



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

Guide to the

**Vivian Hewitt papers**

1929-2015

Sc MG 602

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2016.

## Summary

**Creator:** Hewitt, Vivian D.

**Title:** Vivian Hewitt papers

**Date:** 1929-2015

**Size:** 25.95 linear feet (63 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by Vivian Hewitt, in multiple donations between 1996 and 2016.

**Abstract:** Vivian Hewitt is a former librarian and collector of Haitian and African American art. Her papers date from 1929 to 2015, and primarily document her social and family life, volunteer work, and art collection. Hewitt's papers also include materials concerning her career as a librarian.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

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**Preferred citation:** [Item], Vivian Hewitt papers, Sc MG 602, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2016.

## Creator History

Vivian Ann Davidson Hewitt is a former librarian and collector of Haitian and African American art. Her professional affiliations included the Special Libraries Association (SLA) and the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (ALA). She had been active in the social organization the Northeasterners; was a volunteer docent at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine; and is an honorary member of the art-appreciation group the Pierians.

Hewitt was born in 1920 in New Castle, Pennsylvania. She received her bachelor's degree from Geneva College in 1943, and her master's in library science from the Carnegie Library School in 1944. That same year, she became the first black librarian to work at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. In 1949, Hewitt accepted a position as an instructor-librarian at the library school of Atlanta University. In Atlanta, she met her husband, John H. Hewitt, then a professor at Morehouse College. The two met in 1949 and were married the same year. Their son, John Hamilton Hewitt III, was born in 1952.

The couple moved to New York City in 1953, where Vivian Hewitt worked first for the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company and then as a librarian for the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1963, Hewitt became the librarian for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a position she would hold until her retirement in 1983. She served as the first black president of SLA from 1978 to 1979.

Hewitt and her husband began to collect Haitian art around 1960; later, they focused their collecting on African American art – often the work of artists they knew personally. In 1998, the John and Vivian Hewitt Collection of African-American Art became part of the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Arts+Culture.

Hewitt has lectured widely on art and librarianship. Her autobiography, *The One and Only: Vivian Ann Davidson Hewitt*, based on oral history interviews with Annie Segan, was published in 2010.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Vivian Hewitt is a former librarian and, with her husband John Hewitt, a collector of Haitian and African American art. Her papers date from 1929 to 2015, with the majority of materials dating from the 1990s onward. The papers largely document her social life and volunteer activities, and her and her husband's art collection.

Biographical and family files contain personal memorabilia, biographical notes, CVs, awards, and other papers related to Hewitt's life, her immediate and extended family, and her friends. These files include papers concerning the annual reunion of the "Roberts, Borders, Mauney, Howell, Briggs and Related Families." Papers related to Hewitt's autobiography, *The One and Only: Vivian Ann Davidson Hewitt*, include transcriptions of stories Hewitt told to Annie Segan.

The largest component of the collection is Hewitt's correspondence, which discusses her social activities, professional activities, travels, volunteer work, and art collection. Among Hewitt's correspondents are artists, medical professionals, social workers, librarians, and actors. Most correspondence is sorted by year only, with no further internal order, though Hewitt created a small number of files dedicated to specific correspondents, which are arranged by name. Correspondence also contains files of greeting cards, Christmas newsletters, and a volume of family letters that Hewitt created as a gift for her son. Hewitt's activities and relationships are further documented in her appointment books, guest books, and address books.

Vivian and John Hewitt's art collection is represented by research files; articles written by John Hewitt; photographs and lists of artwork they owned; records of purchases, sales, and donations; and programs, pamphlets, and clippings related to the exhibition of their art collection. Artists documented in the collection include Romare Bearden, Tom Feelings, Olivia Gatewood, J. Eugene Grigsby, Jr. (a relative of Vivian Hewitt), Yolene Legrand, Ann Tanksley, and Luce Turnier. Photographs of Feelings and Turnier are filed in the "Photographs" section of the collection. The collection also contains lists of the Hewitts' books and correspondence related to the sale of their book collection.

Librarianship files concern Vivian Hewitt's work with the Carnegie Endowment, the Special Libraries Association (SLA), and the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (ALA). Hewitt's participation in other organizations is documented through correspondence, clippings, event programs, and records of charitable gifts.

Photographs depict Hewitt, her family, and friends; there are also photographs from a 1978 SLA conference in Hawaii and a 1979 trip to Trinidad and Tobago. Printed matter comprises programs, pamphlets, and clippings, including obituaries and memorial programs for Hewitt's friends, family, and colleagues. The collection also contains files related to Hewitt's travels. Writings consist of research and drafts for biographical articles that were published in the book *Notable Black American Men*.

**Arrangement:** The Vivian Hewitt papers are arranged in the following categories: Biographical and Family Files Correspondence Appointment Books, Guest Books, and Address Books Art Collection Book Collection Librarianship Organizations Photographs Printed Matter Travel Writings

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American art  
African American librarians  
Art -- Private collections  
Art, Haitian

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence  
Programs (documents)

### **Names**

Hewitt, John H., 1924-2000

## Container List

### Biographical and Family Files

- b. 1 f. 1-11 1934-2010s  
Includes autograph book with inscriptions by friends (1934); school papers; wedding album; and scrapbook and important letters (1959-1995).
- b. 2 f. 1-10 1958-2013
- b. 3 f. 1-8 Birthday Celebrations 2004-2015
- b. 4 f. 1-3 Talks and Lectures 1999-2011
- b. 4 f. 4-7 *The One and Only* 2010-2011  
Partial draft of book; transcripts of stories told to Annie Segan; and promotional material.
- b. 4 f. 8 Ruth Jett 2007-2014  
Jett was an arts administrator who worked for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and was director of the Cinque Gallery. She was a close friend of Vivian Hewitt.
- b. 4 f. 9 Delores Neville 2004-2005
- b. 4 f. 10 Maurice V. Russell 1960s-1998
- b. 63 f. 2-3 Memorabilia  
Menus from Oscar's Salt of the Sea and The Anchor Tavern, Bankside; dust jacket for *Mamba's Daughters* (1929).

### Correspondence

#### Chronological

- b. 5 f. 1-18 1938, 1943, 1951-1970
- b. 6 f. 1-14 1971-1985
- b. 7 f. 1-7 1986-1990
- b. 8 f. 1-10 1990-1994
- b. 9 f. 1-10 1994-1996
- b. 10 f. 1-7 1996-1997
- b. 11 f. 1-8 1997-1998
- b. 12 f. 1-8 1998-1999
- b. 13 f. 1-7 2000
- b. 14 f. 1-8 2000-2001
- b. 15 f. 1-7 2001-2002
- b. 16 f. 1-6 2002-2003
- b. 17 f. 1-8 2003-2004
- b. 18 f. 1-8 2004-2005
- b. 19 f. 1-7 2005-2006
- b. 20 f. 1-7 2006-2008
- b. 21 f. 1-7 2008
- b. 22 f. 1-7 2009
- b. 23 f. 1-6 2009-2010
- b. 24 f. 1-6 2010-2011
- b. 25 f. 1-6 2011

Correspondence (cont.)  
Chronological (cont.)

- b. 26 f. 1-9 2011-2012
- b. 27 f. 1-7 2012-2013
- b. 28 f. 1-7 2013
- b. 29 f. 1-7 2014-2015
- b. 30 f. 1-7 Newsletters, Cards, and Christmas Letters 1966-2013  
Contains the Hewitt family's newsletters as well as family newsletters and Christmas cards sent to the Hewitts.
- b. 31 f. 1-6 Cards and Christmas Letters
- b. 32 f. 1-3 Cards
  - b. 32 f. 4 J. Eugene Grigsby 1960s-1990s
  - b. 32 f. 5 Vivian Hewitt--Letters to Eddie and Joan James 1994-2004
  - b. 32 f. 6 Isabella Van Dine 1956-1990
  - b. 32 f. 7 Thelma Wamble 1984-1986
- b. 33 f. 1-5 Family Correspondence 1963-2005
- b. 33 f. 6-8 Miscellaneous and Undated

Appointment Books, Guest Books, and Address Books

Appointment Books

- b. 34 f. 1-7 1964-1979
- b. 35 f. 1-5 1980-1983
- b. 36 f. 1-6 1983-1987
- b. 37 f. 1-6 1988-1993
- b. 38 f. 1-8 1994-2004
- b. 39 f. 1-6 2005-2009
- b. 40 f. 1-5 2010-2014

Guest Books

- b. 40 f. 6-7 1973-1983  
Includes guest book for black librarians attending SLA conference.
- b. 41 f. 1-4 1979-2012  
Includes guest book for a Hale Woodruff show.

Address Books

- b. 41 f. 5 Circa 1970s
- b. 42 f. 1-3 Circa 1980s-1990s

Art Collection

Research and Writings

Notes and articles by John and Vivian Hewitt about collecting art, and information they collected on Haitian art, specific artists, and artwork.

- b. 43 f. 1-11 1961-2007
- b. 44 f. 1-7 1967-2015

Exhibition Programs

Gallery and museum exhibitions of works by various artists.

- b. 44 f. 8-10 1973-2015

- Art Collection (cont.)  
Exhibition Programs (cont.)
- b. 45 f. 1-3 1979-2014
  - b. 34 f. 4-5 Cinque Gallery 2001-2004, 2008  
Hewitt Collection
  - b. 45 f. 6-8 Lists of Artwork
  - b. 45 f. 9-13 Purchases and Sales 1967-1977
  - b. 46 f. 1-13 Purchases, Sales, and Donations 1984-2015
  - b. 46 f. 14-15 Photographs of Artwork  
Tour and Exhibition
  - b. 47 f. 1-9 1995-2012
  - b. 48 f. 1-8 1998-2011
  - b. 49 f. 1-4 1999-2011
  - b. 49 f. 5-11 Book Collection
  - b. 50 f. 1-8 Librarianship 1970-2010  
Organizations
  - b. 51 f. 1 Archons of Colophon
  - b. 51 f. 2 Aurora Reading Club 1957-2014  
Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine  
Docent materials, church mailings, and programs.
  - b. 51 f. 3-8 1985-2015
  - b. 52 f. 1 2008-2013
  - b. 52 f. 2 Geneva College 1999-2012
  - b. 52 f. 3 Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement
  - b. 52 f. 4 Jack and Jill of America 1979-2015
  - b. 52 f. 5-6 Northeasterners  
The Order of St. John  
Member mailings and directories.
  - b. 52 f. 7-9 2002-2011
  - b. 53 f. 1-2 2002-2015
  - b. 53 f. 3-9 St. Philip's Church 1958-2015  
Event programs and correspondence. Includes materials related to St. Philip's Institute for Married Couples (1960-1963), which Hewitt helped organize.
  - See also photographs.
  - b. 54 f. 1-4 The Pierians 1999-2005  
Includes a manual of guidelines and procedures for use by members and chapters.
  - b. 54 f. 5 United Negro College Fund 2001
  - b. 54 f. 6 Miscellaneous 2006-2013  
Archons of Colophon, Northeasterners, Jack and Jill of America, and Retired African American Librarians.
  - b. 54 f. 7-8 Charitable Gifts 1996, 1998  
Photographs

Photographs (cont.)

- b. 55 f. 1-7    1940s-2000s  
Includes photographs of Tom Feelings, Luce Turnier, and Brooke Astor with St. Philip's Church clergy and parishioners.
- b. 63 f. 1    St. Philip's Church Parish Dinner 1960  
Rolled photograph. Fragile.

Printed Matter

- b. 55 f. 8-9    Clippings 1982-2015  
Event, Exhibition, and Performance Programs
- b. 56 f. 1-7    1967-2015
- b. 57 f. 1-7    1975-2015
- b. 58 f. 1-6    1976-2015
- b. 59 f. 1-3    2000-2007
- Obituaries and Memorial Programs
- b. 59 f. 4-7    1979-2015
- b. 60 f. 1-5    1993-2015

Travel

- b. 60 f. 6-10    China, Dominican Republic, and Miscellany 1980-2003
- b. 61 f. 1-10    Alaska, Barbados, London, Paris, South Africa, and Cruises 1999-2009
- b. 62 f. 1-2    Writings 1966, 1995  
Research materials and biographies of David Dinkins, Percy Sutton, and James Van Der Zee, written by Hewitt for the book *Notable Black American Men*.