

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Susan Cayton Woodson

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Woodson, Susan Cayton, 1918-2013
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Susan Cayton Woodson,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 14, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:24:10).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Art collector Susan Cayton Woodson (1918 - 2013 ) is a collector and preservationist of Chicago Renaissance art. The Susan Woodson Gallery houses the preeminent collection of the Chicago Renaissance and has attracted an international clientele. Woodson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 14, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_105
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Art enthusiast Susan Cayton Woodson helped collect and preserve several works from the Chicago Renaissance. Born on October 16, 1918, in Seattle, Washington, Woodson was raised by her maternal grandparents after her mother died when she was just a year old.

From an early age, Woodson was conscious of her heritage, and expected to live up to the reputations of her ancestors. Her great-grandfather, Hiram R. Revels, became the first African American senator in 1870 when he won election from

Mississippi during Reconstruction. At home, Woodson was influenced by the accomplishments of her grandparents. Grandmother Susie Revels Cayton was a suffragette and union activist, and Woodson's grandfather, Horace Roscoe Cayton, published the *Seattle Republican*, the city's first black newspaper.

Woodson attended Washington State College until her grandfather's death in 1940; at that time her grandmother decided it would be best to send Woodson some place where she could get married, and chose to move her to Chicago. Paul Robeson, a friend of Woodson's siblings, flew out to chaperone Woodson on the drive to Chicago. In Chicago, Woodson lived in the Rosenwald; home to many of the city's black intellectuals and artists.

After working at the Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Company and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, Woodson volunteered at the Parkway Community House where her uncle, Horace Cayton, Jr., became director; she herself became a board member in 1973. Over the years, Woodson befriended Eldzier Cortor, Langston Hughes, Ted Ward, Richard Wright, and many other artists and activists from the eras of the WPA and Chicago Renaissance. Woodson also formed relationships with Chicago's great artists, and began collecting art commemorating these important movements. The Susan Woodson Gallery houses the preeminent collection of the Chicago Renaissance and has attracted an international clientele.

Woodson served on the board of the South Side Community Art Center, and was a member of the Vivian G. Harsh Collection at the Carter G. Woodson Regional Library.

Woodson passed away on January 31, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Susan Cayton Woodson was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 14, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Art collector Susan Cayton Woodson (1918 - 2013 ) is a collector and preservationist of Chicago Renaissance art. The Susan Woodson Gallery houses the preeminent collection of the Chicago Renaissance and has attracted an international clientele.

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## Restrictions

## **Restrictions on Access**

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

## **Restrictions on Use**

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## **Related Material**

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## **Controlled Access Terms**

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### **Persons:**

Woodson, Susan Cayton, 1918-2013

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Woodson, Susan Cayton, 1918-2013--Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## **Occupations:**

Art Collector

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ArtMakers

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## **Administrative Information**

### **Custodial History**

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### **Preferred Citation**

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Susan Cayton Woodson, May 14, 2003. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Susan Cayton Woodson, Section A2003\_105\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:10 2003/05/14

Art collector Susan Cayton Woodson talks about her family history and tells of her relation to Hiram Revels, the first African American elected to the United States Senate. She also shares several anecdotes that have been passed down through her family's history and recalls her mother and father's backgrounds. She explains why her family moved from Mississippi to Seattle before she was born.

Video Oral History Interview with Susan Cayton Woodson, Section A2003\_105\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:50 2003/05/14

Art collector Susan Cayton Woodson shares childhood memories of Seattle, Washington, describing segregation in the city and explaining how many different ethnicities interacted. She also focuses on her family life in Seattle and talks about her elementary school, high school, and junior college education.

Video Oral History Interview with Susan Cayton Woodson, Section A2003\_105\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:10 2003/05/14

Art collector Susan Cayton Woodson recalls her early adulthood in Chicago, Illinois. She describes living in the Rosenwald Building and talks about some of the famous tenants, and talks about her friendship with Paul Robeson. She also describes the racial, social, and economic divisions on Chicago's South Side. After explaining her difficulties in finding a job, Woodson talks about meeting her husband, Harold Woodson, and talks about troubles with her family.

Video Oral History Interview with Susan Cayton Woodson, Section  
A2003\_105\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:40 2003/05/14

Art collector Susan Cayton Woodson remembers her husband Harold Woodson's career path and his family's business success. She then recalls how she began her art gallery the Susan Woodson Gallery. She talks about many of the artists with whom she has worked, including Charles Sebree, and outlines the methods she uses to acquire artwork. Woodson also discusses showing WPA artwork in her gallery.

Video Oral History Interview with Susan Cayton Woodson, Section  
A2003\_105\_001\_005, TRT: 0:26:20 2003/05/14

Art collector Susan Cayton Woodson remembers some of the prominent artists and art collectors she has known, such as William McBride and Margaret Burroughs. She reflects on her life and career, recalling rewarding moments from her ownership of the Susan Woodson Gallery, and considers her legacy. She also shares her hopes for the black community.