



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mayme Clayton

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Mayme Clayton
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Mayme Clayton,
Dates:	October 7, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	4 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:56:48).
Abstract:	Curator and librarian Mayme Clayton (1923 - 2006) was the collector and founder of the Mayme Clayton Library and Museum. The museum houses an extensive collection of African American literature, music and other cultural artifacts that she amassed over four decades. Clayton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 7, 2004, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_196
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Curator and librarian Mayme A. Clayton was born to Mary Dorothy Knight Agnew and Jerry Modique Agnew in Van Buren, Arkansas on August 4, 1923 . She graduated high school at the age of sixteen, and moved to Los Angeles, California in 1946. She earned her B.A. degree from the University of California-Berkeley. She earned her master's of library science degree from Goddard College via correspondence to their Vermont campus and a Ph.D. degree from Sierra University in Los Angeles.

Clayton began her career as a librarian in 1952, working at the Doheny Library at the University of Southern California. In 1957, she left the University of Southern California to become a law librarian at the University of California, Los Angeles, and also served as a consultant and founding member of the Afro-American Studies Center Library. After working at University of California Los Angeles for fifteen years, Clayton took a position at Universal Books in Hollywood, California. When the store closed, the partners in the store divided the remaining volumes between themselves. Clayton received all of the books that pertained to Black society and culture – more than 4,000 volumes. Clayton's collection of African American ephemera has continued to grow; it now contains more than 20,000 pieces, including films, books, magazines, music and advertisements. Some of the items in this collection include signed first editions of works by Zora Neale Hurston, handwritten correspondence from George Washington Carver, as well as a rare signed copy of Phyllis Wheatley's "Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral." Currently, the collection resides in the Mayme A. Clayton Library and Museum in Culver City, California. Clayton served as the president of the center.

Clayton was the founder of the Black American Cinema Society, which awards scholarships and hosts film festivals. She was the recipient of numerous awards, including the Phoenix Award and the Paul Robeson Award.

Mayme Clayton was interviewed by "The HistoryMakers" on October 7, 2004. Clayton died on October 13, 2006 at the age of 83.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Mayme Clayton was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 7, 2004, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Curator and librarian Mayme Clayton (1923 - 2006) was the collector and founder of the Mayme Clayton Library and Museum. The museum houses an extensive collection of African American literature, music and other cultural artifacts that she amassed over four decades.

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®.

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.

Controlled Access Terms

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

Persons:

Clayton, Mayme A.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Clayton, Mayme A.--Interviews

African American librarians.

African American archivists

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Western States Black Research Center.

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Mayme Clayton, October 7, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/11/2011 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage, October 7, 2004

Video Oral History Interview with Mayme Clayton, Section A2004_196_001_001, TRT: 0:29:48
2004/10/07

Mayme Clayton discusses her family history. Clayton was born on August 4, 1923 in Van Buren, Arkansas to Mary Dorothy Knight Agnew and Jerry Modique Agnew who graduated from Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock, Arkansas and was the only African American to own two general merchandise stores, one in Van Buren and another in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Clayton is the youngest of three children; she had a brother that died in his early 20s and a sister named Sarah Elizabeth Agnew Davis. John Knight, her maternal grandfather, was the son of a plantation owner in Texas. As a child at Douglass Elementary School in Van Buren, Arkansas Clayton remembers a lack of African American books in the school library. She recalls sitting in the "blacks only" balcony of a movie theater in Van Buren. As a teenager, Clayton would go to Midnight Rambles, a vaudeville event.

African American families--Arkansas--Van Buren

Arkansas Baptist College

African American businesspeople--Arkansas.

Discrimination in public accommodations--Arkansas--Van Buren

African American children—Education (Elementary)—Arkansas

African American children--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with Mayme Clayton, Section A2004_196_001_002, TRT: 0:29:13
2004/10/07

Mayme Clayton remembers herself as being an athletic child. When she was young, Clayton use to run away from home to watch the children learning in school. She does not recall any organized sports being offered for girls while she was in primary school. At Arkansas Baptist College, she played on the girl's basketball team. While studying at Arkansas Baptist College, she lived at president Tandy Washington Coggs Sr.'s home, he was a family friend. Clayton later transferred to Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. She remembers the African American male students leaving the university to serve in World War II during the 1940s. Before his baseball career Jackie Robinson was stationed at an army reserve in Missouri; Clayton met him at a Lincoln University party. As a child, Clayton's parents would take her to Little Rock, Arkansas to meet prominent African Americans such as Mary Bethune and Marian Anderson.

African American children--Social life and customs.

Sex discrimination in sports--Arkansas.

Arkansas Baptist College.

World War, 1939-1945--Participation, African American.

Bethune, Mary McLeod, 1875-1955

Lincoln University (Jefferson City, Mo.)

Robinson, Jackie, 1919-1972.

Video Oral History Interview with Mayme Clayton, Section A2004_196_001_003, TRT: 0:30:13
2004/10/07

Mayme Clayton discusses moving to California in 1946. She began her career as a librarian at the University of Southern California and she continued working as a librarian at the University of California, Los Angeles. In the 1960s, she became interested in African American history and began to collect African American books. After retiring from the University of California, Los Angeles, she worked for Universal Book Store in Hollywood, California, a

store that had a large selection of African American books. Clayton was a member of Our Authors Study Club, Inc. when she was a member, the president was Betsey Wright. Clayton's most prized acquisitions are signed Oscar Micheaux books, signed Langston Hughes books, and an 1876 signed edition of a Phillis Wheatley book. She provides details about the formation of the Western States Black Research and Education Center in 1976.

African American librarians--California

University of Southern California--Employees.

University of California, Los Angeles--Employees.

African Americans--History--Archival resources.

African American--Archival materials

Wheatley, Phillis, 1753-1784. Works.

Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967.

Micheaux, Oscar, 1884-1951

Video Oral History Interview with Mayme Clayton, Section A2004_196_001_004, TRT: 0:27:34
2004/10/07

Mayme Clayton discusses founding The Black American Film Society, a nonprofit organization developed to give cash grants to student film makers. Every year, The Black American Film Society held a film festival called Black Talkies on Parade. Clayton recalls meeting Charles Blockson of Philadelphia; they had similar African American collections. She describes her future plans for the Western States Black Research and Educational Center. Clayton hopes the African American community will understand the importance of their heritage. Looking back on her life, she wishes she received more local and international support for her collection. There has been interest from people in Germany and South Dakota to purchase her collection, but she believes it belongs in California. Clayton wants her legacy to be the collection she had amassed about African Americans. She received the majority of her African American books as a debt settlement from Universal Book Store.

African American film festivals.

Blockson, Charles L.

Western States Black Research Center

African American communities.

Archival resources--California

African Americans--History--Archival resources.