Summary

Creator: 409 Edgecombe Avenue Tenant Association

Title: 409 Edgecombe collection

Date: 1878-1987 [bulk 1920-1960]

Size: 6.34 linear feet (16 boxes, 1 oversize folder)

Source: Gift, 409 Edgecombe Avenue Tenant Association, 1988

Abstract: 409 Edgecombe Avenue, also known as Colonial Parkway Apartments, is a residential apartment building in the Sugar Hill section of Harlem that was home to many of the city's Black elite during the 1920s–1950s. The 409 Edgecombe collection consists of the personal effects of building residents, typically including correspondence, bills, receipts, and other ephemera. The collection is made up of the contents of trunks found in a storage room of the building by the 409 Edgecombe Avenue Tenant Association.

Preferred citation: [Item], 409 Edgecombe collection, Sc MG 804, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Separated Materials:
Material from the 409 Edgecombe collection was separated to create the following collections:

Walter White papers, Sc MG 479, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Aaron Douglas papers, Sc MG 308, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Fisher family papers, Sc MG 312, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Lillian Ross letters, Sc MG 547, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts,
Creator History

409 Edgecombe Avenue, also known as Colonial Parkway Apartments, is a residential apartment building in the Sugar Hill section of Harlem that was home to many of the city's Black elite during the 1920s–1950s.

The thirteen-story building was designed by architects Simon Schwartz and Arthur Gross in the neo-Georgian style and completed in 1917. Though initially its tenants were exclusively white, the building opened to Black tenants December 1, 1927, and they soon comprised the majority of the building's residents. The building's luxury amenities attracted members of New York's Black upper class, and residents included a number of notable figures, such as NAACP leaders Walter Francis White and Roy Wilkins, artists Aaron Douglas and Elizabeth Catlett, journalist Marvel Cooke, author and activist W.E.B. Du Bois, and lawyer and future Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall. Langston Hughes dubbed the building "Harlem's House of Celebrities" and described it as a hub of social activity for writers and poets during the Harlem Renaissance, declaring it "one of Harlem's most fashionable addresses." By the 1950s, Jet magazine argued the glamour of the Sugar Hill neighborhood was fading as some residents moved elsewhere, but named 409 Edgecombe as an exception for retaining "anything approaching the high-styled living of yesteryear."

Ownership of the building has passed through various entities, from its initial owner Candler Holding Corp., to Nicolas Jones and the Colonial Parkway Corp. in 1918, to Metropolitan Life Insurance in 1930, to the Antillean Holding Company, a Black-owned investment group led by Augustine A. Austin, in 1942. After Austin's son Orin defaulted on the mortgage, Metropolitan Life Insurance again took over, and in 1976 the building was purchased by Harold Tamarin. Due to Tamarin's failure to pay taxes, the city took ownership of the building in 1979, and it was converted to an HDFC co-op. In 1993, the building was given landmark status by New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The 409 Edgecombe collection consists of the personal effects of building residents, typically including correspondence, bills, receipts, and other ephemera. The collection is made up of the contents of trunks found in a storage room of the building by the 409 Edgecombe Avenue Tenant Association.
Please note that the belongings of some residents, including Walter White and Aaron Douglas, have been cataloged as separate collections; see under Separated Material for a full list.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged alphabetically by name, with unidentified material at the end.

**Key Terms**

**Genre/Physical Characteristic**
- Ephemera
- Personal correspondence
- Photographs

**Geographic Names**
- Harlem (New York, N.Y.) -- History -- 20th century
- Harlem (New York, N.Y.) -- Social life and customs

**Names**
- Boyd, Carroll
- 409 Edgecombe Avenue Tenant Association
Containers List

Allen, Earl 1938-1948
Earl Allen spent time in Utica, New York, where he worked at Hotel Utica; Uniontown, Pennsylvania; Newport, Rhode Island; and in New York City. It is unclear if he resided at 409 Edgecombe, but his friend Roger Pulley did and may be the reason his papers ended up in the building.

Correspondence 1938-1948
b. 1 f. 1 General 1938-1939
b. 1 f. 2 Cohen, Delia (mother) 1938-1939
b. 1 f. 3 Goodwin, Bertha 1938
Johnson, B 1938-1939
b. 1 f. 4 1938 August
b. 1 f. 5 1938 September
b. 1 f. 6 1938 October-December
b. 1 f. 7 1939
b. 1 f. 8 undated
b. 1 f. 9 "Pal" 1938
b. 1 f. 10 Pulley, Roger and Cora Mae 1938-1948
Includes letters from Roger Pulley to Allen, as well as letters to Roger from Cora Mae, and a letter from an E. Howard to Cora Mae Pulley.

b. 1 f. 11 Ephemera and Printed Matter
Includes a booklet of poems entitled Heartsease by Thomas Brockholst Livingston, sheet music by Livingston inscribed to "Mrs. E. N. Allen," as well as the booklet Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island by Charles A. Battle.

b. 1 f. 12 Books
b. 1 f. 13 Photos

Anderson, James Milton 1913-1918
James Milton Anderson was a second lieutenant in the Tuskegee Institute Officers’ Corp.

Letters from Ella C. Curry 1913-1918
b. 2 f. 1 1913
b. 2 f. 2 1914
b. 2 f. 3 1915
b. 2 f. 4 1916
b. 2 f. 5 1917-1918
b. 2 f. 6 undated
b. 2 f. 7 Ephemera 1914-1916
Includes a Tuskegee Institute Officers’ Corps booklet, an invitation to the inauguration of Robert Russa Moton at Tuskegee, and a handwritten poem by Anderson about Tuskegee.

b. 2 f. 8 Photos
Jennie Richards Boyd (1862–1933) was born in Loudoun County, Virginia. She married Thomas Boyd (d. 1926) in 1900, and the two lived in Washington, D.C., where Thomas worked at the Bureau of Printing and Engraving. The couple had three children: Ruth, Annette, and Carroll, all of whom ended up settling in New York City. At some point after her husband's death, Jennie moved to Harlem to live with her daughter Ruth, where she stayed the remainder of her life. Ruth Boyd was an actress who originated the role of Lola in Noël Coward's *Point Valaine* (1935), and also appeared in *Jezebel* (1933), *The Lost Leader* (1919), *Shakuntala* (1919), *A Woman's Honor* (1918), *The Maid of France* (1918), and *The Big Scene* (1918). She also taught in the Work Progress Administration's remedial reading and arithmetic programs through New York's Board of Education. Carroll Boyd was a musician and entertainer, dubbed by the *New York Amsterdam News* as "one of our best known cafe society artists." He performed at Cafe Encore for many years and was part owner of the Harlem nightclub Chez Clinton. Annette (Boyd) Booker was a public school teacher in Cape May, New Jersey, in the 1920s–1930s, then later moved to 409 Edgecombe. In 1924, she married Garvall H. Booker from Ardmore, Oklahoma. Their son Garvall (d. 1996) fought in World War II, attended Howard University, and became a dentist. In 1953, he married Dr. Doris Wethers, a pediatrician who was the third Black woman to graduate from Yale School of Medicine. Ruth, Carroll, and Annette were often featured in Black newspaper society papers, attending balls, parties, and social events in Harlem. The three siblings occasionally performed together as "The Boyd Trio." Carroll A. Brooks was a doctor and professor at Howard Medical School. He had no apparent relation to the Boyd family, but he shared a Washington, D.C., address with Jennie and Thomas.


b. 3 f. 1  
Booker, Annette E. (Boyd) 1915-1937  
Includes handwritten notes on teaching, correspondence, receipts, and personal ephemera.

b. 3 f. 2  
Booker, Garvall 1932-1945  
Includes a school report card and correspondence from Garvall to his mother and aunt written while he was stationed overseas during World War II.

b. 3 f. 3  
Boyd, Carroll M 1926-1937

b. 3 f. 4  
Boyd, Jennie Richards and Thomas 1880-1933

b. 3 f. 5  
Correspondence 1928-1938

b. 3 f. 6  
Bills, Contract, Teaching Documents 1927-1938  
Includes Boyd's Actors' Equity contract for *Point Valaine*, documents relating to her job as a teacher, bills, receipts, and personal ephemera, including an ID card and library card.

b. 3 f. 7  
Playbills 1933-1935  
Includes playbills for *Jezebel* (1933) and *Point Valaine* (1934-1935), both of which featured Ruth Boyd, as well as *Stevedore* (1934) and *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934).

b. 3 f. 8  
Brooks, Carroll A 1924-1928  
Primarily gas and electricity bills, with a letter to Brooks from Ira Booker.

b. 3 f. 9  
Ephemera and Printed Matter

b. 3 f. 10  
Press Clippings 1933-1935  
Includes Jennie Richard Boyd's obituary and reviews of two of plays Ruth appeared in, *Point Valaine* and *Jezebel*.

b. 3 f. 11  
Photos

o. 1  
Diplomas 1915-1922

Includes Annette Boyd's elementary diploma (1915) and Garvall H. Booker's high school diploma (1922).
England, Henry and Jessie 1915-1955
Henry and Jessie (Moreland) England were a married couple with a son, Henry Jr. Jessie was originally from Atlanta, Georgia, and in New York worked as a clerk in the post office. In August, 1939, Henry Jr., then age fourteen, went missing; the family placed several newspaper ads seeking information on his whereabouts, and in October he was found in Georgia and returned safely home.


b. 4 f. 1 England, Henry 1934-1939
Correspondence.

b. 4 f. 2-3 England, Jessie 1934-1939
Correspondence 1934-1939

b. 4 f. 4 Class Notes 1934-1936
b. 4 f. 5 Employment 1938-1939
b. 5 f. 1 Ephemera 1932-1939
b. 5 f. 2 Bills and Receipts 1934-1939
b. 5 f. 3 Medical Appointment Cards and Prescriptions 1934-1937
b. 5 f. 4 Press Clippings
b. 5 f. 5-6 Printed Matter 1915-1955
b. 5 f. 7 Photos

George, William Anthony 1936-1938
William Anthony George was a spiritualist who went by "Professor" or "Doctor" "Anthony George" or "George Anthony." Claiming to be from India, he advertised himself as a spiritual advisor and medium, conducting in-person services and broadcasting a radio program. (He may also have been the "George Anthony Pane" who from 1938 to 1955 ran a "dotology" column in the Philadelphia Tribune offering readers lucky numbers.) On multiple occasions he was put on trial on charges of fortune-telling: in 1934 in Baltimore, in 1937 in Philadelphia (during which he spent some months in jail), and 1950 in New York. In 1938, he married Jeneice Wong, reportedly (as written up in the Associated Negro Press) the cousin of actress Anna Mae Wong. By 1950, according to news reports of his New York trial, George had a new wife named Harriet.


Correspondence 1936-1938

b. 6 f. 1 1936 December-1937 August
b. 6 f. 2 1937 September-November
b. 6 f. 3 1937 December-1938 April
b. 6 f. 4-5 1938 May
b. 7 f. 1-2 1938 June
b. 7 f. 3-4 1938 July
b. 7 f. 5 1938 August
b. 7 f. 6 1938 September
b. 7 f. 7 undated
b. 8 f. 1 Betty [no last name] 1937
b. 8 f. 2 George, Jeneice 1938
George, William Anthony (cont.)
Correspondence (cont.)

b. 8 f. 3  Family correspondence 1937-1938
Includes letters from George's aunt, Mary Johnson; sister, Helen Vear; mother, Rosetta Vaughn; and nephew, Harold Baynham.

b. 8 f. 4  Bills and Receipts 1937-1938

b. 8 f. 5  Ephemera and Printed Matter 1937-1938
b. 15  Scrapbook
b. 8 f. 6  Photos

b. 8 f. 7  Harris, Gertrude 1921-1931
Gertrude Harris was a beautician who operated a salon in Harlem.
Includes business cards, a bank book, and two letters.

Higgs, Leila G 1924-1937
Leila Higgs was a post office clerk, as well as a singer and performer. She was married to Franklin Coffee from 1918 to 1927, then Robert Boynton until their divorce in 1931.

b. 8 f. 8  Correspondence 1925-1937
Includes Leila's divorce filings against her husband Franklin Coffee.

b. 8 f. 9  Bills, Receipts, and Ephemera 1924-1930
b. 8 f. 10  Photos

Madan, Gladys (Lewis) 1929-1940
Gladys Ruth Lewis was originally from Trevilians, Virginia. She was married to Jarrett Reed, Julian Appleton Madan (circa 1940), then Edward J. Mitchell (m. 1947).

Correspondence 1929-1940
b. 9 f. 1  1929-1939
b. 9 f. 2  1940
b. 9 f. 3  Julian Madan "Get Well Soon" Cards 1940
b. 9 f. 4  Lease, Bills, and Ephemera 1940
b. 9 f. 5  Photos

McDowell, N.B 1878-1926
McDowell lived in Buxton, Iowa. His daughter Susie A. Wright lived in Harlem and is perhaps the reason McDowell's papers ended up at 409 Edgecombe.

Correspondence, Bills, and Ephemera 1878-1926
b. 9 f. 6  Photos

Miller, Cécile 1951-1965
Cécile Miller was a student at New York University in the early 1960s.
b. 10 f. 1  General 1951-1962
Typed essays from Miller's "Introduction to Political Science" class (1959); St. John's University School of Law exams; a few items of personal correspondence.
b. 10 f. 2  NYU Class Notebooks 1964
b. 10 f. 3  Photos 1959-1965

Nelson, Mable Barbara 1949-1960
Mable Barbara Nelson (b. 1915) lived in Detroit, Michigan. Her papers also include the address of Emma Snellings at 409 Edgecombe.
b. 10 f. 4  Correspondence and Ephemera 1949-1960
b. 10 f. 5  Photos
Nelson, Mable Barbara (cont.)

b. 16  Scrapbook and Slides 1955-1959
       Perryman, Lillian 1937-1940

b. 10 f. 6  Correspondence and Programs 1937-1940
       Letter, postcard, and two programs from Marian Anderson performances.

b. 10 f. 7  Photos
       Simon, Albert and Alene 1928-1934

b. 10 f. 8  Correspondence 1932-1934

b. 10 f. 9  Bills, Receipts, and Ephemera 1928-1934

b. 10 f. 10  Photos

b. 10 f. 11  Strand, Hattie Chapelle 1931
       Hattie Chapelle Strand was from Atlantic City, married to an O.A. Strand, and died in New York City in 1932.
       Lifetime membership certificate for the Ocean Temple Order of the Elks, signed by Bessie A. Jackson and C. Mable Poole.

b. 10 f. 12  Sydney, Mrs. C. William 1934
       Letter from cousin Ellen, postmarked Columbus, Ohio.

       Thomas, Marie (Samuel) 1881-1927
       Marie (Samuel) Thomas was originally from the Virgin Islands.

b. 11 f. 1  Correspondence 1918-1927

b. 11 f. 2  Bills, Receipts, and Ephemera 1924-1926

b. 11 f. 3  Programs 1903-1919
       Weekly programs for the Church of Zion and St. Timothy, along with programs for the 1913 Brotherhood of St. Andrew national convention and the 1919 National Conference on Lynching.

b. 11 f. 4  Bible 1881
       Inscribed to Mary E. Samuel for her confirmation on April 10, 1881.

       Thompson, Alderman 1926-1930
       Alderman McTaggart Thompson was a native of Bluefields, Nicaragua. He attended high school in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, City College in New York, and Howard University Medical School. After training as a surgeon and ear, nose, and throat specialist in New Orleans, he settled in Detroit, Michigan, as a physician. He and his wife Margaret (Avery) had two children, William Cecil (1942-1966) and Alderman Jr.

       Correspondence 1926-1930

b. 11 f. 5  1926-1928

b. 11 f. 6  1929-1930

b. 11 f. 7  Notes and Printed Matter 1927-1929
       Includes small notebook, school notes, a certificate establishing the Douglass Society at City College, and a 1927 issue of The Moravian.

       Williams, Lewis 1939-1953
       Lewis Williams (b. July 20, 1935) was the son of Mary Louise (Gary) and Lewis Lamar Williams, Harlem residents who married in 1932 and who both worked at the New York City Department of Welfare. Lewis grew up at 409 Edgecombe Avenue, attending the Little Brown School, P.S. 139, and DeWitt Clinton High School.
       Composition notebooks and a three-ring binder filled with notes on various school subjects, dating from Williams's time at P.S. 139 and DeWitt Clinton High School.

b. 12 f. 1  Algebra Notebook 1949
Robert Winchester and Horace Hicks were a gay couple who lived together at 409 Edgecombe. During the 1930s–1940s, the two were often featured in the society pages of Black newspapers as hosts and guests of various parties for friends and neighbors, including other 409 Edgecombe residents Luckey Roberts, Alma Hubbard, and Carroll Boyd. Along with Boyd, the two were also members of the Friends of Roger White Committee, a 1948 fundraising effort to assist White, a dancer, with medical expenses. Before moving to New York, Hicks lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he was an actor and the secretary of the Richard B. Harrison Players.


Winchester, Robert and Horace Hicks 1929-1937

Correspondence.

Hicks, Horace

Correspondence 1931-1933

Theater Programs and Script 1933

Programs for theatrical performances including Eyes of Love and Common Clay, and Hicks's copy of a script for The Vanishing Princess, in which he played the king.

Bills, Receipts, and Ephemera 1931-1937

Notes 1933

Includes a notebook with diary entries chronicling a bus trip, some letter drafts, a sexually explicit story about cruising in Central Park, and notes for a class on modern literature.

Unidentified Owner 1922-1987

Miscellaneous Ephemera 1922-1987

Baltimore Department of Public Welfare Forms

Photos 1940-1985