Inventory of the
Edwina Harleston Whitlock Papers, 1918 - 2006
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Edwina Harleston Whitlock Papers,

Dates: 1918 - 2006


Abstract: Edwina Augusta Harleston Whitlock was born Gussie Louise Harleston on September 28, 1916 in Charleston, South Carolina to Robert Othello Harleston and his wife, Marie Isabelle Forrest. She was raised by her uncle, Edwin Augustus "Teddy" Harleston and his wife Elise Forrest after it was discovered that Whitlock's parents had tuberculosis. Whitlock attended the Avery Normal Institute in Charleston, South Carolina and Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama, where she graduated in 1939. She worked as a reporter and editor for several publications throughout the U.S. Whitlock met her husband, Henry Oliver Whitlock, while studying for her Master's degree at Northwestern University. The couple married in 1945 and had four children together. They also published a newspaper in Gary, Indiana, called The Gary American, until Henry's death in 1960. Following her husband's death, Whitlock and her children relocated to Los Angeles California, where she became a social worker. Upon retirement, she returned to Charleston where she founded a chapter of the League of Allied Arts and volunteered as editor of The Avery Bulletin. In the early 1990s consulted with her distant cousin Edward Ball on writing The Sweet Hell Inside: A Family History. The book documents the African American branch of the Harleston family and was published by HarperCollins in 2001. Whitlock died the following year at the age of 87.

The collection contains personal papers, correspondence, photographs, and printed material relating to Whitlock and her family. Also included are materials documenting Whitlock's education, as well as her professional, civic and research endeavors. Items in the collection date from 1960-2006, with bulk dates spanning the years 1960-1989 and 2000-2001.

Extent: 0.42 linear feet (1 archival box)

Repository: Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston

Call Number: AMN 1120

Language of Material: Material in English

Biographical Note

Edwina Augusta Harleston Whitlock was born Gussie Louise Harleston on September 28, 1916 in Charleston, South Carolina to Robert Othello Harleston and his wife, Marie Isabelle Forrest. Whitlock was the granddaughter of Captain Edwin Gillard Harleston, founder of the Harleston Funeral Home. At the age of two, Whitlock was sent to live with her uncle, a noted portrait artist, Edwin Augustus "Teddy" Harleston and his wife, Elise Forrest, who is acknowledged as South Carolina's first female photographer. Both Edwin and Elise worked for the family business, the Harleston Funeral Home. Edwin was also active in the Charleston Chapter
of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1917. Edwin adopted Whitlock; and when he died in 1931, she changed her name to Edwina Augusta Harleston in honor of his memory. After her uncle’s death, Whitlock was sent to live with her aunt, Eloise Harleston Jenkins, wife of Reverend Daniel Jenkins of Jenkins Orphanage. As a teenager Whitlock wrote for the Charleston Messenger, a newspaper published by her uncle, The Rev. Daniel J. Jenkins. By the age of twenty, Whitlock lost her parents and sister, Sylvia to tuberculosis.

Whitlock attended the Avery Normal Institute in Charleston, South Carolina and Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama. She graduated from the college in 1939; earning a B.A. degree in English with a minor in Sociology. She worked as a reporter and editor for the Pittsburgh Courier, Baltimore Afro-American, Chicago Defender, and Negro Digest. Whitlock met her husband, Henry Oliver Whitlock, while studying for her Master’s degree at Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism. The couple married in 1945 and had four children together: Henry O. Whitlock, Jr., Sylvia Elise Whitlock, Mae Whitlock Gentry and Edwin Harleston Whitlock. Whitlock and her husband published a weekly newspaper based out of Gary, Indiana, called The Gary American, until his death in 1960.

Following her husband’s death, Whitlock and her family moved to Los Angeles California, where she became a social worker. When she retired, Whitlock returned to Charleston and founded a chapter of the League of Allied Arts, serving as the organization’s first president. She also volunteered as an editor of the Avery Bulletin from 1988-1990. In the early 1990s, Whitlock moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where she consulted with her distant cousin, author, Edward Ball on writing The Sweet Hell Inside: A Family History. The book documents the African American branch of the Harleston family and was published by HarperCollins in 2001. Whitlock died the following year at the age of 87.

Collection Overview

The collection contains personal documents, correspondence, printed and photographic material, and legal records pertaining to the life, career and family of Edwina Augusta Harleston Whitlock. Collection items in each folder are arranged chronologically.

Series 1. Biographical Papers, 1935-2006, undated includes Whitlock's passports and personal identification cards, appointment books, diaries and correspondence. The series also contains signed affidavits regarding her name change from Gussie Louise Harleston to Edwina Augusta Harleston. In addition, there are materials related to Whitlock's living arrangements and expenses; family and wedding photographs; greeting and birthday cards, as well as posthumous materials including obituaries, remembrances from friends, and a program from her funeral. Also present within the series are class notes and ephemera from Whitlock's alma mater, Talladega College; a certificate of completion for specialized training in counseling disadvantaged youth; and a portfolio and business card from Jonathan Green Studios, Inc., from Whitlock's work with the League of Allied Arts. A publishing contract for The Sweet Hell Inside: A Family History, correspondence between Edward Ball and Whitlock concerning the book's title and release; and book reviews from the New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, and O, The Oprah Magazine, are also contained in the series.

Series 2. Harleston Family, 1918-2002 contains news clippings from the Post & Courier and Avery Bulletin about her Uncle Edwin Augustus Harleston's artwork; a photocopied note regarding Harleston family members' ownership of his artwork; and correspondence regarding a long-term exhibit at the Smithsonian on African American history. In addition, the series consists of correspondence to Whitlock from University of South Carolina professor, Dr. Bobby Donaldson regarding letters from her uncle and cousin, Edward Crum Mickey to W.E.B. Du Bois. Copies of these letters are included in the series, as well as a reply letter from Du Bois. A handwritten letter to Whitlock’s uncle from friend, Nora Brown is also part of the series.

Series 3. Legal Records/Documents, 1958-1983 consists of items pertaining to the estate of Whitlock's husband, Henry Oliver Whitlock, and his local Gary, Indiana newspaper, The Gary American, including: copies of her husband's death certificate; a certificate of incorporation; a bill of sale for the Gary American Printing and Publishing Corporation and mortgage documents. Also included in the series are correspondence
between Whitlock and her attorneys regarding property damage coverage for a space she was leasing at 212 East Main Street in Dillon, South Carolina.

**Series 4. Correspondence, 1977-2001, undated** consists of handwritten letters from Whitlock to friends, family and professional acquaintances, as well as one from an unknown source.

**Series 5. Miscellaneous, 1961-1987** consists of news clippings and a booklet on conducting oral history interviews.

**Collection Arrangement**

2. Harleston Family, 1918-2002
5. Miscellaneous, 1961-1987

**Restrictions**

**Access Restrictions**

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**Subject Headings**

- African American-South Carolina--Charleston.
- African American art--South Carolina-20th century.
- African American artists--South Carolina.
- African American families--South Carolina.
- African American newspapers.
- African American photographers.
- Avery Normal Institute.
- Ball, Edward, 1959-
Funeral homes--South Carolina-Charleston.
Funeral rites & ceremonies.
Genealogy & local history.
Genealogy--Research.
Harleston, Edwin Augustus, 1882-1931
Harleston, Elise F. (Elise Forrest)
Harleston family.
Jenkins' Orphanage Band.
Racially mixed people--United States.
Talladega College.
Tuberculosis--diagnosis.
Youth--Counseling of.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Edwina Harleston Whitlock Papers, Avery Research Center, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, USA.

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Bibliography

Sources consulted by Ardra Whitney

Avery Research Center preliminary biographical note: Edwina Augusta Harleston Whitlock Papers (1916-2002)

Life History: Edwina Harleston Whitlock, undated
Detailed Description of the Collection


This series contains personal documents, records and ephemera relating to Whitlock’s life, including passports and personal identification cards, appointment books, diaries and correspondence; signed affidavits concerning her name change from Gussie Louise Harleston to Edwina Augusta Harleston, and materials related to her living arrangements and expenses. In addition, the series includes family and wedding photographs; greeting and birthday cards, as well as posthumous materials, such as obituaries, remembrances from friends and a funeral program. Class notes and other ephemera from Whitlock's alma mater, Talladega College; a certificate of completion from the University of California for specialized training in counseling disadvantaged youth; a publishing contract and book reviews for *The Sweet Hell Inside: A Family History* can also contained within the series.

| Box 1 Folder 1 | Talladega College: Class Notes, Concert Flyer, Annual Fund Contributor Sticker and Student Identification Card, 1935-1988, undated |
| Box 1 Folder 2 | Affidavits Regarding Legal Name Change, 1960 |
| Box 1 Folder 3 | Certificate of Completion for Specialized Training in Vocational Counseling, 1964 |
| Box 1 Folder 4 | Appointment Books, Diaries, Calendar and Notes, 1966-1989, undated |
| | Includes Whitlock's appointments books and calendar with entries and notes, as well as addresses and telephone numbers. Also included are handwritten notes concerning her family heritage research. |
| Box 1 Folder 5 | Photographs, c.1970s-2001, undated |
| | Contains a photocopied image of Whitlock as a baby with her mother Marie; a photo from her daughter's wedding and a photo of Whitlock with her daughter, Camille. |
| Box 1 Folder 6 | Living Arrangements and Expenses: Budgets, Correspondence Flyer, Health Care Insurance Membership Cards, Mortgage Interest Statement and Permit to Return to Work or School, 1981-2000, undated |
| Box 1 Folder 7 | Georgia State Identification Cards, Passports and Social Security Card, 1982-2003, undated |
| Box 1 Folder 8 | Obituaries and Newspapers Clippings, 1983-2002, undated |
| | Includes an article from the *News & Courier/Evening Post* concerning Whitlock's promotion of her uncle's art. |
| Box 1 Folder 9 | Transcript of Oral History Interview with Edwina Harleston Whitlock, 1995 |
| Box 1 Folder 10 | Birthday and Greeting Cards, 1996-2002, undated |
| | Many of the cards are written in celebration of Whitlock's 85th birthday. |
| Box 1 Folder 11 | *The Sweet Hell Inside: A Family History*: Correspondence, Magazine and Newspaper Clippings, and Publishing Contract, 1998-2001 |
| Box 1 Folder 12 | Posthumous Materials: Correspondence and Funeral Program, 2002-2006, undated |
2. Harleston Family, 1918-2002

This series includes news clippings from the Post & Courier and Avery Bulletin, as well as a note regarding Edwin Augustus Harleston's artwork. The series also contains correspondence concerning a long-term exhibit at the Smithsonian on African American history and correspondence to Whitlock from University of South Carolina professor, Dr. Bobby Donaldson about letters from her uncle, Edwin Augustus Harleston and cousin, Edward Crum Mickey to W.E.B. Du Bois. Copies of these letters are included in the series, as well as a reply letter from Du Bois. A handwritten letter to Whitlock's uncle from friend, Nora Brown is also part of the series.

Box 1 Folder 13  Correspondence Re: W.E.B. Du Bois, Edwin Harleston and Edward Crum Mickey, 1918-2000
Box 1 Folder 14  Photocopy of Correspondence to Edwin A. Harleston from Nora Brown, 1921
Box 1 Folder 15  Correspondence, Notes and Printed Material Pertaining to Edwin A. Harleston, 1931-2002
Box 1 Folder 16  Reverend Jenkins Almost All Colored Orphanage Band Program, 1987


This series is comprised of records pertaining to the estate of Whitlock's husband, Henry Oliver Whitlock, and his local Gary, Indiana newspaper, The Gary American. Also included in the series are correspondence between Whitlock and her attorneys regarding property damage coverage for a space she was leasing at 212 East Main Street in Dillion, South Carolina.

Box 1 Folder 17  Henry Oliver Whitlock's Estate Records, 1958-1969
  Contains records pertaining to Whitlock's husband, Henry Oliver Whitlock, and his local Gary, Indiana newspaper, The Gary American, including copies of her husband's death certificate; a certificate of incorporation; a bill of sale for the Gary American Printing and Publishing Corporation; and mortgage documents.
Box 1 Folder 18  Property Damage at 212 East Main Street, Dillon South Carolina: Correspondence and Lease Agreement, 1982-1983


This series consists of handwritten letters from Whitlock to friends, family and professional acquaintances, as well as one from an unknown source.

Box 1 Folder 19  Correspondence and Notes, 1977-1985, undated
  Highlights include a letter from Whitlock to Josephine Herrald of Detroit's Heritage Museum about an upcoming exhibition of Edwin Augustus Harleston's works; a note about Edmund J. Jenkins studying at the Royal Academy of Music; a letter from Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe (photographer and wife of Arthur Ashe) regarding Whitlock's assistance with Ashe's book, Viewfinders; and a note card detailing Whitlock's discovery of information about a family member, named Kate Harleston, from going through reels of the 1880 Census at the South Carolina Archives.
Box 1 Folder 20  Handwritten Letters, 1977-2001, undated
Includes handwritten letters from Whitlock, mentioning her family history research at Atlanta University's archives and describing her health. Also present are letters from Whitlock's friends discussing their lives, health and families.

Box 1 Folder 21  Jonathan Green Studios, Inc.: Business Card, Career Portfolio and Correspondence, 1989

These items were sent to Whitlock by Studio Manager, Richard D. Weedman, while she was Chairman of the Long Range Planning Committee at the League of Allied Artists.

5. Miscellaneous, 1961-1987

This series contains a booklet on oral history interview procedures and news clippings from the Los Angeles Sentinel and Atlanta Constitution.

Box 1 Folder 22  Oral History Booklet, 1973

Box 1 Folder 23  Newspaper Clippings, 1961-1987

Contains a clipping from the Los Angeles Sentinel concerning a family savings bank and an article from the Atlanta Constitution regarding Atlanta University's honoring of the restoration of murals by the late artist, Hale Woodruff.