



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

Guide to the

Cleo Sims collection

1944-2002

Sc MG 708

Processed by Janice Quinter, August 2002.

Summary

Creator: Sims, Cleo, 1912-2002

Title: Cleo Sims collection

Date: 1944-2002

Size: 0.02 linear feet (2 folders)

Source: Gift of Annette Welford, Cleo Sims's daughter, ca. 2002.

Abstract: The Cleo Sims collection reflects this milliner's activities in Harlem. It consists of biographical information including her obituary; programs for many of her fashion shows; and articles from newspapers, trade publications, and magazines advertising her shops and featuring her hats. There are also course outlines for her millinery classes, programs, and award certificates.

Preferred citation: [Item], Cleo Sims collection, Sc MG 708, 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: Processed by Janice Quinter, August 2002.

Creator History

Cleo Sims was a milliner in Harlem, New York. Born in Georgia, she began her millinery career taking classes at the Harlem YMCA Trade School, where she later returned as an instructor for ten years. She also taught at the Harlem Institute of Fashion. In her early years, Sims developed skill and experience by working for large millinery companies where she learned factory manufacturing methods. In 1944, she began her first business in her home.

She later moved to a new location near her church, Salem United Methodist, then to the Rose Meta Beauty Salon. In the 1960s, she relocated to the Theresa Hotel, where "Cleo's Hats" was frequented by Harlemites until her retirement in the late 1990s. Sims knew many famous personalities and her hats were featured in nationally known magazines.

Sims produced many fashion shows and as an active member of the National Association of Fashion Designers, contributed to the fashion glitz of Harlem in the 1950s. She staged productions which benefited the Salem United Methodist Church (where she also taught millinery) and several black nonprofit organizations. She also appeared on radio and television programs, discussing fashion and current trends. She was the recipient of numerous awards.

Scope and Content Note

The Cleo Sims collection reflects this milliner's activities in Harlem. It consists of biographical information including her obituary; programs for many of her fashion shows; and articles from newspapers, trade publications, and magazines advertising her shops and featuring her hats. There are also course outlines for her millinery classes, programs, and award certificates.

Key Terms

Subjects

Advertising -- Fashion

African American fashion designers -- New York (State) -- New York

African American women in the professions -- New York (State) -- New York

African Americans -- Clothing

Fashion designers -- New York (State) -- New York

Millinery -- New York (State) -- New York

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Programs

Names

Sims, Cleo, 1912-2002