



Smithsonian  
*Anacostia Community Museum*

Ella B. Howard Pearis papers,  
1923-1998, bulk 1970-1981

Vuanya T. Cyrus

2009

Anacostia Community Museum Archives  
1901 Fort Place, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20020  
ACMArchives@si.edu  
<http://www.anacostia.si.edu/Collections/ArchiveCollection>

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## Collection Overview

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Repository:</b> | Anacostia Community Museum Archives  |
| <b>Title:</b>      | Ella B. Howard Pearis papers   |
| <b>Identifier:</b> | ACMA.06-012  |
| <b>Date:</b>       | 1923-1998<br>(bulk 1970-1981)  |
| <b>Extent:</b>     | 2.32 Linear feet (3 boxes)   |
| <b>Creator:</b>    | Pearis, Ella B. Howard   |
| <b>Language:</b>   | English  |
| <b>Summary:</b>    | The collection, which dates from 1923 to 1998 and measures 2.32 linear feet, documents the career of community activist, Ella B. Howard Pearis. The papers are comprised of correspondence with and documents from community organizations, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, scrapbooks, and photographs. |

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## Administrative Information

### Related Archival Materials

Finding Aid to the Anacostia Historical Society located in Anacostia Community Museum Archives.

Finding Aid to the Alice Bell Finlayson Papers located in Anacostia Community Museum Archives.

Finding Aid to the Charles Qualls Papers located in Anacostia Community Museum Archives.

### Other Finding Aids

Finding aid

### Processing Information

Finding aid prepared by Vuanya T. Cyrus, 2009.

### Preferred Citation

The Ella B. Howard Pearis papers, Anacostia Community Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

Use of the materials requires an appointment. Please contact the archivist to make an appointment: [ACMarchives@si.edu](mailto:ACMarchives@si.edu).

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## Biographical Note

Ella B. Howard Pearis was born in 1905 in Washington, DC. She graduated from Paul Lawrence Dunbar High in 1923 and then went on to attend Miner Teachers College. For fifteen years she taught 1st and 2nd grade in Maryland and Virginia and later she worked fifteen years at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, from where she retired in 1956.

Mrs. Howard had deep roots in the Anacostia community; her great-grand parents moved to Anacostia in 1863. Macedonia Baptist Church was founded by her great-grandfather in 1866, and her great-grandfather's niece was one of the founders of St. John's Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1867. Mrs. Pearis's house on Elvans Road was built by her grandfather in 1876. As a result of this history, Mrs. Pearis felt that it was her duty to be an advocate for and promoter of the Anacostia community. She volunteered her time to work with community groups and neighborhood civic associations. Her community work brought changes to Anacostia including getting new schools established and getting more public transportation in the area.

In 1974 she and other community activists founded the Anacostia Historical Society. The Society was established in partnership with the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum's Center for Anacostia Studies. Mrs. Pearis said that the idea for the Society started when, "...a group of us started to get together one Saturday and bring any family heirlooms that you had. " From there the group began to work with the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Together they developed the exhibit, "Anacostia Story," which opened at the Museum in March 1977.

In addition to her work with the Anacostia Historical Society, Mrs. Pearis served on the advisory board of the Anacostia--ongress Heights Red Cross Service Center. This center was a part of the District of Columbia Chapter of the American Red Cross. Later in her life, Mrs. Pearis remarked that physical limitations limited her ability to make it to all of the community functions. Yet she found others ways to contribute to her community.

Mrs. Ella B. Howard Pearis died on February 23, 1998 and her funeral service was held at St. John's Christian Methodist Episcopal Church --the church founded by her family in 1867.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection documents the activities of Ella B. Howard Pearis between 1923 and 1998. It contains materials related to Mrs. Pearis's work with local and national civic organizations. Included in the collection are awards, correspondence, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, photographs, and scrapbooks.

The papers are organized into five series. The content of each series is arranged alphabetically. The series are arranged as follows:

Series I: Biographical Series II: Civic Organizations Series III: Photographs Series IV: Scrapbooks Series V: Miscellaneous

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## Arrangement

The papers are organized into five series. The content of each series is arranged alphabetically. The series are arranged as follows:

Series I: Biographical Series II: Civic Organizations Series III: Photographs Series IV: Scrapbooks Series  
V: Miscellaneous

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

D.C. Community Humanities Council  
District of Columbia Art Association

Types of Materials:

Clippings  
Correspondence  
Papers  
Photographic prints  
Photographs  
Scrapbooks

Names:

American Red Cross  
Anacostia Neighborhood Museum  
Pearis, Ella B. Howard

Geographic Names:

Anacostia (Washington, D.C.)

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical, 1960-1998; undated

*0.21 Linear feet*

This series contains materials related to Mrs. Pearis's family history, commendations, and her involvement in religious and benevolent organizations. Of particular interest is Mrs. Pearis's account of her family's history, which she traces back to 1863.

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 1   | Autobiographical, 1976; 1998; undated  |
| Box 1, Folder 2   | Awards, 1984; 1985; 1990   |
| Box 1, Folder 3   | Correspondence-- Personal, circa 1960-1981   |
| Box 1, Folder 4   | Saint John's Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, 1973 - 1986                                       |
| Box 1, Folder 5-6 | Thrift Chapter No. 12 Order of the Eastern Star Prince Hall Affiliation [2 folders], 1960; 1972-1978 |

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## Series 2: Civic Organizations, 1960-1992; undated

### *1.56 Linear feet*

This series contains materials related to Mrs. Pearis's involvement with various local and national civic organizations. The documents consist of correspondence, event calendars and programs, notes, and printed materials. Included in this series are documents that trace the history of the Anacostia--ongress Heights Red Cross Service Center (RCSC).

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 7     | Anacostia--General, circa 1960--1986                          |
| Box 1, Folder 8     | Anacostia--Printed materials, 1960 - 1984                     |
| Box 1, Folder 9-13  | Anacostia Historical Society [5 folders], 1974--1981; undated |
| Box 1, Folder 14-15 | Anacostia Neighborhood Museum [2 folders], 1974 - 1984        |
| Box 1, Folder 16    | Arts associations, 1977--1981; 1992                           |
| Box 1, Folder 17    | D.C. Village, 1974; 1979--1980                                |
| Box 1, Folder 18-19 | RCSC--Administration [2 folders], 1974 - 1982                 |
| Box 2, Folder 1     | RCSC--Administration, 1974 - 1982                             |
| Box 2, Folder 2-5   | RCSC--Advisory Board [4 folders], 1974--1981; undated         |
| Box 2, Folder 6-7   | RCSC--Events [2 folders], circa 1971--1981                    |
| Box 2, Folder 8     | RCSC--General, circa 1966--1982                               |
| Box 2, Folder 9-10  | RCSC--Newsletters [2 folders], 1974 - 1981                    |

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## Series 3: Photographs, 1979; undated

*0.01 Linear feet*

This series contains a black and white portrait of a female subject and a contact sheet. The contact sheet contains pictures from a 1979 gathering.

Box 2, Folder 11          Portraits, undated

Box 2, Folder 12          Contact sheet, 1979

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## Series 4: Scrapbooks, 1923 - 1981

*0.27 Linear feet*

This series contains one autograph book and two scrapbooks which trace Joe Louis's entire boxing career. The scrapbooks are in fragile condition.

Box 3, Folder 1            Dunbar High School, 1923  
[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 3, Folder 1            Joe Louis, 1935 - 1981

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## Series 5: Miscellaneous, circa 1956-1995

*0.15 Linear feet*

Box 2, Folder 13      Austin L. Fickling, circa 1956-1977

Box 2, Folder 14      Miscellaneous papers, 1972 - 1995

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