Summary

Creator: Anderson, Martha Pryor

Title: Martha Pryor Anderson papers

Date: 1928-1991

Size: 2.08 linear feet (7 boxes)


Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: Martha Pryor Anderson was an African American woman poet and dramatic performer. This collection consists of correspondence, notebooks, programs, printed matter, and scrapbooks documenting Anderson's activities as a poet and duseuse.

Preferred citation: [Item], Martha Pryor Anderson papers, Sc MG 510, 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: Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

Creator History

Born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1890, Martha Pryor Anderson was an African American woman poet and dramatic performer. She founded the Pryor's Dramatic Players in Richmond in the 1930s, but later moved to New York where she started the group anew. She made her debut at Carnegie Hall in the early 1940s. She travelled extensively, appearing in churches, local schools, and colleges. Her repertoire included some of her own poems and dramatic works. She died in Harlem in 1993.
Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of correspondence, notebooks, programs, printed matter, and scrapbooks documenting Martha Pryor Anderson's activities as a poet and disease, and her membership in the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York. There are also writing samples, mainly poems, hymns, and her memoirs. The collection also includes materials documenting her 95th birthday trip to Richmond, where she was honored by the Ebenezer Baptist Church and the Governor's office (in the Abyssianian Baptist Church file).

Key Terms

Subjects
African American women dramatists
African American women entertainers
African American women poets
African Americans in the performing arts

Names
Anderson, Martha Pryor
Pryor's Dramatic Players
Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Date/Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 f. 2</td>
<td>Addresses and notes 1942-1977</td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 f. 3</td>
<td>1931-1985</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 f. 4</td>
<td>1986-1990</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 f. 5</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 f. 6</td>
<td>Poems, hymns, and church meeting notes 1966-1988</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1 f. 7</td>
<td>&quot;Memoirs of Martha Pryor Anderson&quot; undated</td>
<td>Printed matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 f. 1</td>
<td>1956-1990</td>
<td>Includes clippings, performance programs, and award programs (including the 1988 Humanitarian Award from the Harlem School of the Arts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 7</td>
<td>Oversized posters and clippings (Most of the posters are fragments and very brittle.)</td>
<td>Subject files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 f. 2</td>
<td>A-W</td>
<td>Includes printed matter on individuals such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Hattie McDanlins, and Douglas Wilder, among others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 f. 3</td>
<td>Memorial service programs 1955-1990</td>
<td>Includes programs for various individuals, including Anna Arnold Hedgeman and Merritt A. Hedgeman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 f. 4</td>
<td>1955-1990</td>
<td>Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2 f. 5</td>
<td>1985-1990</td>
<td>Abyssinian Baptist Church (and others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 f. 1</td>
<td>Alfred E. Isaac Club of Democrats 1967</td>
<td>Includes annual ball program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 f. 2</td>
<td>The Grand Temple of the Improved, Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks of the World 1971</td>
<td>Includes cotillion program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 f. 3</td>
<td>Programs and newsletters 1974-1991</td>
<td>Includes newsletters and programs from various organizations such as the Harlem School of the Arts, the Greater Harlem Guidance Center, Dance Theatre of Harlem, and Negro Actors Guild, among others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3 f. 4</td>
<td>American Traveler's Guide to Negro History, American Oil Company ca. 1963</td>
<td>Publications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Subject files (cont.)
Publications (cont.)

b. 3 f. 5  
*Baker's* Plays, *The Road Back by Joseph Carlton* 1928

b. 3 f. 6  
*The Baptist* 1966-1987
Includes 2 issues.

b. 3 f. 7  
*Black newspapers* 1962-1989
Includes clippings mostly from *The Richmond Afro-American*.

b. 3 f. 8  
*Jet* 1964 May 14

b. 3 f. 9  
*Poetry*
Includes books of poetry from Naomi Faust, Frank A. Johnson, W. Calvin McCain, and Richard W. Pitts.

b. 4-6  
*Scrapbooks*

b. 6  
*Plaques* 1968-1982
Include Women's Day Committee award, 1968; two honorary awards from Ebenezer Baptist Church, 1977 and 1984; honorary member award from New Mount Zion Baptist Church, 1982; and "Senior Citizen of the Year" Award from the Canaan Senior Service Center.