



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of American History*  
*Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Famous Amos Collection

NMAH.AC.0112

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Famous Amos Collection
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.0112
<b>Date:</b>	1975-1996
<b>Extent:</b>	7 Cubic feet (11 boxes, 1 oversize folder)
<b>Creator:</b>	Amos, Christine Amos, Wally Famous Amos Cookie Company
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The Famous Amos Collection consists primarily of business records, photographs, and newspaper clippings documenting the career and life of Wally Famous Amos and the Famous Amos chocolate chip cookie company he created.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Wally and Christine Amos in November, 1980.

### Related Materials

#### **Materials at the National Museum of American History**

The Division of Work and Industry holds artifacts (Panama hat, an Indian gauze shirt, a tin cookie container, and two paper cookie bags) related to this collection. See accession #:1980.0886.

#### **Materials in Other Organizations**

Chicago Public Library, Woodson Regional Library, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature. Wally Papers Amos Papers, 1978-1996 (Accession #1979/01). The collection consists of correspondence, draft copies of manuscripts, memorabilia, awards and books.

### Processing Information

Processed by Erin Molloy (volunteer), Nancy Beardsley (volunteer), Nancy Mulry (volunteer), and Theresa Worden (volunteer) in August, 2011. Finding aid authored by Erin Molloy.

### Preferred Citation

Famous Amos Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

## Restrictions

The collection is open for research use.

## Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning intellectual property rights. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

## Accruals

Additional materials (approximately 9 cubic feet) were donated by Wally Amos through Rosica Mulhearn & Associates in July, 2000.

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## Biographical / Historical

Wallace "Wally" Amos, Jr. (born July 1, 1936) is the founder of the Famous Amos chocolate chip cookie brand. Amos grew up in Tallahassee, Florida before moving to New York City at age twelve. He initially attended the Food Trades Vocational High School, but dropped out to serve in the United States Air Force from 1953-1957. After serving in the military and being honorably discharged, he moved back to New York and began working at the William Morris Agency, where he became the company's first African American talent agent.

In March of 1975, upon the suggestion of a friend, he opened up his first cookie shop in Los Angeles, California. The Famous Amos company was financed with the help of philanthropist celebrities, including Marvin Gaye and Helen Reddy. The cookies became nationally renowned and were sold throughout the United States. As Famous Amos cookies grew in popularity, so did Amos' significance as a celebrity figure. He appeared at book signings alongside entertainers and authors such as Bill Cosby, and he appeared as himself in a 1981 cameo on the television series *Taxi*.

In 1979, Amos began focusing his attention on advocating for child and adult literacy. He worked with the Literacy Volunteers of America and libraries, and he hosted a television series, *Learn to Read*, that encouraged literacy and taught children to read. Amos wrote a number of self-help and autobiographical books, including *The Power in You*, 1988 and *The Famous Amos Story*, 1983. During this time he also worked as a motivational speaker.

Facing financial difficulties, Amos sold both the Famous Amos Company and the trademarked "Famous Amos" name in 1985. In 1994, Amos started a new muffin business, initially called Uncle Noname Gourmet Muffins, which has since been renamed Uncle Wally's Muffin Company. Wally Amos currently lives in Hawaii.

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## Scope and Contents

The Famous Amos Collection consists primarily of business records, photographs, and newspaper clippings documenting the career of Wally Famous Amos and the Famous Amos chocolate chip cookie. The bulk of the collection consists of newspaper clippings.

**Series 1, Biographical Materials, 1970-1994 and undated**, documents the professional life of Wally Amos. This series includes background information about the Famous Amos chocolate chip cookie,

awards, newspaper clippings describing Amos receiving his high school diploma, and drafts and published versions of Amos's writings the *The Famous Amos Story* and *The Power in You*.

**Series 2, Advertising and Marketing Materials, 1975-1994 and undated** consists of materials relating to the marketing and advertising of Famous Amos cookies. This series contains his marketing plan, promotional materials, press releases, posters, advertising mock-ups, and packaging samples.

**Series 3, Photographs, 1975-1980 and undated**, includes a variety of photographic prints, most of which are 5" x 7" or smaller. The series contains professional and publicity photographs of Wally Amos and Famous Amos products as well as personal photographs of Amos' family and friends. Film negatives and color slides of people are also included in this series.

**Series 4, Press Materials, 1975-1996 and undated**, is comprised of three subseries: Subseries 1, Clippings, 1975-1995 and undated; Subseries 2, Articles, 1976-1996; and Subseries 3, Scrapbooks and Wall Art, 1977-1981 and undated. The publicity materials in this series are primarily about Wally Amos, Famous Amos cookies, and his literacy efforts. The scrapbooks were assembled by Amos and contain additional clippings. Included in this subseries is a mounted 32" x 15" hand embroidered and appliquéd corduroy fabric panel that reads "Have a very brown day!"

**Series 5, Correspondence, 1975-1985**, includes postcards, business and personal letters, and drawings from young fans of Famous Amos cookies. This series also contains three guest registers in which visitors to the Famous Amos stores wrote comments.

**Series 6, Literacy Activities, 1978-1984**, includes promotional materials, articles, clippings, and a scrapbook related to Amos' literacy campaign.

**Series 7, Community Service, 1978-1981**, includes a scrapbook and correspondence from members of the Chocolate Chip Cookie Club and the Aliis Pintos Little League team of California.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged into seven series.

**Series 1, Biographical Materials, 1970-1994 and undated**

**Series 2, Advertising and Marketing Materials, 1975-1994 and undated**

**Series 3, Photographs, 1975-1980 and undated**

**Series 4, Press Materials, 1975-1996 and undated**

Subseries 1, Clippings, 1975-1995 and undated

Subseries 2, Articles, 1975-1996

Subseries 3, Scrapbooks and Wall Art, 1977-1981 and undated

**Series 5, Correspondence, 1975-1985**

**Series 6, Literacy Activities, 1978-1984**

**Series 7, Community Service, 1978-1981**

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

African American entrepreneurs  
Cookies  
Hats  
Shirts, Men's  
advertising -- Food -- 1970-1990

Types of Materials:

Advertisements -- 1980-2000

Names:

Famous Amos Chocolate Chip Cookie Company.

Geographic Names:

Hawaii

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1970-1994 and undated

Box 1, Folder 1	Release of levy, 1970
Box 1, Folder 2	Background information about Famous Amos chocolate chip cookie, 1976
Box 1, Folder 3	Awards, 1976 - 1994
Box 10, Folder 1	Awards, 1981 - 1987
Box 1, Folder 4	<i>Famous Amos Story</i> , final draft manuscript, 1983
Box 1, Folder 5	<i>The Famous Amos Story</i> , pages 116-240, 1983
Box 1, Folder 6	<i>The Famous Amos Story</i> , pages 241-319, , 1983
Box 1, Folder 7	<i>The Power in You</i> , , 1988
Box 1, Folder 8	<i>The Power in You</i> , , 1988
Box 1, Folder 9	Printed media, 1994 and undated
Box 1, Folder 10	Food Trades High School event, 1983
Box 1, Folder 11	<i>The Real Me</i> , undated

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## Series 2: Advertising and Marketing Materials, 1975-1994 and undated

Box 2, Folder 1	Packaging, undated
Box 2, Folder 2	Advertising and promotional materials, 1975-1982 and undated
Box 2, Folder 3	Press releases, 1977-1994
Box 2, Folder 4-7	Marketing plan, 1988
Box 2, Folder 8	Corporate identity and logo, undated
Box 2, Folder 9	Advertisement mock-ups, undated
Box 2, Folder 10	Smithsonian, , 1980
Box 10, Folder 2	Advertisement mock-ups, 1978
Box 12, Folder 1	Advertisement mock-ups, 1975-1978 and undated
Box 13, Folder 1	KRLA radio sign, 1976 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 13, Folder 2	Posters, , 1975

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## Series 3: Photographs, 1975-1980 and undated

Box 7, Folder 1	Cookies, undated
Box 7, Folder 2	Slides, 1976-circa 1980s and undated
Box 7, Folder 3	Negatives, , undated
Box 7, Folder 4	Negatives, undated
Box 7, Folder 5	Photo album, undated
Box 7, Folder 6	Bakery, undated
Box 7, Folder 7	Postcards, Chuck Cassell, 1975-1980
Box 8, Folder 1	Wally Amos, undated
Box 8, Folder 2	Wally Amos, , undated
Box 8, Folder 3	Wally Amos, undated
Box 7, Folder 8	Miscellaneous, undated
Box 11, Folder 7	Miscellaneous, undated
Box 12, Folder 2	Miscellaneous, undated

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**Series 4: Press Materials, 1975-1996 and undated****Subseries 4.1: Clippings, 1974-1995 and undated**

Box 10, Folder 3	Clippings, 1974
Box 2, Folder 11	Clippings, , 1975
Box 2, Folder 12	Clippings, , 1976
Box 2, Folder 13	Clippings, , 1977
Box 10, Folder 4	Clippings, 1977
Box 2, Folder 14	Clippings, , 1978
Box 10, Folder 5-6	Clippings, 1978
Box 2, Folder 15	Clippings, , 1979
Box 2, Folder 16	Clippings, , 1980
Box 3, Folder 1	Clippings, , 1981
Box 3, Folder 2	Clippings, , 1982
Box 10, Folder 8	Clippings, 1982
Box 3, Folder 3	Clippings, , 1983
Box 10, Folder 9	Clippings, 1983
Box 3, Folder 4-7	Clippings, , 1984
Box 3, Folder 8-11	Clippings, , 1985
Box 4, Folder 1-2	Clippings, , 1985
Box 10, Folder 10-11	Clippings, 1985
Box 4, Folder 3	Clippings, , 1986
Box 4, Folder 4	Clippings, 1987

Box 4, Folder 5	Clippings, , 1988
Box 4, Folder 6	Clippings, , 1990
Box 4, Folder 7	Clippings, , 1991
Box 4, Folder 8	Clippings, , 1992
Box 11, Folder 1	Clippings, 1992
Box 4, Folder 9	Clippings, , 1993
Box 4, Folder 10	Clippings, , 1993
Box 4, Folder 11	Clippings, , 1995
Box 11, Folder 2	Clippings, 1995
Box 4, Folder 12	Clippings, , undated
Box 11, Folder 3	Clippings, undated
Box 10, Folder 7	Clippings about Baltimore Mayor William Schaefer, 1981

#### Subseries 4.2: Articles, 1975-1996

Box 4, Folder 13	Articles, 1975
Box 4, Folder 14	Articles, 1976
Box 4, Folder 15	Articles, 1977
Box 4, Folder 16	Articles, 1978
Box 4, Folder 17-18	Articles, 1979
Box 5, Folder 1-2	Articles, 1979
Box 11, Folder 4	<i>Ebony</i> , 1979 September; <i>Interview</i> , 1979 Summer
Box 5, Folder 3	Articles, 1981

Box 5, Folder 4	Articles, 1982
Box 5, Folder 5	Articles, 1983
Box 5, Folder 6	Articles, 1984
Box 5, Folder 7	Articles, 1985
Box 5, Folder 8	Articles, 1988
Box 5, Folder 9	Articles, 1993
Box 5, Folder 10	Articles, 1996

### Subseries 4.3: Scrapbooks and Wall Art, 1977-1983 and undated

Box 5, Folder 11	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 March
Box 5, Folder 12	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 April
Box 5, Folder 13	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 May
Box 5, Folder 14	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 June
Box 5, Folder 15	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 July
Box 5, Folder 16	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 August
Box 5, Folder 17	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 September
Box 5, Folder 18	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 October
Box 5, Folder 19	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 November
Box 5, Folder 20	Newspaper clippings, , 1980 December
Box 6, Folder 1	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 January
Box 6, Folder 2	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 February
Box 6, Folder 3	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 March
Box 6, Folder 4	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 April

Box 6, Folder 5	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 May
Box 6, Folder 6	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 June
Box 6, Folder 7	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 July
Box 6, Folder 8	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 August
Box 6, Folder 9	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 September
Box 6, Folder 10	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 October
Box 6, Folder 11	Newspaper clippings, , 1981 November
Box 6, Folder 12	Newspaper clippings, , undated
Box 11, Folder 5	Babson College, 1982-1983
Box 11, Folder 6	Smithsonian donation, 1980
Map-case XX, Drawer XX, Folder 1	Wall art, 1977

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## Series 5: Correspondence, 1975-1985

Box 6, Folder 13      Correspondence, 1978-1985

Box 9, Folder 1      Guest register, 1975

Box 9, Folder 2      Guest register, 1975

Box 9, Folder 3      Guest register, 1976

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## Series 6: Literacy Activities, 1978-1984

Box 6, Folder 14	Literacy activities, 1978-1980
Box 6, Folder 15	Literacy activities, 1983-1984
Box 11, Folder 8	Scrapbook, 1981-1982

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## Series 7: Community Service, 1978-1981

Box 6, Folder 16      Chocolate Chip Cookie Club, 1978-1979

Box 6, Folder 17      Little League Sponsorship, 1981

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