



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

Guide to the

Bettie Esther Parham collection

1945-1981

Sc MG 496

Home to Harlem Project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Summary

Creator: Parham, Bettie Esther

Title: Bettie Esther Parham collection

Date: 1945-1981

Size: 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

Source: Gift, Esther Parham, December 1993

Revision History: This finding aid was updated by Allison Hughes.

Abstract: The Bettie Esther Parham collection contains information about the company she founded, the National Beauty Supply Company. The products of its subsidiaries are represented via advertisements and price lists. There are a few scattered letters regarding business expansion in the United States and Nigeria, as well as a list of equipment needed for the company's branching out to Nigeria and a "Plan for the Development of Esther Parham Products in the United States and Africa," 1977. Financial and personal documents, and the pamphlet "How to Get Money through Positive Thinking" by Parham complete the collection.

Preferred citation: [Item], Bettie Esther Parham collection, Sc MG 496, 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:

Scrapbooks of photographs transferred to Photographs and Prints Division.

Creator History

Bettie Esther Parham was owner and founder of the National Beauty Supply Company and its subsidiaries, which provided products geared towards Black women. Beauty products were made and sold to beauty shops, with a full line of cosmetics added for the consumer trade. The company operated

out of New York City, and in the 1940s Parham became the first Black retail owner on 125th street in Harlem. The subsidiaries were Esther Beauty Aids Company, manufacturing cosmetics; The Esther Beauterias, beauty salons in Brooklyn and Manhattan; and Esther Hair Goods Division, which manufactured wigs and other hair goods. In 1959 Parham became the first African American to expand her business to Africa by exporting her line of products to Nigeria. In the 1970s she entered the food business, marketing sauces.

Parham was born and raised in North Carolina, and received degrees in education and chemistry. She took additional advanced courses at colleges in North Carolina and New York, and taught chemistry at Dillard University in New Orleans. She also wrote articles in newspapers and magazines in exchange for advertising space, and authored a pamphlet entitled "How to Get Money through Positive Thinking".

Scope and Content Note

The Bettie Esther Parham collection contains information about the company she founded, the National Beauty Supply Company. The products of its subsidiaries are represented via advertisements and price lists. There are a few scattered letters regarding business expansion in the United States and Nigeria, as well as a list of equipment needed for the company's branching out to Nigeria and a "Plan for the Development of Esther Parham Products in the United States and Africa," 1977. Financial and personal documents, and the pamphlet "How to Get Money through Positive Thinking" by Parham complete the collection.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American women executives -- New York (State) -- New York
African American women in the professions
Beauty culture -- United States
Cosmetics industry -- United States
Hair preparations industry -- United States
Leadership in women -- United States

Names

Parham, Bettie Esther
National Beauty Supply Company