



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

Guide to the

**The Old Community West 98th-99th Streets Reunion collection**

ca.1900-2011

Sc MG 849

Processed by Miranda-Tarisa Mims, 2011.

## Summary

**Creator:** Old Community West 98th-99th Street Reunion (New York, N.Y.)

**Title:** The Old Community West 98th-99th Streets Reunion collection

**Date:** ca.1900-2011

**Size:** 0.42 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** Gift of Jim Torain, December 2011.

**Revision History:** Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

**Abstract:** New York City's first so-called Slum Clearance Project, headed by urban planner Robert Moses, caused the physical destruction of a once tight-knit African American community that dated back to the early 1900s. The buildings on 98th and 99th in Upper West Side Manhattan, or what is affectionately known today as "The Old Community", were razed from the 1940s to the 1950s as part of this urban renewal program. Although the residents were forced to relocate, the community stayed connected through annual dances (ca. 1950s-1990s) organized by constituents of the West 98th and 99th Streets Association, and then through "The Old Community" annual reunions (1999-) headed by Jim Torain. The Old Community West 98th-99th Streets Reunion collection consists of "The Old Community" reunion programs, 2003-2011; background information on some of the former community members; reports; journal, newspaper, and magazine articles about the history of the West 98th and 99th Streets community, Park West Village (which replaced the buildings on West 98th and 99th Streets), and the urban renewal program and its impact on this neighborhood. Additionally, there are a few Spirit of 179 newsletters, 1952-1953, which were written by the young members of the PS 179 Community Center. They note some of the community events before the relocation took place.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], The Old Community West 98th-99th Streets Reunion collection, Sc MG 849, 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 Miranda-Tarisa Mims, 2011.

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

**Creator History**

New York City's first so-called Slum Clearance Project, headed by urban planner Robert Moses, caused the physical destruction of a once tight-knit African American community that dated back to the early 1900s. The buildings on 98th and 99th in Upper West Side Manhattan, or what is affectionately known today as "The Old Community", were razed from the 1940s to the 1950s as part of this urban renewal program. Although the residents were forced to relocate, the community stayed connected through annual dances (ca. 1950s-1990s) organized by constituents of the West 98th and 99th Streets Association, and then through "The Old Community" annual reunions (1999-) headed by Jim Torain.

**Scope and Content Note**

The Old Community West 98th-99th Streets Reunion collection consists of "The Old Community" reunion programs, 2003-2011; background information on some of the former community members; reports; journal, newspaper, and magazine articles about the history of the West 98th and 99th Streets community, Park West Village (which replaced the buildings on West 98th and 99th Streets), and the urban renewal program and its impact on this neighborhood. Additionally, there are a few *Spirit of 179* newsletters, 1952-1953, which were written by the young members of the PS 179 Community Center. They note some of the community events before the relocation took place.

**Key Terms****Subjects**

African American families -- New York (State) -- New York  
African Americans -- Housing -- New York (State) -- New York  
African Americans -- New York (State) -- New York -- Social conditions -- 20th century  
African Americans -- New York (State) -- New York -- Social life and customs  
Collective memory and city planning -- New York (State) -- New York  
Community development, Urban -- New York (State) -- New York  
Community life -- New York (State) -- New York  
Urban renewal -- New York (State) -- New York

**Names**

Torain, Jim  
Old Community West 98th-99th Street Reunion (New York, N.Y.)  
Spirit of 179 (Newsletter)  
West 98th-99th Street Association (New York, N.Y.)

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 The Old Community Reunion programs 2003-2012
- b. 1 f. 2 Member profiles
- b. 1 f. 3 *Spirit of 179th newsletters* 1952-1953
- b. 1 f. 4 Printed matter on historical background of neighborhood 1905-2011
- b. 1 f. 5 Women's City Club of New York 1954-1957  
Includes reports on tenant relocation at Park West.
- b. 1 f. 6 Schwartz, Joel. "Tenant Power in the Liberal City, 1943-1971"