

Guide to African American women real photo postcards C0396

African American women real photo postcards
circa 1910s-1940s



Title Statement

Guide to African American women real photo postcards C0396

Subtitle: African American women real photo postcards

Author: Meghan Glasbrenner

Publication Statement

Publisher: George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Fenwick Library, MS2FL
4400 University Dr.
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Business Number: 703-993-2220
Fax Number: 703-993-8911
speccoll@gmu.edu
URL: <https://scrc.gmu.edu>



October 12, 2023

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-07-01 07:01:35 -0400.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

C0396

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/679

Unit Date

circa 1910s-1940s

box

1 (folder)

Language

English

Abstract

A group of 25 real photo postcard portraits of African American women, in both studio and informal settings.

Creator

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Extent

.1 Linear Feet 1 folder

Physical Location

R 72, C 3, S 6

Repository

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

The copyright and related rights status of this collection have not been evaluated (See <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/CNE/1.0/>).

Acquisition Information

Purchased from Schubertiade Music by Lynn Eaton in April 2023.

Processing Information

Processing and finding aid completed by Meghan Glasbrenner from September - October 2023.

Preferred Citation

African American women real photo postcards, C0396, Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries

Historical Information

In 1903, Eastman Kodak Company released a new camera to capitalize on the current global interest in postcards: the No. 3A Folding Pocket Kodak. This small camera was portable and designed specifically for postcard sized film, allowing the real photographic images to be printed directly onto a blank card, making it possible, and affordable, for anyone to create their own, mailable postcards, either for personal use or as a business. As such, the subjects of real photo postcards were widely varied, including slices of everyday life, such as local shops and humorous antics, but the majority served as formal family portraits to distribute to friends and relatives.

In the early 20th century, there was also an increased emphasis on capturing photographs that portrayed Black subjects respectfully and affirmingly. Within the African American community, posing for a photograph was a way to push back against the overly "sympathetic" images captured by earlier white photographers and counteract racist caricatures. The affordability of Kodak's postcard camera increased the ability for African American families and individuals to commission and share personal and family images on their own terms.

Scope and Content

A group of 25 real photo postcard portraits of African American women, in both studio and informal settings. Professional portraits were taken in a variety of locations including Riter's Studio in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Peoples Photo Studio in Parkersburg, West Virginia, Bell Studio in New York City, New York, Elite Studio in Farrell, Pennsylvania, and Hoover Studios in Carlisle & Newville, Pennsylvania. Other possible locations include Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio, Morgantown, West Virginia, Savannah, Georgia, and Chicago, Illinois. Many contain personal inscriptions and identifications written on the back, and one is largely covered with black backing paper residue on top of pencil markings and drawings, likely from a child.

Date range estimates are based on stamp box markings where possible (see "How to Date Real Photo Postcards" for more information).

Related Materials

The Special Collections Research Center holds many other portrait and general photography collections such as the Jack Rottier photograph collection.

The Thomas Balch Library holds many collections of photographs documenting Black history in Loudoun County and Northern Virginia.

Keywords

Portrait photographs

Photography

Real photo postcards

African American women

African Americans

Bibliography

Hill, Samantha. 2021. "How Black People in the 19th Century Used Photography as a Tool for Social Change." School of Information, University of Michigan (blog). March 1, 2021. <https://www.si.umich.edu/about-umsi/news/how-black-people-19th-century-used-photography-tool-social-change>.

"How to Date Real Photo Postcards." 2017. Sports Collectors Daily. September 5, 2017. <https://www.sportscollectorsdaily.com/dating-vintage-real-photo-postcards/>.

"Real Photo Postcards." n.d. Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Accessed October 4, 2023. <https://www.mfa.org/exhibition/real-photo-postcards>.

"These Pictures by Early African-American Photographers Did More Than Capture a Moment." 2019. Time. March 5, 2019. <https://time.com/5539596/early-african-american-photographers/>.

Arrangement

This is a single folder collection.