

Helen Zuser Wortis Papers
ArMs 1977.351

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OCR by Sarah Steele, February 2008

BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Archives and Manuscripts Section

Helen Zunser Wortis Collection

Accession Number: 1977.351A,B,C,
Quantity: c. 750 index cards & other materials
Source: Helen Zunser Wortis
Date: unknown

Research notes and materials compiled by Helen Zunser Wortis (1906-1976) chiefly concerning slavery and the Black population on Long Island, and Shelter Island history. Mrs. Wortis, a resident of both Brooklyn and Shelter Island, was archivist at the Shelter Island Historical Society c. 1970 to 1976. She published several articles, mainly on Negroes on Long Island in Long Island Forum and Journal of Long Island History.

October 28, 1985

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Mrs. Helen Zunser Wortis (1906-1976)

The daughter of Russian-Jewish immigrant parents, Helen Zunser Wortis was a humanitarian and scholar. Her dedication as a researcher on slavery and the Black population on Long Island and Shelter Island history was most proficient. The collection contains a copy of her memorial service with remarks by friends and colleagues.

In her personal life Mrs. Wortis was actively involved in community affairs and various charities. She helped form the Brooklyn Heights Youth Center, which she served for many years until her death. She assisted in obtaining funds for the Weeksville project, which has established itself as a significant cultural institution.

CONTAINER LISTING

The Collection is stored in Toedteberg Room Packages 351 A, B, and C.

Contents of Package 351A

Containing boxes a) and b)

Box a) Research notes made by Helen Wortis on Long Island negroes.

- i) Long Island negro slavery:
Census. Notes in approximate chronological arrangement c1664 – c1910 from official (government and local) and individual sources.
Monetary value of slaves. Sources chiefly books and local records/
- ii) History of the negro in Long Island: slavery. The notes are divided chronologically in fifty year sections, 1600-1900. Sources: locals records, books, journals, encyclopaedias, diaries.
- iii) Notes on contemporary black historians, authors, and bibliography.

7.5C Cardboard file box of approximately 350 research index cards (mainly 6x4”) with guide cards.

AO313-314 contain 351-B folders 1-42

Box b) Research notes made by Helen Wortis chiefly on Shelter Island history.

- i) History of Shelter Island. The notes are divided chronologically in fifty year sections, 1650 to present. Sources: local records, books, journals, diaries. Subjects cover geographical area, individuals, wars, and all aspects of life from Colonial times on.
- ii) Colonial history on Long Island with special reference to John Winthrop, Sylvester family and New Haven colony.
- iii) Indians on Long Island, including present day inhabitant, Red Thunder Cloud.
- iv) Shelter Island cemeteries, including local names, age of cemeteries, inscriptions, slave cemetery.

- v) Schools. Long Island in general, Shelter Island in particular.
- vi) Augustus Griffin. Notes for article on Griffin and his unpublished journals.
- vii) A.G.T. Tuthill. Notes for article on the artist.

2.5C Approximately 400 research index cards mainly (6x4") with guide cards

Contents of Package 351C

Containing file folders 1 to 5

Folder #

1. Weeksville Drawings.
4 drawings: three of fashionably dressed, nineteenth century Negro women; one of houses in Weeksville. Reprints, 1973, of copies of these drawings done from original photographs. With descriptive sheet, photocopy of typescript.
2. William Sidney Mount.
 - a) 2 exhibition catalogs of works by Long Island painter (1807-1868) of rural America.
 - b) Newspaper clipping on memorial art gallery at Stony Brook, Long Island. N.Y. Times, 10/27/74
3. Blacks on Long Island
'Blacks on Long Island: Population Growth in the Colonial Period.' Article by Helen Wortis in Journal of Long Island History, X1:1, Autumn 1974, pp 35-46.
4. The Atlantic Slave Trade
'The Eyeview History of the Atlantic Slave Trade.' Article by Michael Teague and Zelide Cowan in Art in America. Jan./Feb. 1971, pp 58-67, with typed card of research notes.
5. Miscellaneous articles by Helen Wortis
 - a) 'Shelter Island and Barbados,' article cut from Long Island Forum, XXXV: 12, Dec. 1972, 5p.
 - b) '(Augustus) Griffin's Unpublished Journals' in Long Island Forum, XXXVII: 9, Sept. 1974, pp164-169.
 - c) 'A.G.T. Tuthill of Oyster Ponds.' Photocopied from Long Island Forum, XXXIX: 10, Oct. 1976. 7p.

Copy of Memorial Service

See also tape, in L.I.H.S. collection, made by Helen Wortis of her seminar on Black History of Long Island at the Long Island Archives Conference held at L.I.H.S., fall, 1975. (Duplicate of tape made by Sheila Lesnick, Jericho Public Library donated to L.I.H.S.)