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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

George A. and Maudelle Weston papers

1919-1979

Sc MG 188

Processed by Hanna Bailey.

Summary

Creator: Weston, George A. and Maudelle

Title: George A. and Maudelle Weston papers

Date: 1919-1979

Source: Donated by Maudelle Weston, December 28, 1978; and Dr. Faulkner Watts, February 1979. SCM 78-53, 79-5, 82-62

Abstract: George Weston papers consist of correspondence, writings, printed material, and clippings concerning his career, theology, and politics. One folder pertains to the Pro-Lad Paint company (Africa's Shadow Type Progressive Ladder Paint, Ltd.) and a paint to be made in Antigua especially for tropical climates. Biographical article on Weston by Lionel M. Yard, 1975, and sheet music and words by Weston for "Climbing Africa's Ladder." The Maudelle Weston series include programs and clippings pertaining to Mrs. Weston's career as a dancer during the 1940s-1960s.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: George A. and Maudelle Weston papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Hanna Bailey; Machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services; revised by Terry Catapano.

Related Materials:

Universal Negro Improvement Association, Central Division, Sc Micro R-1571 Universal Negro Improvement Association, Uriah Gittens, Sc MG 619 Universal Negro Improvement Association, Philadelphia Division, Sc MG 91 Miscellaneous American Letters and Papers:
Universal Negro Improvement Association
Universal Negro Improvement Association - Debourg, Sidney
Universal Negro Improvement Association - Drax, Orgus
Universal Negro Improvement Association - *Negro World*

Creator History

Reverend George A. Weston was born in Green Bay, Antigua in 1885. After dropping out of school at an early age, he worked as a carpenter for a few years. He travelled to Dominica and attempted to stow away on a boat bound for the United States before gaining employment as a sailor. Working on a trading ship allowed Weston to travel throughout the West Indies, to Europe, Canada, and the United States. From 1910 until 1919, he held various jobs at sea and on land in Canada and the United States. In Boston, Massachusetts he enrolled in night classes in order to receive his high school degree. It was in these classes that he learned about Marcus Garvey's movement, the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). In 1919 Weston became a member of the Boston chapter of the UNIA. He continued to work as a seaman and travelled to St. Thomas where he spread Garvey's philosophies and helped people there to organize a UNIA branch. In the same year, Weston was declared a Local Preacher of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston, and was elected First Chaplain of Boston's UNIA. In the early 1920s he established the Trinity Mission as a branch of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and became increasingly involved with the UNIA. By 1924 Weston was a recognized leader in Garvey's movement. He was appointed Vice President of the New York City Division of the UNIA, the organization's largest branch which at its height claimed to have thirty-five thousand members. He travelled to cities such as Cleveland and Pittsburgh on assignments to reestablish order among UNIA factions that developed in these cities. When Garvey was imprisoned in 1925, the movement began to splinter. Weston was the leader of the main faction that formed in the New York City Branch of the UNIA. According to Weston, Garvey's second wife, Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, attempted to gain power in the movement. When he refused to accept her authority she made false accusations against him. Weston claims that Amy Jacques Garvey told her husband and the general public that he stole money from the movement and was planning to sell UNIA property to white people. Though some members remained loyal to Weston, Garvey believed his wife's accusations and fired Weston. The factions came to violence, but eventually the movement declined without Garvey's charisma to hold people together. Weston worked with a faction called Pioneer Negroes of the World until it collapsed due to the Depression. After the decline of the UNIA, Weston was ordained in the African Orthodox Church (AOC) by Archbishops Reginald Barrow and Richard Machanna in Brooklyn. He returned to Antigua after serving in World War II, and led missionary work for the AOC. He ran the African Orthodox Evangelical Mission and founded that organization's Workshop and Cultural Center in 1951. Weston worked hard to encourage Garvey's philosophies of race pride and economic independence in Antigua. He started a Negro History week, and made efforts to establish local industries. In the 1960s he ran the Pro-Lad Paint Company which produced a paint made specially for the tropical climate. During these years, he and his second wife, Maudelle, started a nursery school in Antigua. The school taught the children African and African Caribbean history and dance in an attempt to instill in people, during their formative years, a sense of race pride and awareness. Weston returned to the U.S. in the early 1970s. Renewed interest in Garvey and the UNIA created a demand for the recollections and reminiscences of someone who had been directly involved in the movement. In 1971 he spoke at a Stanford University seminar on the Garvey Movement and the development of Black Consciousness. That year he also spoke at Lafayette College at a six day Black Arts Festival. Weston died in 1973 at the age of eighty-eight. Antiguans gave him a hero's funeral in appreciation for his work in their struggle for independence. Weston married Francis Rosina Amos in 1917. She died in approximately 1948 after a long illness. In 1960 Weston was remarried to Maudelle Bass, a well known dancer and model. * Much of the information found in this biographical note was drawn from Lionel M. Yard's article, "George Weston: Organizer of UNIA Branches, Oral Historian of the Garvey Movement, Black Nationalist" (1975). Maudelle Bass Weston, known professionally as Maudelle, began her formal dance education at Gray Conservatory of Music and Art in Los Angeles. She later studied at the Lester Horton School of Dance and the Fowler School of African Culture, both in New York City. She studied Nigerian dance with Asadata Dafora and Modupe Paris, and Liberian song and dance with Tony Massaqua. Maudelle travelled throughout South America and the Caribbean, learning and teaching African influenced dance and song. She established a dance academy in 1948 in Los Angeles, and

later lectured on the history of dance at the University of California in Los Angeles. Maudelle was among the first African American women to dance on Broadway in Agnes DeMille Company's "Black Ritual" (1940). She also spent three years travelling in Latin America with a company called Arte Folklorico de Mexico. Maudelle performed on stage, television, and in films. She also gave performance lectures featuring several African and African influenced dances and songs. These performances were held in churches and museums all over the country. Her goal was to expose people to African and African American cultures. Maudelle was also known for her modelling. While in Mexico she modelled for artist Diego Rivera; she also modelled for photographer Edward Weston.

Scope and Content Note

The George and Maudelle Weston collection spans the years 1919 to 1979. The collection is divided into two series: GEORGE WESTON and MAUDELLÉ WESTON.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American clergy
African American dancers
African American families
African Americans -- Colonization -- Africa
African Americans -- Religion
African Americans -- Societies, etc
African Americans in the performing arts
Back to Africa movement
Black theology
Christian sects -- United States
Paint

Titles

Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Project funded by the Lilly Endowment

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Sheet music

Names

Weston, George A. and Maudelle
Weston, George A., 1885-1973
Weston, Maudelle
Yard, Lionel M.
Africa's Shadow Type Progressive Ladder Paint Co., Ltd
Universal Negro Improvement Association

Container List

b. 1 George Weston

The GEORGE WESTON SERIES is larger and contains correspondence, printed material, clippings and some of Weston's writings. The correspondence includes a few personal letters, however the bulk of this folder consists of letters written by Weston to various officials. He wrote to Winston Churchill and Richard Nixon among others, stating his opinions and making recommendations about issues facing African Americans. There is also correspondence between Weston and J. A. Rogers (1880-1966), Jamaican born author of several books on the subjects of race relations, miscegenation, and African American history. Other examples of Weston's writings in the collection are mostly handwritten and difficult to read. They include statements and articles, one of which is entitled: "Marcus Garvey..Man Aflame." The Printed Material folder has Weston's Preacher's License (1919), a 1951 issue of "Leeward Island's Review Caribbean Digest and African Orthodox Messenger," and a 1955 issue of "The Antigua Progress." It also contains a musical score for which Weston wrote the words, and a biographical account of Weston's life, written by Lionel M. Yard (1975). The clippings in the collection relate to Weston's achievements and to his role in the UNIA. There is a folder on the Pro-Lad Paint Company which contains financial correspondence and one balance sheet. The Miscellaneous folder includes a typed list compiled at the First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World (1920), organized by Garvey. The list names African American representatives and leaders, elected at this convention. There is also a petition for classroom use of black history textbooks, made during Antigua's thirteenth annual Negro History Week. Lastly the folder has shareholder information from the Antigua Co-operative Bank Ltd..

b. 1 f. 1 Correspondence 1943-71

b. 1 f. 2 Writings n.d.

b. 1 f. 3 Printed Material 1919-75

b. 1 f. 4 Clippings 1956-71, n.d

b. 1 f. 5 Pro-Lad Paint Company 1953-62

b. 1 f. 6 Miscellaneous 1920-70

Maudelle Weston

The MAUDELLA WESTON SERIES consists of clippings and programs from her performances. These items were removed from a scrapbook (1940-79), put together by Maudelle to document her career. Also included is a permit authorizing Maudelle to open a dance academy, and a letter from Maudelle to Joe Nash, the director of the Black Dance Documentation Project.

b. 1 f. 7 Clippings 1940-76

b. 1 f. 8 Programs 1940-79