



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

Guide to the

**Martha Pryor Anderson papers**

1928-1991

Sc MG 510

## Summary

**Creator:** Anderson, Martha Pryor

**Title:** Martha Pryor Anderson papers

**Date:** 1928-1991

**Size:** 2.08 linear feet (7 boxes)

**Source:** Salvaged, 1993.

**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 diseuse.

**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

**Processing note:** Accessioned by Andre Elizee, 1993.

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

## Creator History

Born in Richmond, Virigina, 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 diseuse, 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 Abyssinian 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

- b. 1 f. 1 **Personal 1937-1991**  
Includes a wedding book, certificates, and mementoes.
- b. 1 f. 2 **Addresses and notes 1942-1977**  
**Correspondence**
  - b. 1 f. 3 1931-1985
  - b. 1 f. 4 1986-1990
  - b. 1 f. 5 undated**Writing**
  - b. 1 f. 6 Poems, hymns, and church meeting notes 1966-1988
  - b. 1 f. 7 "Memoirs of Martha Pryor Anderson" undated**Printed matter**
  - b. 2 f. 1 1956-1990  
Includes clippings, performance programs, and award programs (including the 1988 Humanitarian Award from the Harlem School of the Arts).
  - b. 7 Oversized posters and clippings (Most of the posters are fragments and very brittle.)**Subject files**

Includes printed matter (published booklets, clippings, event and awards programs, and newsletters) on various individuals and organizations. Most likely, Anderson knew many of the individuals and participated in events, or was a member, of the organizations. Also included are publications, again most likely from organizations of which Anderson was a member or, in the cases of the books of poetry, from authors with whom she was acquainted.

Arranged into three subgroups: (1) Individuals; (2) Organizations; and (3) Publications.

**Individuals**
  - b. 2 f. 2 **A-W**  
Includes printed matter on individuals such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Hattie McDaniels, and Douglas Wilder, among others.
  - b. 2 f. 3 **Memorial service programs 1955-1990**  
Includes programs for various individuals, including Anna Arnold Hedgeman and Merritt A. Hedgeman.**Organizations**
  - Abyssinian Baptist Church (and others)**  
Includes printed matter (church service programs, souvenir journals, etc.), mostly from the Abyssinian Baptist Church, but from a few other churches as well.
    - b. 2 f. 4 1955-1990
    - b. 2 f. 5 1985-1990
  - b. 3 f. 1 **Alfred E. Isaac Club of Democrats 1967**  
Includes annual ball program.
  - b. 3 f. 2 **The Grand Temple of the Improved, Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks of the World 1971**  
Includes cotillion program.
  - b. 3 f. 3 **Programs and newsletters 1974-1991**  
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.**Publications**
  - b. 3 f. 4 *American Traveler's Guide to Negro History, American Oil Company* ca. 1963

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.