



Gwen Reed

A Guide to the collection at the Hartford History Center

Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library Hartford, Connecticut |
| Creator : | Reed, Gwendolyn B. (Clarke) |
| Title : | Gwen Reed Collection |
| Dates : | 1936-1974 (Bulk Dates) |
| Extent : | 3 linear feet (6 boxes) |
| Abstract : | Papers of noted Hartford actress Gwen Reed. |
| Location: | Ground Floor Electronic Stacks |
| Language: | English |

Biographical Note

Gwendolyn B. Clarke was born in 1912 to Georgianna and George Nathaniel Clarke of New York City. Georgianna soon left her husband, and she and her daughter settled in Hartford in 1921. Both worked in the tobacco fields, but Gwen also graduated from Arsenal Elementary School and Hartford Public High School. She briefly attended Hartford Federal College before marrying John T. Reed in 1935. The couple separated a few years later and were divorced by 1948.

In October 1936, the Charles Gilpin Players formed, with Gwen as their secretary. She began her acting career with the Charles Gilpin players as well, with a role in the June 1937 performance of "Trilogy in Black." Over the years Gwen performed in and directed numerous productions in Hartford. In 1946 she began a 17 year tenure portraying Aunt Jemima for the Quaker Oats Company. Gwen traveled all over New England promoting the brand.

In Hartford, Gwen was dedicated to educational and community work. She made television appearances on Channel 3's children's program "Ranger Station," originated the Playtime for Tots program in Bellevue Square, as well as teaching in the Head Start and Reading is Fundamental Programs.

Following Gwen Reed's death in 1974, Hartford Mayor George A. Athanson dedicated a storytelling room to Gwen at the Ropkins Branch of the Hartford Public Library.

Scope and Content

Papers of Gwen Reed, a Hartford tobacco worker turned actress, educator, and community worker. Included are papers from her involvement with Community Players, Hartford Stage Company, and Playtime for Tots. Theater programs and scripts constitute about a third of the collection. A valuable source of information is Reed's scrapbook from her time with the Charles Gilpin Players (1936-1939), a beneficiary of the Federal Theater Project. Reed is also well known for having portrayed Aunt Jemima throughout New England during a 17-year career with the Quaker Oats Company. Additional material includes photographs, a video tape from WFSB Channel 3, and plaques.

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

The records are stored in a restricted area and therefore may not be available on a same-day basis.

Use Restrictions

See Hartford History Center's Collection Use policy. Permission to publish from the Collection must be obtained in writing from curator of the Hartford History Center, and a copy of the published work may be requested by the Hartford History Center. The Hartford History Center reserves the right to refuse permission to publish, etc. to those who have not complied with its policies. Use of the collections will normally not be permitted for the purpose of promotion of commercial products and services or political campaigns. Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library reserves the right to limit the number of photographic prints/captures and to restrict the use or reproduction of rare, fragile, or valuable objects.

Subject Headings

Personal Names

Jemima, Aunt

Corporate Names

Charles Gilpin Players

Federal Theatre Project (U.S.)
Quaker Oats Company

Subjects

Actresses - Hartford
African American women
Drama
Photographs

Genre Terms

Scrapbooks

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Item, Collection Title, Collection number (Box #, Folder #). Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

Processing Details

EAD Finding Aid created January 2013.

Accruals

The collection is closed. Additional accruals are not expected.

Contents:

Papers

| Box | Folder | |
|------------|---------------|--|
| 1 | 1 | African American Studies |
| 1 | 2 | Associated Little Theaters of Greater Hartford 1949-51 |
| 1 | 3 | Aunt Jemima |
| 1 | 4 | Charles Gilpin Players |
| 1 | 5 | Clark, George |
| 1 | 6 | Community Players |
| 1 | 7 | Community Players, Applications |
| 1 | 8 | Community Players, Correspondence 1948-51 |
| 1 | 9 | Community Players, Minutes 1948-51 |
| 1 | 10 | Community Renewal Team of Hartford |
| 1 | 11 | Correspondence 1939-74 |

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| 1 | 12 | Hartford Public Schools |
| 1 | 13 | Hartford Stage Company |
| 1 | 14 | Parade for Freedom-A Dedication to Frederick Douglas 1974 |
| 1 | 15 | Performances, Clippings |
| 1 | 16 | Playtime for Tots |
| 1 | 17 | Playtime for Tots, Applications |
| 1 | 18 | Playtime for Tots, Class of 1965 |
| 1 | 19 | Playtime for Tots, Events and News |
| 1 | 20 | Playtime for Tots, Time Sheets |

Box Folder

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| 2 | 1 | Programs 1946-49 |
| 2 | 2 | Programs 1950 |
| 2 | 3 | Programs 1951-56 |
| 2 | 4 | Programs 1957-74, ND |
| 2 | 5 | Reading for Fun, Damental |
| 2 | 6 | Reed, Gwen, Biographical |
| 2 | 7 | Reed, Gwen, Calendars 1970-71 |
| 2 | 8 | Reed, Gwen, Certificates and Awards |
| 2 | 9 | Reed, Gwen, Hartford Public Library |
| 2 | 10 | Reed, Gwen, Memberships/Organizations |
| 2 | 11 | Reed, Gwen, Personal Records |
| 2 | 12 | A Salute to Gwen Reed 1968 |
| 2 | 13 | Script, Anderson, Maxwell, Bad Seed |
| 2 | 14 | Script, Applegarth, Margaret T., The Legion of the Black Madonna |
| 2 | 15 | Script, Armstrong, William Howard, Sounder |

Box Folder

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|---|----|---|
| 3 | 1 | Script, Barry, Spranger, Cupid's Bow 1958 |
| 3 | 2 | Script, Brownell, John Charles, Mississippi Rainbow circa 1935-39 |
| 3 | 3 | Script, Coleman, Ralf, The Double Take ND |
| 3 | 4 | Script, Coleman, Warren, The Greener Grass ND |
| 3 | 5 | Script, Davis, Allen, On Vengeance Height 1924 |
| 3 | 6 | Script, France, Anatole, The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife 1915 |
| 3 | 7 | Green, Paul, The Man Who Died at Twelve O'Clock 1925-31 |
| 3 | 8 | Script, Gunderson, Lee, A Moment of Hope ND |
| 3 | 9 | Script, Hellman, Lillian, The Little Foxes 1939 |
| 3 | 10 | Script, Herliby, Ludvig, Jeppe of the Hill 1722 |
| 3 | 11 | Script, Hurd, Reggie Jr., The Age of Anguish ND |
| 3 | 12 | Script, Hurd, Reggie Jr., The Red Tie ND |
| 3 | 13 | Script, Hurd, Reggie Jr., Savior From Agnew Alley ND |
| 3 | 14 | Script, Huxley, Aldous, The Gioconda Smile 1938 |
| 3 | 15 | Script, Kotz, Kathleen Murphy, Five Favorite Folk Plays 1945 |
| 3 | 16 | Script, Manley, William Ford, Sacrifice ND |

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| 3 | 17 | Script, Manley, William Ford, Samson and Delilah ND |
| Box | Folder | |
| 4 | 1 | Script, McCullers, Carson, The Member of the Wedding Broadway opening 1950 |
| 4 | 2 | Script, McCoo, Edward, Ethiopia at the Bar of Justice |
| 4 | 3 | Script, O'Neil, Eugene, Before Breakfast 1916 |
| 4 | 4 | Script, Reed, Gwen, Get Your Morning Paper |
| 4 | 5 | Script, Reed, Gwen, Home, Sweet Home |
| 4 | 6 | Script, Reed, Gwen, Ripping Quarters |
| 4 | 7 | Script, Reed, Gwen, The Test |
| 4 | 8 | Script, Reed, Gwen, 3 Peas One Pod |
| 4 | 9 | Script, Russel, Charlie L, Five on the Back Hand Side |
| 4 | 10 | Script, Ryerson, Florence and Colin Clements, Last Night 1937 |
| 4 | 11 | Script, Stone, Gene and Jack Robinson, Ready! Aim! Fire! |
| 4 | 12 | Script, Williams, Tennessee, The Glass Menagerie |
| 4 | 13 | Script, Williams, Tennessee, Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen |
| 4 | 14 | Script, Author unknown, And No One Asked: A Choral |
| 4 | 15 | Script, Author unknown, Bitter Bread |
| 4 | 16 | Script, Author unknown, Broadcast of 1950 |
| 4 | 17 | Script, Author unknown, The Courage and the Grace |
| 4 | 18 | Script, Author unknown, Father to the Man |
| 4 | 19 | Script, Author unknown, For Better or Worse |
| 4 | 20 | Script, Author unknown, Two Birds (With One Stone) |
| 4 | 21 | Photographs |
| 4 | 22 | Photographs |
| 4 | 23 | Photographs |
| 4 | 24 | Photographs |
| 4 | 25 | Photographs |
| Box | | |
| 5 | | Oversized Portrait |
| 5 | | Award |
| 5 | | Gwen Reed Week Proclamation 1975 |
| 5 | | Songbook, "Let's Sing Again" |
| 5 | | Scrapbook, Programs |
| 5 | | Scrapbook, "The Sincere Testimony to Anxiety, Labor, Patience, Time and Cordial, Constructive Criticism and to Memories Turbulent or Tender of Conn. Federal Theater October 1936 to May 6, 1939 |
| Box | | |
| 6 | | Plaques |
| 6 | | Video Tape: WFSB TV, "Gwen Reed |
| 6 | | Keys to Cities |