 1917 Professor Bias left Shaw to lead the Berry O'Kelley School in Method (near Raleigh) North Carolina. The school, established in 1910, was one of the first rural high schools for African Americans in North Carolina. Six years later, Professor Bias returned to Elizabeth City State Normal in order to assume the role of vice principal in 1923. When Dr. Moore retired in 1928, the Board of Trustees named Dr. Bias President – the first chief executive to have that title. On Commencement day, May 25th, 1928, Trustee and Board Secretary Mrs. James G. Fearing announced:

“The Board has decided to drop the mantle of president for this institution upon one who has been closely associated with Professor Moore for many years, one who has the best interests of the institution at heart and who comes as nearly being the type of man as our President Emeritus, Professor Moore, as any one we could possibly have found had we searched the state over—Professor J.H. Bias, who has been vice-principal for some time.”

Mrs. Evelyn Johnson wrote in her *History of Elizabeth City State University* that President Bias was the head of State Normal School during an era of educational and economic uncertainty. He wholeheartedly embraced the statewide teacher-training educational objective of training individuals to make worthwhile contributions while living in a free, democratic society. According to Johnson, his philosophy of education was:

“I am in favor of a type of education that leads to complete living which includes an education of the Head, Hand, and Heart.”

At the same time, President Bias moved steadily toward his goal of upgrading the institution. He discontinued the High School department in 1931, and despite the struggle of the Depression

years, shifted the curriculum toward the day when the institution would become a baccalaureate degree-granting four year college. In 1937, President Bias received approval from the State of North Carolina to proceed formally with the planning and implementation of a baccalaureate program, which became a reality in 1939 when the first four-year class of 26 graduated with Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education degrees. The name of the school changed from Elizabeth City State Normal School to Elizabeth City State Teachers College.

John Henry Bias died on July 15, 1939 while serving his eleventh year as the president of the institution which had become Elizabeth City State Teachers College.

Scope and Content Note:

The Bias Papers are composed of 1 linear foot of material, c. 1928 to 1939, which is arranged in four series: Biographical Material, Correspondence, Writings, and Printed Material. Images are housed in the ECSU University Archives' Photograph files. The majority of the collection consists of correspondence President Bias sent and received during his administration at Elizabeth City State Normal School. Biographical material includes published sketches of his life and career, newspaper clippings and obituaries. Printed materials reflect a variety of organizations in which Bias participated and maintained professional interest.

Correspondence files during Bias' ten-year term as chief executive officer of Elizabeth City State Normal reveal much about the problems he encountered as the region and the nation was plunged into the Great Depression. The topic of money—paying bills and extracting payment from students' families—concerns the majority of the letters and notes in the files. Local bank closings in Elizabeth City and neighboring Edenton are mentioned in several items. Applications for employment and cover letters are especially abundant in 1929 and 1930. Of particular interest are the correspondence and completed registration forms relating to a "Declamatory Contest" held on campus in 1927.

Printed material files include publications reflecting on the hard times of the 1930s. A "Questionnaire from the Committee of Negro Rural Housing of the White House Conference" and several editions of "Minutes and Proceedings, Division of Cooperation in Education and Race Relations" document issues with which citizens and legislators struggled. Of particular interest are printed lectures from a meeting of Jeanes [Fund] Supervisors, trained teachers assisting rural schools in upgrading teaching skills.

Timeline:

- 1879 Born June 11, Palmyra, Missouri.
- 1897 Began classes at Lincoln Institute (Collegiate Department) Jefferson City, Missouri
- 1901 Graduated from Lincoln Institute with B.S.D. and A.B. degrees
- 1901 Taught mathematics and drawing at Lincoln Institute

- 1902 Post-graduate work at University of Chicago.
- 1904 Appointed to teach mathematics and science at Elizabeth City (NC) State Normal School
- 1907 Married Frances Lenora Lane of Baxter Springs, Kansas, whom he met while at Lincoln.
- 1910 Appointed Chair of the Natural Sciences department at Shaw University.
- 1917 Left Shaw to head the Berry O'Kelley School in Method, North Carolina.
- 1922 Accepted appointment as assistant principal at Elizabeth City State Normal School beginning with the 1922-1923 school year.
- 1928 Named as first President of Elizabeth City State Normal upon retirement of Dr. Peter W. Moore.
- 1931 Discontinued State Normal High School department
- 1939 North Carolina General Assembly changed name of school to State Teachers College on March 28, and authorized granting of 4-year B.S. degrees in Elementary Education.
- 1939 Class of 4-year Baccalaureate students, 13 men and 13 women, graduated on May 19.
- 1939 Died July 15.

Collection Inventory:

Series	Folder Title	Box One
Correspondence	Annie Holland	
Correspondence	Correspondence 1926-1928	
Correspondence	Correspondence January –June 1929	
Correspondence	Correspondence July-August 1929	
Correspondence	Correspondence September –October 1929	
Correspondence	Correspondence November –December 1929	
Correspondence	Correspondence January-February 1930	
Correspondence	Correspondence March-April 1930	
Correspondence	Correspondence May-June 1930	
Correspondence	Correspondence July-August 1930	
Correspondence	Correspondence September-December 1930	

Series	Folder Title	Box Two
Correspondence	Correspondence 1931-1934	
Correspondence	Correspondence 1934-1936	
Correspondence	Correspondence 1937-1937	
Correspondence	Correspondence 1938	
Correspondence	Correspondence 1939	
Correspondence	Undated Correspondence and Lists	
Biography	Death of John Henry Bias 1939	
Biography	Death of Frances Lane Bias 1943	
Writings	Remarks at Dedication of Library 5/14/1939	
Biography	Biographical material	
Printed Material	"Public Welfare Progress" 1930	
Printed Material	Lectures Delivered at Group Conferences of Jeanes Supervisors of North Carolina 11/27/1928	
Printed Material	Records of Employees' fees paid 1929-1930	
Printed Material	Records of Student Accounts Summer School, 1939	
Printed Material	Undated scraps of material	
Printed Material	Statement of NC Governor O. Max Gardner to State Administrative Heads January 1932	
Printed Material	Norfolk Journal and Guide Education Issue 5/6/1939	
Printed Material	Howard University Bulletin Vol. 8 No. 1 January 1929	
Printed Material	"The Money Value of Education" 1928	
Printed Material	Supreme Council, 33 degree, Bulletin No. 252 1933	
Printed Material	North Carolina Teachers Record October 1934	
Printed Material	Questionnaire of Committee of Negro Rural Housing of the White House Conference 1931	
Printed Material	Program-Jeanes Supervisors Conference November 2 no year	
Printed Material	Minutes and Proceedings, Division of Cooperation in Education and Race Relations 12/10/1936	
Printed Material	Minutes and Proceedings, Third Annual Conference, Division of Cooperation in Education and Race Relations 5/10/1938	
Printed Material	Knoxville College Bulletin July 1938	
Printed Material	Typed History of Elizabeth City State Teachers College , circa 1960	
Printed Material	Application for [student] Admission [copy] 1928	
Printed Material	"Negro Child Welfare Week" announcement 8/1/1937	
Printed Material	Lyceum Offerings Candidates, 1938	
Printed Material	Applicants for Employment, various years 1929-1935	
Printed Material	Speech: "What's the Matter with Alma Mater?" by Harold L. Ickes 1/20/1938	
Printed Material	Announcement: Ada Mohn-Landis Prize 1938	
Printed Material	State Normal College Enrollment Lists 1937-1938	
Printed Material	"A Festival of Negro Music" Program (Federal Music Project) 5/26/1937	
Printed Material	Lecture: "The Individual's Responsibility to the Community in Matters of Health" 10/25/1935	
Printed Material	Proposed Plan of Farm Practice Program for state Normal, 1937-1938	

