Biographical Note

Agnes McConnell Sligh Turnbull (October 14, 1888 – January 31, 1982) was born in New Alexandria, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. She was the daughter of Alexander and Lucinda McConnell Sligh. In 1910, she graduated Phi Beta Kappa and was the Valedictorian of her class at Indiana State Normal School in Indiana, Pennsylvania.

After finishing her education at the University of Chicago, she began teaching high school English. She resigned from teaching in 1918 when she married an Englishman named James Lyall Turnbull just before he left for military service during World War I. In 1922, the Turnbull family moved to Maplewood, New Jersey. Agnes and James Turnbull adopted a little girl, Martha Turnbull O’Hearn (May 21, 1921 – August 27, 2006), who married James Paul O’Hearn on December 30, 1949 in Maplewood.


Agnes Sligh Turnbull wrote her memoir *Dear Me: Leaves from the Diary of Agnes Sligh Turnbull* (1941). All of her books were published by Houghton Mifflin.

In 1966, Agnes Sligh Turnbull appeared in *Who’s Who*. Her alma mater, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, conferred upon her the honorary Doctorate of Letters during their Centennial Convocation on September 13, 1974. Throughout her life, Agnes Sligh Turnbull maintained close ties to her hometown and many of the fictitious towns in her novels are based on New Alexandria, Pennsylvania. In 1982, Agnes Sligh Turnbull passed away at Saint Barnabus Medical Center in Livingston, New Jersey at the age of 93.

Scope and Content

The Agnes Sligh Turnbull Collection at the IUP Special Collections and University Archives is housed in one archival box. The collection includes correspondence, and
early drafts of Turnbull's novels. The collection contains a file of biographical information including various newspaper articles and an article written by Mrs. Turnbull concerning the adoption of her daughter Martha. Several notebooks, which are the handwritten copies of Agnes' books, can also be found in the collection. Notebooks of The Rolling Years (1936), Remember the End (1938), The Bishop's Mantle (1947), and The Gown of Glory (1952) are included. In addition to the handwritten notes for The Gown of Glory, galley proofs and page proofs have been donated for this book. A letter written by Agnes relates a short story which is titled A Belated Easter Tail. All of Turnbull’s novels housed in the IUP Special Collections & University Archives have been cataloged and are listed at the end of this collection finding aid.

In this collection, there is also an early inventory of the Agnes Sligh Turnbull Collection at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center in the Special Collections Library at Boston University. The Turnbull Collection at Boston University consists of 8 linear feet of manuscript materials.

**Provenance**
The collection was donated by Agnes Sligh Turnbull.

**Restrictions**
None.

**Processor**
This collection finding aid was updated by Special Collections in 2014.

**Container List**

**Box 1 (17 folders)**
1. Correspondence: letter from Agnes Sligh Turnbull "A Little Easter Tail," to little Sara Jane, Easter 1927
2. Correspondence: photocopy of the "A Little Easter Tail" letter (photocopy), 1927
3. Correspondence: letter from Agnes Sligh Turnbull to Dr. William W. Hassler (University President of IUP), in regard to the IUP Centennial Scrapbook and the 1974 Centennial Convocation at IUP, during which she received an honorary degree, handwritten letter dated April 15, 1975
4. Correspondence: letter from Agnes Sligh Turnbull to Dr. William Lafranchi (Director of the IUP Libraries) in regard to donating her manuscript notebooks, no date (circa 1970s-1980s)
5. Correspondence: letter to Special Collections Librarian Phillip Zorich from Bess Cochran, September 30, 1987
   a. The American Magazine (May 1929) “Agnes Sligh Turnbull describes the great adventure of adopting a baby,” pp. 44-45, 180, 182, 184 (original)
   b. New York Times Book Review (November 27, 1938) “Remember the End and other works of fiction: Agnes Turnbull’s portrait of a rugged individualist – Philip Barry’s War in Heaven, p. 7 (original and copy)


7. Correspondence about the collection inventory of [Agnes Sligh Turnbull Collection](http://example.com) in the Special Collections Library at Boston University at the [Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center](http://example.com), 1965-2000

8. Photograph of Agnes Sligh Turnbull in 1974, used for the IUP Centennial Convocation program

9. Book Dust Jackets of Turnbull’s first editions that were cataloged in Special Collections:
   a. *The Gown of Glory* (1952)
   b. *The Flowering* (1972)
   c. *Many a Green Isle* (1968)

10. Manuscript Notebook of Turnbull’s novel *The Rolling Years* (1936)

11. Manuscript Notebook of Turnbull’s novel *Remember the End* (1938)


15. Alma Mater:
   a. [1910 Indiana State Normal School (ISNS) Commencement Program](http://example.com), Agnes Sligh (Turnbull) was Valedictorian of her class (photocopy)
   b. [Fall 1974 IUP Report to the Alumni](http://example.com), announcing that author and alumni Agnes Sligh Turnbull and actor Jimmy Stewart will be receiving honorary degrees at the IUP Centennial Convocation on September 13, 1974 (photocopy)
   c. Centennial Convocation of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, honorary degree recipients novelist Agnes Sligh Turnbull and actor Jimmy Stewart, September 13, 1974
   d. Excerpt from *Indiana County 175th Anniversary History* by Clarence Stephenson, Volume III (1979), pp. 330-333, “Indiana Normal in the old days” written by Agnes Sligh Turnbull and published in the IUP Centennial Convocation program, September 13, 1974 (photocopy)

a. *Indiana Gazette*, February 1, 1982 (copy)
b. *Indiana Gazette*, February 2, 1982 (original and copy)

17. Biographical and bibliographic information about novelist Agnes Sligh Turnbull including a copy of this document (collection finding aid for Manuscript Group 41).

![Agnes Sligh Turnbull in 1970](image)

**Materials removed from Manuscript Group 41 and stored separately in the IUP Special Collections and University Archives**

1. Artifact: 5” Souvenir sterling silver spoon, attributed to being donated by Agnes Sligh Turnbull; obverse, Indiana Normal School of Pennsylvania (Indiana State Normal School) seal; reverse, inscribed “1910” (stored in vault)

Books by Agnes Sligh Turnbull (1888-1982) that are part of the Rare Book Collection in the IUP Special Collections & University Archives are available for research: