



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

Guide to the

Hibernia "Bernia" Austin scrapbook

1931-1947

Sc MG 712

Summary

Creator: Austin, Hibernia

Title: Hibernia "Bernia" Austin scrapbook

Date: 1931-1947

Size: 0.46 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Gift of Barbara McLeod, January 2003.

Abstract: Hibernia "Bernia" Austin and her husband, William Harry Austin, were members of Harlem society, most notably during the 1920s and 1930s. Bernia Austin was a member of the Campaign Committee of Harlem and the Cooperating Committee on Relief and Unemployment (1931), along with Bessie Bearden, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Hubert Delaney, Wilhelmina Adams, and William L. Imes. She also engaged in political work and civic activities. Her husband, Harry Austin, was elected a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1936. The Hibernia "Bernia" Austin Scrapbook focuses on the social life of the Black middle and upper class, primarily of Harlem, New York, during the 1920s-1940s. The scrapbook contains a variety of material: clippings; photographs; invitations; birth, marriage and death announcements; letters; and greeting cards. Also included is information about entertainers and civic and social leaders.

Preferred citation: [Item], Hibernia "Bernia" Austin scrapbook, Sc MG 712, 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 Diana Lachatanere, June 2003.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Creator History

Hibernia "Bernia" Austin and her husband, William Harry Austin, were members of Harlem society, most notably during the 1920s and 1930s. Bernia Austin was a member of the Campaign Committee of Harlem and the Cooperating Committee on Relief and Unemployment (1931), along with Bessie Bearden, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Hubert Delaney, Wilhelmina Adams, and William L. Imes. She also engaged in political work and civic activities. Her husband, Harry Austin, was elected a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1936.

Scope and Content Note

The Hibernia "Bernia" Austin Scrapbook focuses on the social life of the Black middle and upper class, primarily of Harlem, New York, during the 1920s-1940s. The scrapbook contains a variety of material: clippings; photographs; invitations; birth, marriage and death announcements; letters; and greeting cards. Also included is information about entertainers and civic and social leaders.

Of particular interest are a postcard from A'Lelia Walker to Bernia Austin written in New Haven, Connecticut, where Walker was staying for a few days, and an article and flyer regarding the auction of the contents of her home "Villa Lewaro", November 1930. There are also greeting cards from the Charles S. Johnson family, one of which contains the words and music to a piece titled "New Born: A Negro Spiritual". There are invitations to the weddings of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and Isabel Washington; Eva and Richard Des Verney; and the daughters of Lester Walton, Samuel Battle, and William Pickens, as well as a page of birth announcements. There are a few letters from various politicians (mostly thanking her for her support) and other Harlem figures. With the exception of one clipping about Bernia Austin, the clippings mainly deal with well-known Black civic leaders, entertainers, and socialites.

Key Terms

Subjects

African Americans -- New York (State) -- New York -- Social life and customs
African Americans in popular culture -- New York (State) -- New York
Socialites -- New York (State) -- New York

Geographic Names

Harlem (New York, N.Y.)

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Scrapbooks

Names

Austin, Hibernia
Robinson, A'Lelia Walker, 1885-1931