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HELEN ARMSTEAD-JOHNSON THEATER COLLECTION
Edith Spencer Scrapbook

Sc MG 599

Bulk Dates:	1916-1946
Extent:	Shelving Unit: Linear feet: 2 linear inches
Source and Date:	Helen Armstead-Johnson, December 1996.
Processor's Name:	Paula Williams
Date Finding Aid Completed:	November 2000
Processed:	Processed as part of the <i>Blacks on Stage: African-American Theater Arts Collections Project</i> . Funding was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the City and State of New York.
Abstract:	Edith Spencer was an international singer and dancer who performed in vaudeville, the theatre and in nightclubs during the decades of the 1920s and 1930s.
Provenance:	The scrapbook was donated to Helen Armstead-Johnson by Edith Spencer. It was subsequently donated by Helen Armstead-Johnson, along with other theater-related collections to the Schomburg Center.
Access:	Unrestricted access
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Other Source of Description:	RLIN #: NYPW00-A170
Citation:	Edith Spencer Scrapbook , Helen Armstead-Johnson Theater Collection, Sc MG 599, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library
Index Terms	
Names:	Edith Spencer
Subject:	Afro-American singer; Afro-American dancer; Afro-Americans in the performing arts

Preface

This inventory was prepared as part of an archival preservation project to arrange, describe, and catalog resources essential for the study of African-American theater history. The necessary staff and supplies for *the Blacks on Stage: African-American Theater Arts Collections Project* were made available through a combination of funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities the City and State of New York.

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Edith Spencer. Scrapbook (1916-1946).
1 box (2 linear ins.).

Edith Spencer was an international singer and dancer who performed in vaudeville, the theatre and nightclubs during the decades of the 1920s and 1930s. She appeared in the Broadway productions of *Runnin' Wild*, *Rarin' to Go* and succeeded Florence Mills in *Shuffle Along*. Her club engagements included the Cotton Club and Plantation Café (New York), Sunset Café (Chicago), and the Cotton Club in Culver City as well as other engagements from the east to the west coast, New York to Los Angeles, London, Paris, and the Far East. After *Shuffle Along* closed, Spencer teamed up with Lottie Gee and formed a sister act. In 1933 Spencer, Gee, and Allegretti Anderson toured Shanghai and Hong Kong and were alternately billed as the Harmony Trio, the Creole Beauties, and Three Dark Sisters. Before she obtained recognition on Broadway, Spencer had accompanied T. Lloyd Hickman and her brother, C. Spencer Tocus, in a concert recital in 1916.

In 1940 Spencer married Cecil P. Brooks and they were divorced in 1946. Sometime after her divorce Spencer relocated to Los Angeles, California from the Philippines where she had resided with her husband, and subsequently became a real estate agent.

Scope and Content Note

The Edith Spencer Scrapbook, consists of a scrapbook and two folders, and documents Spencer's entertainment career. Although the majority of newspaper clippings do not have dates, those that do are dated 1932 and 1933. The newspaper clippings are comprised of feature articles containing biographical information on the entertainer as well as reviews of productions in which she appeared. In addition, there are advertisements and flyers for performances, a photograph of the trio Spencer formed with Lottie Gee and Allegretti Anderson and of Spencer's niece, as well as a page of autographs. There are photographs of Spencer in the Photographs and Prints Division.

The two folders may contain materials previously pasted in the scrapbook, including newspaper clippings, letters, telegrams, advertisements, and membership cards. Folder 1 dates from 1922 to 1974 and contains letters to Spencer's husband, Cecil P. Brooks from a female admirer while Edith and Cecil were stationed in Los Angeles and the Philippines as well as his Veteran of Foreign War membership cards. There are a couple of letters to Spencer's mother, letters from friends and admirers, and telegrams from her husband, Cecil. The second folder's contents date from 1927 to 1941 and contain printed materials, primarily newspaper clippings, articles, greeting cards, and advertisements and flyers for her performances. Articles on Spencer's brother, C. Spencer Tocus, who was the organizer and director of the All Saints Episcopal Choir in St. Louis, Missouri are also included in the folder. Tocus was a concert pianist and the musical director for Stowe College (Missouri?). Report cards and a diploma for William H. Parker are among the folder's contents, although there is no other documentation or identification of who he is in the scrapbook or folders.

Provenance

Gift of Helen Armstead-Johnson, 1996
SCM 96-38

Processed by Paula Williams
November 2000

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Volume</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1	1932-1933 Newspaper clippings: feature articles, reviews, and advertisements; greeting cards, poem, photographs, autographed page containing Spencer's signature, flyer, Florence Mills' funeral program
	<u>Folder</u>	
	1	Letters and telegrams, 1922-1940, 1951, 1973-1974
	2	Printed Material, 1937-1941

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SEPARATION RECORD

The following items were removed from:

Name of Collection/Papers Edith Spencer Scrapbook

Accession Number SCM 96-38

The item(s) listed below have been sent to the division indicated, either to be retained or disposed of there. Any items that should receive special disposition are clearly marked.

Schomburg Photographs and Print Division:
Photographs sent to this division.

Accessioned by: Mary Yearwood

Date: December 1996