NEW EXHIBIT

*Sunday Go To Meeting: African American Women & Church Hats in Houston*

Upon entering a traditional Black American church, particularly in the South, one cannot help but notice elaborate hats worn by women throughout the congregation. The origin of the church hat tradition has been debated by historians and theologians for years. Some trace the practice back to western Africa, where headwear was commonly used to signify social identities. Others point to the influence of Christianity during slavery: According to I Corinthians 11:2-15, proper women should cover their heads during worship services. Still others argue that the church hat tradition simply developed from people’s desire to demonstrate their class status. The history of Black American church hats most likely contains traces of truth from all of these theories. What we know for sure is that throughout the first half of the twentieth century, most Black women used Sunday worship as opportunities to put aside their work clothes and express themselves through their attire. Those who held jobs such as domestic servants, factory workers, and nurses were required to wear drab workday uniforms, so Sunday church service was a time to put on their good “Sunday-go-to-meeting” outfits. To complete their look, these women favored bright colors, textured fabric, feathers, flowers, and other adornments for their “crowsns.”

During the 1960s, cultural and social changes posed challenges to the strong tradition of church hats and fashionable clothing in many Black churches. Our new exhibit will explore the origins of Black American church hats and will feature hats and stories by various women in Houston. Youth camps and church groups are encouraged to stop by this summer for this special educational experience.
Archivists’ Corner
2016 Donor Appreciation Day

Our 2016 Donor Appreciation Day program, featuring Dr. James T. Jones III of Prairie View A&M University, was held on Saturday, April 30. Each year, we set aside a special program to honor our donors. Without them, our archives would not exist, and we want them to understand how much we appreciate their contributions to African American history in the Houston area.

Miguell Caesar, Processing Archivist, examines an archival piece with a donor.

Dr. James T. Jones III gives his presentation on Malcolm X’s legacy in this year’s presidential race.

Billy Glasco, Lead Archivist, expresses thanks to our donors for their contributions.
Archivists’ Corner

University Student Presentations for Spring 2016

Our university collaborations continue to grow! In early May, students from Texas Southern University (TSU) and University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) came to the Gregory School to present their semester projects. Our archival team has been working hard to cultivate relationships with local students and professors, and our collaborations with Dr. Jesse Esparza of TSU and Dr. Bernardo Pohl of UHD are yielding impressive results. Dr. Jesse Esparza’s students conducted primary source research using our documents, photographs, and oral histories. Dr. Bernardo Pohl’s students used our galleries to create curriculum materials that K-12 students may use during their tours of the Gregory School. Parents and educators bringing young people to our library may access these materials through the “Community” page on our website, http://www.thegregoryschool.org/.

Spring Event Highlights

Of our many events this spring, two special treats were Tierney Malone, the esteemed DJ and artist, who spoke about Houston’s jazz culture, and award-winning fiber artist Lauren Austin, who taught us about the history of Black American quilts and crafting.
Featured Reading


The Gregory School not only has an amazing collection of archival items, but our Collections Librarian also manages a multifaceted collection of adult and juvenile books related to African American history. As you plan your visit to our new exhibit, don’t forget to browse our book collection, which contains texts that expound upon Black American aesthetics and religious practices.

*Click the images to view information in the Houston Public Library online catalog.*

Oral History Spotlight

**Black Women & Church Hats in Houston: O’Neta Mae Pink Cavitt**

Ms. O’Neta Mae Pink Cavitt was born on May 23, 1914 in Kendleton, Texas. After graduating from Powell Point High School, she moved to Houston and married Roscoe A. Cavitt shortly thereafter. She attended Franklin Beauty School in Houston’s Fourth Ward, and eventually owned a beauty shop. She received her B.A. from Paul Quinn, and she graduated from the Fashion Academy in Chicago in 1940. During her time in Chicago, she studied the designing of fine hats. She became known in the Houston area for her skill in millinery. She owned Neta’s Hat Shop and Accessories, which was located in the Pilgrim Temple Building until it was demolished in the 1960s. Countless women depended on Ms. Cavitt to create the elaborate hats they wore for church and special occasions. In 1965, she began teaching English and working as a librarian in Aldine and Houston Independent School Districts. She retired from her work as an educator in 1984.

To learn more about Ms. O’Neta Cavitt, you can listen to her oral history here: [http://bit.ly/1U7gkra](http://bit.ly/1U7gkra)
Walk-In Wednesdays

Every Wednesday from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm, the Gregory School hosts open hours for individuals who are interested in donating archival items to our collection. Our collections include papers, photos, and books donated by citizens from across the area. People who want to be a part of our oral history collection are also welcome to walk in each Wednesday to discuss potential interview appointments. If you are busy on Wednesdays, you can always call us at (832) 393-1440 or email us at hpl.gregoryschool@houstontx.gov to schedule an appointment to discuss donations and oral histories.

Volunteer Spotlight: Mr. Roy LeMelle

At Houston Public Library’s 2016 Volunteer Appreciation Ceremony on April 27, Mr. Roy LeMelle was awarded the “Most Tenured Volunteer” award for his service to the Gregory School. Mr. LeMelle has volunteered at our library since its earliest days. He attended the Gregory School as a child before it ceased operation. Mr. LeMelle is always ready to lend his expertise wherever it is needed, whether greeting patrons at our welcome desk or helping our archivists process new collections.

Please join us in congratulating Mr. LeMelle on his recognition. Our volunteer team is a stellar group of people from a variety of backgrounds. They are invaluable to the operation of the Gregory School. If you are interested in volunteering with us, please don’t hesitate to contact us at hpl.gregoryschool@houstontx.gov.

Community Resources

Meeting Rooms
If you need an elegant meeting space in the Midtown area, the Gregory School has two conference rooms available for reservation. We offer complimentary parking and free wireless internet for laptops and tablets.

Tours
Our gallery spaces offer an excellent history of the Fourth Ward area and African Americans in the greater Houston area.

If your group would like to book a conference room or take a tour of our galleries, please email us at hpl.gregoryschool@houstontx.gov for information.

Join Our Email List!
If you are interested in receiving Gregory School news, send a request to hpl.gregoryschool@houstontx.gov to be added to our email list.

Gregory School Events
For information on events at the Gregory School, visit http://www.thegregoryschool.org/news.html.

Trivia Answer:
Fanny McFarland, who died in 1866.