



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Clarence L. Holte papers**

1947-2003

Sc MG 718

## Summary

**Creator:** Holte, Clarence L., 1909-1993

**Title:** Clarence L. Holte papers

**Date:** 1947-2003

**Size:** 4.0 linear feet (4 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by Bolerium Books, 2003.

**Revision History:** Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

**Abstract:** Clarence LeRoy Holte (1909-1993) is principally known as an African American bibliophile who collected books pertaining to Africa and the African diaspora. He was also an advertising executive and for twenty years worked as an ethnic market specialist for a general market advertising firm. The Clarence L. Holte papers reflect Holte's desire to educate people about Black history and culture, and his attempts to assist with the economic development of Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia through the advertising company he represented.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Clarence L. Holte papers, Sc MG 718, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Accessioned by Janice Quinter, September 2003 and February 2004.

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: audio materials. For more information, please contact the division at [schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org](mailto:schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org) or 212-491-2270.

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

**Related Materials:**

Twenty-First Century Foundation (New York, N.Y.) records, Sc MG 241, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

## Creator History

Clarence Leroy Holte (1909-1993) is principally known as an African American bibliophile who collected books pertaining to Africa and the African diaspora. He was also an advertising executive and for twenty years worked as an ethnic market specialist for a general market advertising firm.

Holte assembled a collection of approximately 8,000 volumes covering the history and culture of Africans and people of African descent in the Americas and Europe. He collected both rare books and contemporary publications (including many first editions), the earliest published in 1690, and extending into the 1970s. This collection was sold to Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, in 1977, following its exhibition at the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Nigeria.

Holte founded "The Basic Afro-American Reprint Library" with the goal of educating a primarily Black audience about Black history. The series included fifty-four titles about the history, culture, and social environment of African Americans. These books, some originally published in the 19th century, were reprinted from Holte's personal collection and published by the Johnson Reprint Company. Additionally, he donated funds for a literary prize, awarded biennially in recognition of a significant contribution by a living writer to the cultural heritage of Africa and the African diaspora. The award, named for him, was created in 1977; it was administered by the Twenty-First Century Foundation until 1984, when the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, in conjunction with the Phelps-Stokes Fund, took over its management through 1988.

Between 1952 until his retirement in 1972, Holte was on the staff of the Madison Avenue advertising agency of Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osbourne, Inc., where he supervised the consumer ethnic markets operation, which developed plans for the promotion of products geared towards these markets. Holte was one of the first Blacks to rise to the executive level in a general market advertising agency. In this position he made numerous trips to Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia to promote construction projects in these countries.

In 1972, after Holte retired from his position in advertising, he managed the Nubian Press, the book publishing company that he founded. Its first product was *The Nubian Baby Book*, designed to acquaint Black children with their African American and African heritage. Holte authored several series of articles and essays for *The National Scene* (1972-1975), the news supplement inserted in Black newspapers, and also became an editor for this series.

## Scope and Content Note

The Clarence L. Holte papers reflect Holte's desire to educate people about Black history and culture, and his attempts to assist with the economic development of Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia through the advertising company that he represented. The collection includes writing, research, and bibliographic material related to his book collecting; materials related to the Clarence L. Holte Prize; and records on his advertising career.

**Arrangement:** Collection organized into three series: I. Bibliophilic activities; II. Clarence L. Holte Prize, and III. Advertising career.

## **Key Terms**

### **Geographic Names**

Africa -- Bibliography

### **Subjects**

African American authors

African American book collectors

African American executives

African Americans -- History

African Americans -- Relations with Africans

African Americans in advertising

Authors, Black

Literary prizes

### **Names**

Holte, Clarence L., 1909-1993

Nkrumah, Kwame, 1909-1972

Clarence L. Holte Literary Prize

## Container List

### Bibliographic activities 1953-2003

This series includes some of Holte's writings, represented by manuscripts and research material and addresses that he delivered about the Black press and as an ethnic market specialist, and writings by others. The book collection is represented primarily by catalog cards containing full bibliographic citations. The catalog cards are roughly arranged by geographic area and subject, and the major categories are "African Americans" and "Africa". The dates of publication range from the 17th century to the 1970s. The entire continent of Africa is covered in the collection, as well as the West Indies and Latin America. There are also appraisal reports, financial information, lists, and descriptions of the books in the first set of books published by the "Basic Afro-American Reprint Library", and the second set of books sold to Bolerium Books in 2002-2003.

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical information 1957-1988
- b. 1 f. 2 Addresses 1956-1981
- Writing
  - b. 1 f. 3-4 "The Early Black Christian Church and Its Forerunners: A Brief Interpretative History" manuscript undated
  - b. 1 f. 5 "Russia and the Negro: The Negro in Russian History and Thought" evaluation 1981 October
  - b. 1 f. 6 "Joe Anderson: The Slave Who Helped Reshape American Society" manuscript and research material 1981-1982
  - b. 1 f. 7 "The Saga of Black Abolitionists", manuscript written as L. H. Stanton (pseudonym) undated
  - b. 1 f. 8 *Nubian Baby Book correspondence* 1971-1984
  - b. 1 f. 9 1953-1980
  - b. 1 f. 10 Writing by others 1957-1976
- Holte's Black history collections
  - b. 1 f. 11 FESTAC exhibit 1977  
Includes guest book.
  - b. 1 f. 12 Correspondence 1969-1984
  - b. 1 f. 13-14 Bolerium Books 2003  
Includes African and African American material.
  - b. 1 f. 15 "Ingenious Americans" booklet 1967
  - b. 1 f. 16-19 Basic Afro-American Reprint Library 1962-1973
- Catalog cards
  - b. 2 Abolitionists - Education
  - b. 2 Ethnicity - General
  - b. 2 Fiction - Institutions
  - b. 2 Literature
  - b. 2 Plays - Reference
  - b. 2 Plays - Reference
  - b. 2 African Americans, Africans, West Indians
  - b. 3 Africa
  - b. 4 Africa; West Indies; and Blacks in Europe, Latin America, Australia and New Zealand

#### Clarence L. Holte Prize 1977-1986

This series of the award consists of correspondence, lists of books submitted by the applicants, and press clippings.

- b. 4 f. 1-3 Twenty-First Century Foundation 1977-1984

- b. 4 f. 4 Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture 1983-1986

#### Advertising career 1947-1976

This series includes information on Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborne's initiatives in establishing American companies in West Africa. Included are plans to construct plants and mills in Nigeria and investment opportunities in Ghana. Holte's long-standing personal relationship with prime ministers Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, which was utilized by the advertising agency, is documented through correspondence and news clippings, 1947-1965. Included are files pertaining to Holte's role in hosting Nkrumah's 1951 visit to the United States, sponsored by Lincoln University, where both Nkrumah and Holte were classmates.

- b. 4 f. 5 Lever Brothers Co 1951

Includes Kwame Nkrumah's Visit to the U.S.,

Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn, Inc 1947-1976

#### Ghana

- b. 4 f. 6-7 Independence 1956-1958

- b. 4 f. 8 News clippings 1957-1958

#### Nigeria

- b. 4 f. 9-11 Construction of steel plant 1961-1964

- b. 4 f. 12 Progress report on developments of proposed integrated steel plant 1962

- b. 4 f. 13 International General Electric Co. paper mill 1962

- b. 4 f. 14 General Mills, investments in Ghana and Nigeria 1958-1965

- b. 4 f. 15 Background material for film on Nigeria undated

- b. 4 f. 16-17 General advertising 1947-1964

- b. 4 f. 18-20 Nigeria and Liberia advertising 1952-1976

- b. 4 f. 21 Holte's relationships with African dignitaries 1947-1965