SIMON, WALTER AUGUSTUS, 1921-1979.
Walter Augustus Simon and Virginia Spottswood Simon family papers, 1813-2015

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Walter Augustus Simon and Virginia Spottswood Simon family papers, 1813-2015
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 1057
Extent: 16.25 linear ft. (32 boxes), 9 bound volumes (BV), and 2 oversized bound volumes (OBV)
Abstract: The collection contains the papers of Walter Augustus Simon, African American artist and professor of art, from 1916-1979; the papers of his wife, Virginia Spottswood Simon, from 1931-2015; and the papers of several members of the Simon and Spottswood families from 1813-2012. Materials include correspondence, certificates and awards, writings, clippings, school records, lecture material, photographs and printed material, documenting the professional careers and personal lives of the Simon family.
Language: Materials mostly in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access
Special restrictions apply: Collection stored off-site. Researchers must contact the Rose Library in advance to access this collection.

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Walter Augustus Simon (1916-1979), African American artist and professor of art, was born in Brooklyn, New York, and began accepting commissioned projects as early as age eleven. He was a graduate of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in New York City, New York, and the National Academy of Fine Arts in Harlem in New York City, New York. During World War II, he served with the United States Army Corps of Engineers from 1940-1945. After his service, Simon used his G.I. Bill to earn a bachelor’s degree in 1948, a master's degree in art history in 1950, and a doctoral degree in art history in 1961, all at New York University. He taught art at Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University), Atlanta Georgia; Georgia State College (now Georgia State University), Atlanta, Georgia; Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia; Patterson State College (now William Paterson University), Wayne, New Jersey; the California Institute of the Arts, Santa Clarita, California; Bloomsburg State College (now Bloomsburg University), Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania; and Virginia Union University, Richmond Virginia. From 1961-1969, Simon served as an assistant cultural affairs officer with the United States Information Agency in Cairo, Egypt, and as a cultural affairs officer in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Colombo, Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). He was married to Virginia Spottswood Simon and they had two daughters, Toni Spottswood Simon and Deborah Booker Simon, and a son, Michael Crichton Simon. Simon died August 28, 1979.

Virginia Spottswood Simon was born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1920, the eldest of five children born to Viola Estelle (nee Booker) of New York and Stephen Gill Spottswood of Boston, an African Methodist Episcopal Zion minister. The family moved to different areas of the United States, including Maine, Connecticut, North Carolina, Indiana, New York, and Washington, D.C., as Virginia's father moved through the ranks to become a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Conference. After graduating from Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., her father insisted that she enroll at their church's denominational institution, Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina, where she earned her bachelor's degree in English in 1941. She then attended Wellesley College in Boston, Massachusetts, to complete her master's degree. Virginia had met Walter Augustus Simon through her brother before beginning at Wellesley, and they stayed in touch while he was enlisted in the Army. They were married in
1942 by Virginia's father. Virginia worked as a substitute teacher prior to Walter's return home from the war and then traveled with him as he earned his subsequent degrees and served with the United States Information Service, during which time she learned Arabic. After Walter's death in 1979, Virginia wrote an unpublished book about Nubian culture and its kingdoms. She later became the first African-American to serve on the Virginia Museum Fine Arts Council.

**Scope and Content Note**

The collection contains the papers of Walter Augustus Simon from 1916-1979. The papers include correspondence, certificates and awards, writings, lecture material, photographs, documents associated with his work as a cultural affairs officer, and printed material. Correspondence includes a significant number of letters sent to Virginia Spottswood Simon during World War II. The files are arranged chronologically and include information on his service in World War II; his education at New York University; his service as a cultural affairs officer in Egypt, Afghanistan, and Ceylon; and his various teaching positions at Atlanta University, Georgia State College, Virginia State University, Patterson State College, the California Institute of the Arts, Bloomsburg State College, and Virginia Union University. The collection also includes photocopies of Simon's artwork and material from his exhibitions, as well as address and appointment books.

The collection also contains the papers of Virginia Spottswood Simon from 1931-2015. The papers include source material and drafts for her unpublished books, Good Measure, Pressed Down; The Nubians; and Inti Masriya? (Are You Egyptian?): An African American Embassy Wife in 1960s Cairo. Also included are articles, childhood diaries, clippings correspondence, notes, research, school records, scrapbooks and yearbooks, documenting her life personally and professionally. The bulk of the correspondence consists of letters between Virginia and Walter. Her work with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and its Friends of African and African American Art group is also documented through correspondence, clippings and meeting minutes.

Also present are the papers of several members of the Simon and Spottswood families from 1813-2015, including Gay Crichton Simon, Jeane Simon Fletcher, Stephen Gill Spottswood, Stephen Paul Spottswood, Michael Crichton Simon, Toni Spottswood Simon Humphries Davis and Deborah Booker Simon Koster. Nearly all of this material is correspondence between family members and Walter Augustus Simon and Virginia Spottswood Simon, dating from 1941-2015. There is also some genealogical research, family memorabilia, photographs and records related to the Simon and Spottswood families, dating from 1813-2015.

**Arrangement Note**

Arranged in original order.
## Container List

### Walter Augustus Simon papers

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Walter Augustus Simon and Virginia Spottswood Simon papers

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**Virginia Spottswood Simon papers**

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16  5 Livingstone College, papers and valedictory speech, 1938-1941

16  6 A.M.E. Zion Church school literature for juniors compiled by Virginia Spottswood Simon, 1938-1948 [1 of 2]

17  1 A.M.E. Zion Church school literature for juniors compiled by Virginia Spottswood Simon, 1938-1948 [2 of 2]

17  2 A.M.E. Zion Church school literature, notes for teachers of juniors, compiled by Virginia Spottswood Simon, 1938-1948

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18  1 Correspondence from mother, Viola Estelle Booker Spottswood, 1939-1953

18  5 Correspondence from Virginia Spottswood Simon to Walter Augustus Simon, 1941

18  6 Correspondence from Virginia Spottswood Simon to Walter Augustus Simon, 1941-1942

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18  7 Correspondence from Virginia Spottswood Simon to Walter Augustus Simon, 1945-1969

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19  2 Correspondence from Nigerian pen pals, Samuel Uba Oti and S.B. Angbara, 1943-1961

19  3 Miscellaneous experiences, 1950-2012 [1 of 2]

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4  Koster, Frederic Gerardus, husband of Deborah Booker Simon, correspondence, photographs and printed material, 1988-2008

Slides

-  Photographs taken by Virginia Spottswood Simon in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Vienna, Holland and Copenhagen for slide talks to art history classes, community groups and friends and family, 1961-1964

-  Photographs taken by Virginia Spottswood Simon in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tehran, Rome, France and the United States of America for slide talks to art history classes, community groups, friends and family, as well as family photographs, 1964-1971

-  Photographs taken by Virginia Spottswood Simon in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Japan for slide talks to art history classes, community groups and friends and family, as well as family photographs, 1966-1971

-  Slides about Nubia acquired from the Brooklyn Museum (courtesy of Dr. Bernard Bothmer), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts to illustrate an art history lecture at Virginia Commonwealth University and to share with community groups and family, as well as slides about the family from photographs taken by Michael Crichton Simon and Virginia Spottswood Simon in the Tonkin Gulf, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Japan and many sites in the United States of America, 1978-1990

-  Photographs taken by Virginia Spottswood Simon in Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Loire Valley, Orleans, France, 1991