



Guide to the Dawn Langley Simmons Papers, 1848-2001, 2012-2014 and undated, bulk 1969-2000

Abstract

Author Dawn Langley Simmons had one of the first sex-reassignment surgeries in the United States. She was brought up as Gordon Langley Hall in England at Sissinghurst Castle, home of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson, and adopted by the actress Margaret Rutherford. After surgery she assumed the identity Dawn Pepita Langley Hall, then became Dawn Langley Simmons after her marriage to John Paul Simmons. The Dawn Langley Simmons Papers span the years 1848-2001, with the bulk of the papers being dated between 1969 and 2001. The collection includes material collected and created by Simmons when she was using the names Gordon Langley Hall, Dawn Pepita Langley Hall, and Dawn Langley Simmons. The collection houses extensive files of correspondence dating from the 1950s to 2000, with topics ranging from Simmons' formative years in Great Britain, her relationship with her mother, Marjorie Hall Copper, literary circles in Great Britain, later personal events such as her wedding, and Simmons' development as a writer. Significant correspondents or individuals mentioned in letters include Margaret Rutherford, Isabel Whitney, Vita Sackville-West, Sir Harold Nicolson, Nigel Nicolson, Robert Holmes, and Edwin Peacock. The collection also includes writings by Simmons in the form of typescripts and diaries; printed material and clippings, including articles and reviews by and about Simmons; legal and financial papers; an extensive collection of scrapbooks; photographs; audiovisual materials; and other material relating to Simmons' personal life and career as a writer.

Descriptive Summary

Collection Number RL.01190

Title Dawn Langley Simmons papers

Date 1848-2001, 2012-2014 and undated, bulk 1969-2000

Creator Simmons, Dawn Langley

Extent 19.7 Linear Feet, 18,350 Items

Repository David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

Language Material in English

Series Quick Links

1. [Correspondence Series, 1874-2000 and undated](#)
2. [Diaries Series, 1975-1976, 1987-1989, 1990-1994](#)
3. [Legal and Financial Papers Series, 1848-1990s and undated](#)
4. [Printed Materials Series, 1911-1993 and undated](#)
5. [Scrapbooks Series, 1946-1989](#)
6. [Volumes Series, 1878-1880, 1909-1911 and undated](#)
7. [William Carter Spann Materials Series, 1969-1981 and undated](#)
8. [Writings Series, 1945-1995, 2012-2014 and undated, bulk 1969-1990s](#)
9. [Audiovisual Materials Series, circa 1910-1980s and undated, bulk 1979-1980s](#)
10. [Oversize Materials](#)

Collection Overview

The Dawn Langley Simmons Papers span the years 1848-2001, with the bulk of the papers being dated between 1969 and 2001. The collection consists of material collected and created by Simmons when she was using the names Gordon Langley Hall, Dawn Pepita Langley Hall, and Dawn Langley Simmons. Extensive files of correspondence dating from the 1950s to 2000 document Simmons' formative years in Kent and Sussex, Great Britain; her relationship with her mother, Marjorie Hall Copper; literary circles in Great Britain; later personal events such as her wedding and purchase of her house in Charleston, S.C.; and Simmons' development as a writer. Significant correspondents or individuals mentioned in letters and other materials include Robert Holmes, Sir Harold Nicolson, Nigel Nicolson, Edwin Peacock, Margaret Rutherford, Vita Sackville-West, and Isabel Whitney. The collection also includes writings by Simmons in the form of typescripts and diaries; printed material and clippings including articles by and about Simmons; legal and financial papers; an extensive collection of scrapbooks; photographs; audiovisual materials; and other material relating to Simmons' personal life and career as a writer. The writings in the collection are primarily typescripts but include a few proofs and printers' galleys. Many of the pieces are unpublished. The publication process of the 1995 autobiography *Dawn: A Charleston Legend* is extensively documented by a series of edited manuscripts and proofs as well as correspondence with the publisher. Collection materials also document to some extent sex change treatments begun in 1967 at the Gender Identity Clinic of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore; Simmons' 1969 interracial marriage to John-Paul Simmons; and the disruption in their lives in part brought on by the negative reaction of Charleston society to their marriage.

The collection also contains an electronic file of an unpublished manuscript, *WANTING MAGIC*, by J. Theodore Ellis, including his unpublished notes, footnotes, and reflections based on the works of Hall-Simmons and related individuals, as well as professional studies of transsexualism and sexual identity. Includes a printout of selected pages of the manuscript. There is also Ellis' copy of Simmons' *GREAT WHITE OWL OF SISSINGHURST*.

The Audiovisual Materials Series includes video and audio tape recordings and photographs. The recordings include professionally-produced audio broadcasts discussing Simmons' transgender life and her interracial marriage - and an amateur audio tape of Simmons' wedding. Several hundred photographs document Isabel Whitney and her family as well as Simmons' family and friends. Original recordings are closed to research; listening copies are available for most items. Otherwise, staff must arrange for use copies to be made.

The largest series in the collection, the Correspondence Series consists chiefly of incoming correspondence, spanning five decades, from family and friends, from publishers concerning Simmons' writing, and from other individuals. There is some correspondence written by Simmons scattered throughout.

Brief but detailed entries in the eleven volumes housed in the Diaries Series describe Simmons' writing career, emotional states, and family matters during the time periods from 1975-1976 and 1987-1989, ending with the years 1990-1994.

The Legal and Financial Papers Series chiefly consist of documents concerning Simmons' father, Jack Copper, Isabel Whitney and her family and estate, Simmons and her husband, and Simmons' inheritance from Whitney.

The Printed Materials Series houses clippings, travel guides, flyers, and other items that document Simmons' interests, travels, and hobbies; includes early journalistic writings (chiefly columns), and a hardcover copy of her children's book, the *Great White Owl of Sissinghurst*.

The twenty-odd albums found in the Scrapbooks Series feature memorabilia, clippings, photos, and correspondence assembled by Simmons concerning her writing career, family, hobbies, and interest in celebrities and royalty.

The small Volumes Series consists of two manuscripts collected by Simmons: a nineteenth-century diary written by Sarah Combs, a transcript of this diary, and an early twentieth century travelogue written by a member of the Whitney family.

The Writings Series primarily consists of typescripts of works by Simmons. There are a few written pieces by other authors. Other writings by Simmons can be found in the Correspondence Series (in the topical correspondence folders for the 1950s and 1960s and scattered throughout in other files); in the William Carter Spann Series, which contains research Simmons conducted in preparation for a book on President Carter's nephew; in the Diaries Series; and in the Printed Materials Series, which contains early columns and later writings by Simmons.

Oversize Materials housed separately from the main collection include posters, cover proofs, newspaper and magazine clippings, and a few diplomas and awards.

Acquired as part of the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture.

Restrictions on Access & Use

A majority of collections are stored off site and must be requested at least 48 business hours in advance for retrieval. [Contact Rubenstein Library staff](#) before visiting. [Read More »](#)

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Researchers must register and agree to copyright and privacy laws before using this collection.

In addition, some of the materials in this collection are not immediately accessible as they require further processing before use.

All or portions of this collection may be housed off-site in Duke University's Library Service Center. There may be a 48-hour delay in obtaining these materials.

Please contact Research Services staff before visiting the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library to use this collection.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Contents of the Collection

1. Correspondence Series, 1874-2000 and undated

24 boxes

Consists of personal and business correspondence received and written by Gordon Hall/Dawn Langley Hall Simmons. The early correspondence consists of letters from Simmons' mother, Marjorie Hall (Ticehurst) Copper, describing her work on the household staff of Sir Harold Nicolson and his wife, Victoria Mary Sackville-West, Lady Nicolson, in Cranbrook, Kent, England. The letters concern family news and local gossip, Lady Nicolson's death, the family affairs and writings of Nigel Nicolson, and Marjorie Copper's views of events in the United States. Later correspondence is from Simmons' friends and acquaintances. Folders of topical correspondence house letters written by Simmons to Edwin Peacock and Robert Holmes, and a few of Peacock's replies; correspondence received by Isabel Whitney, and material concerning the settlement of her estate; and Simmons' correspondence with the publisher Wyrick and Co. detailing the publication process of *Dawn: A Charleston Legend*, and containing older material Simmons sent to the publisher. Other folders in the topical correspondence sub-grouping house early correspondence and clippings from Isabel Whitney and Gordon Hall to Emmeline Paige, editor at the *Villager*, and materials that Hall gathered on Helen Invicta Hall, Natasha Simmons, and Isabel Whitney. Smaller amounts of correspondence are found in the Scrapbooks Series. Correspondence arranged in chronological order by date.

1952 May-1968 Dec. (10 folders)	Box 1
1969 Jan.-1972 Apr. (10 folders)	Box 2
1972 May-1972 Sept. (6 folders)	Box 3
1972 Oct.-1973 July (8 folders)	Box 4
1973 Aug.-1974 Feb. (7 folders)	Box 5
1974 Mar.-1974 Sept. (7 folders)	Box 6
1974 Oct.-1975 Mar. (8 folders)	Box 7
1975 Apr.-1975 Oct. (7 folders)	Box 8
1975 Nov.-1976 April (6 folders)	Box 9
1976 May-1976 Nov. (7 folders)	Box 10
1976 Dec.-1977 July (8 folders)	Box 11
1977 Aug.-1978 May (10 folders)	Box 12
1978 June-1979 Feb. (9 folders)	Box 13
1979 Mar.-1980 Oct. (8 folders)	Box 14
1980 Nov.-1981 June (7 folders)	Box 15
1981 July-1981 Oct. (5 folders)	Box 16
1981 Nov.-1983 (7 folders)	Box 17
1985 Apr.-1987 Jan. (8 folders)	Box 18
1987 Feb.-1987 July (8 folders)	Box 19
1987 May-1989 Dec. (8 folders)	Box 20
1994 Apr.-1999 Mar. and undated (4 folders)	Box 21
1999 Apr.-2000 Aug. and undated (4 folders)	Box 22

Topical correspondence, 1874-1999 and undated (bulk 1956-1999)

James Williams material, 1982-1994	Box 23
Correspondence with publishers, 1978-1999	Box 23
Correspondence with Edwin Peacock, 1971-1989	Box 23
Correspondence with Robert Holmes, 1970-1977 and undated	Box 23

Isabel Whitney materials, 1874-1963	Box 23
Clippings and Natasha Simmons juvenilia, 1980s-1990s and undated	Box 23
Correspondence with Wyrick and Co. Publishers, 1989-1999 and undated (3 folders)	Box 24
Correspondence, printed material, and photographs gathered by Hall and related to Isabel Whitney's last years, the NYC apartment, and 56 Society Street in Charleston, 1963-1968 and undated (1 folder)	Box 24
Gordon Hall to Emmeline Paige, <i>Villager</i> editor, 1956-1962, 1971 and undated (1 folder)	Box 24
Biographical and genealogical materials about Helen Invicta Hall, 1931-1967 and undated (1 folder)	Box 24
Letters from Isabel Whitney to Emmeline Paige, 1930s and undated (1 folder)	Box 24

2. Diaries Series, 1975-1976, 1987-1989, 1990-1994

1 box

Consists of eleven volumes, one for each year with the exception of 1991, kept intermittently by Simmons. Brief but detailed entries refer to daily weather, activities, emotional states, conversations and correspondence, family matters, and personal upheavals or milestones. Portions of some volumes remain unused.

Diaries	Box 25
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3. Legal and Financial Papers Series, 1848-1990s and undated

5 folders

Consists of documents concerning Simmons, her father Jack Copper, Isabel Whitney, and the Whitney family. The Jack Copper material includes papers issued by the United Kingdom government, such as a passport and driver's license, and some memorabilia. The Whitney family material consists of genealogical papers and the will of Martha H. Whitney, Isabel Whitney's mother. The financial papers are made up of various receipts and invoices concerning Dawn Simmons, her husband John-Paul Simmons, and Vita Sackville-West's purchase of a Ford sedan in 1959. The legal papers include publishers' contracts with Gordon Langley Hall, documents concerning the inheritance from Isabel Whitney and the purchase of 56 Society Street in Charleston, S.C. The legal material also includes paperwork on Whitney family cemetery plots. Arranged in alphabetical order by folder title.

Legal and financial papers	Box 26
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4. Printed Materials Series, 1911-1993 and undated

5 boxes

Files of miscellaneous materials including publisher's proofs of two of Dawn Simmon's books; hardcover edition of *The Great White Owl of Sissinghurst* as well as J. Theodore Ellis' copy of the book; a bible once belonging to Isabel Whitney with handwritten notes; early journalistic writings under the identity of Gordon Hall (chiefly columns); newspaper clippings; travel and gallery brochures; church publications; magazines; catalogues; and advertisements. Contains material on the British royal family, and the actresses Bette Davis and Charlotte Cushman. Other printed material is included in the Wyrick and Co. folder in the Correspondence Series. Most of the series is grouped alphabetically by subject. Most newspaper clippings are arranged chronologically by year. Some items are listed in the Oversize Materials series at the end of this finding aid.

Printed materials	Box 27-31
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5. Scrapbooks Series, 1946-1989

29 boxes

Consists of more than twenty scrapbooks assembled by Gordon Hall/Dawn Simmons over the course of several decades. The album pages feature clippings about movie stars and British royalty, articles written by Gordon Hall and Marjorie Hall, advertisements and promotional material for several of Hall's books, some correspondence, and photographs of Isabel Whitney's funeral and Sissinghurst Castle. Arranged in rough chronological order. Other photographs can be found in the Audiovisual Materials Series.

Bette Davis clippings, 1947-1950	Box 32
Bette Davis clippings, 1951-1952 and undated	Box 33
Bette Davis clippings, 1952-1953 and undated	Box 34
Bette Davis, clippings, 1953-1962 and undated	Box 35
Gordon Langley Hall, clippings, 1952-1953	Box 36
Gordon Langley Hall, clippings and correspondence, 1958-1968	Box 37
Gordon Langley Hall, clippings and correspondence, 1962-1963, Bette Davis clippings, 1989	Box 38
Gordon Langley Hall, clippings of writings on British royalty, 1955-1957 and undated	Box 39
Gordon Langley Hall, correspondence, 1960	Box 40
Gordon Langley Hall and Marjorie Hall, clippings, 1955-1957	Box 41
Isabel Whitney funeral photographs, 1962	Box 42
Joan Crawford, clippings, 1953-1959	Box 43
<i>London Illustrated News</i> souvenir edition, Coronation of Edward VII, 1902	Box 44
[Princess] Margaret, clippings, 1958 and undated	Box 45
Marjorie Hall, writings, 1956-1957 and undated	Box 46
<i>Me Papoose Sitter</i> , promotional material and memorabilia, 1956-1958	Box 47
<i>Me Papoose Sitter</i> , promotional material and memorabilia, 1956-1961	Box 48
Newspaper notices and announcements, 1946-1948	Box 49
<i>Peter Jumping Horse at the Stampede</i> , promotional material, 1962	Box 50
Sissinghurst Castle photographs and postcards album, undated	Box 51
<i>Vinnie Ream</i> , promotional material and correspondence, 1963-1966	Box 52
<i>Scrapbooks</i>	Box 69-71
<i>Scrapbook</i> , 1958-1961	Box 72
<i>Scrapbook</i> , Princess Margaret	Box 73
<i>Scrapbook</i> , 1960-1964	Box 74
<i>Scrapbook</i> , Romantic Times	Box 75
Photograph album	Box 75
Photograph albums (2)	Box 76
Marjorie Hall Scrapbook	Box 77
Scrapbook	Box 77
Gordan Hall Scrapbook	Box 78

6. Volumes Series, 1878-1880, 1909-1911 and undated

1 box

Two small manuscript volumes collected by Hall: a nineteenth-century diary written by Sarah Combs, a transcript of this diary, and an early twentieth century travelogue written by a member of the Whitney family.

Volumes	Box 53
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7. William Carter Spann Materials Series, 1969-1981 and undated

1 box

Consists of material collected by Simmons on William Carter Spann, President Jimmy Carter's nephew. Arranged in chronological order.

Drafts of writings on William C. Spann by Dawn L. Simmons, 1977 and undated	Box 54
Prison authority evaluations, 1969-1978	Box 54
William C. Spann-Dawn L. Simmons correspondence, 1978-1981	Box 54
William C. Spann personal correspondence, 1976-1978	Box 54
Clippings, 1976-1978	Box 54

8. Writings Series, 1945-1995, 2012-2014 and undated, bulk 1969-1990s

11 boxes

Folders house drafts and manuscripts of Simmons' writings, and a few pieces by others. Arranged in alphabetical order. Cover proofs of *Dawn: A Charleston Legend* have been removed to oversize housing.

Contains an electronic file of an unpublished manuscript, WANTING MAGIC, by J. Theodore Ellis, dated 2012-2014, including his unpublished notes, footnotes, and reflections based on the works of Hall-Simmons and related individuals, as well as professional studies of transsexualism and sexual identity. There is a printout of selected pages of the manuscript.

<i>The Ballad of Dawn and John-Paul</i> , undated	Box 55
<i>The Ballad of Dawn and John-Paul</i> , manuscript with handwritten notes, 1969	Box 55
<i>The Boy in Washington Square</i> , undated	Box 55
<i>Camilla the Husky Who was Lost in Charleston</i> , 1995	Box 55
<i>Children of the Moor</i> , undated	Box 55
Draft of article on Isabel Whitney's paintings of Brooklyn Heights, undated	Box 55
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , first draft, 1991	Box 55
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , manuscript, 1991	Box 55
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , manuscript, undated	Box 56
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , editorial materials and computer disc, undated	Box 56
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , dust jacket design, undated	Box 56
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , editorial material, undated	Box 56
Photographic materials collected for publication in <i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , undated	Box 56

<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , edited manuscript, 1992	Box 57
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , galley proof, 1995 Jan. 17	Box 57
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , manuscript, 1995 Feb. 2	Box 57
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , edited manuscript, undated	Box 57
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , manuscripts, undated (4 folders)	Box 58
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , typescript, undated	Box 58
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , blueprint printing and empty boards, undated	Box 59
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> , galley proofs, 1995 Feb. (5 folders)	Box 59
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> clippings, book reviews and publicity, 1990s (folder 1 of 2)	Box 59
<i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i> clippings, book reviews and publicity, 1990s (folder 2 of 2)	Box 60
<i>Deserted Wife</i> , undated	Box 60
<i>An English Grandmother</i> , undated	Box 60
<i>The Girl Who Sculpted Lincoln</i> (2 drafts), undated	Box 60
<i>The Great White Owl of Sissinghurst</i> (3 drafts), 1992-1993 and undated	Box 60
<i>The Green Orchid: A Novel</i> , undated	Box 60
<i>Gulielma</i> , undated	Box 60
Harriet Tubman article, manuscript, 1980	Box 60
<i>History of Sussex</i> (?), undated	Box 60
<i>I Was a Papoose Sitter</i> , undated (2 folders)	Box 61
<i>Me Papoose Sitter</i> , play version, undated	Box 61
<i>Lady Bird and Her Daughters</i> , article draft, 1967	Box 61
<i>Lady Marjorie: The Diary of a Catskill Cat</i> , undated	Box 61
<i>Loon Bay People</i> , manuscript, 1980	Box 61
<i>Madness Haunts Actress's Daughter</i> , article draft, undated	Box 61
<i>Margaret Rutherford: A Blithe Spirit</i> , 1980 (2 folders)	Box 61
<i>Margaret Rutherford's Cookbook and Other Family Secrets</i> , undated	Box 62
<i>The Mark of Caroline</i> , undated	Box 62
<i>Mother Rutherford</i> , first draft, 1979	Box 62
<i>Mrs. John-Paul: A Love Story</i> , 1974	Box 62
<i>My Tiara For a Pig</i> , undated	Box 62
<i>Porty's Motel</i> , undated	Box 62
<i>The President's Nephew. An American Tragedy</i> , outline and notes, undated	Box 62
<i>A Princess Recaptures New York</i> , undated	Box 62
<i>Romeo Was a Lady: A Biography of Charlotte Cushman</i> , manuscript, undated (2 folders)	Box 63
<i>Romeo Was a Lady</i> , undated	Box 63
<i>Rosalynn Carter: The Woman Behind the Man</i> , 1978	Box 63
<i>A Rose for Mrs. Lincoln</i> , galley, 1969	Box 63
<i>The Sawdust Tail</i> , typescript of corrections, 1963	Box 63
<i>Sleep On, Dear Randall</i> , undated	Box 63
<i>Sleep On, Dear Randall</i> , photocopy, undated	Box 64

<i>Song of the Wilderness</i> , undated	Box 64
<i>Tapestry of the Rose: A Play in Five Acts</i> , manuscript, undated	Box 64
<i>Though Our Tombs Be Dark</i> , manuscript, undated	Box 64
<i>The Twelve Holy Nights</i> (2 drafts), undated	Box 64
<i>A Very Little Miracle in Harlem</i> , manuscript, undated	Box 64
<i>Vita's Country</i> , manuscript (foreword and chapter one), undated	Box 64
<i>Vita's Country</i> , manuscript photocopy, undated	Box 64
<i>Who Killed Aunt Fay?</i> , manuscript, undated	Box 65
<i>Yankee Alias Romeo</i> , manuscript, undated,	Box 65
Notes and drafts, undated (3 folders)	Box 65
Writings by Others, 1945-1959, 2008-2014 and undated	Box 65

9. Audiovisual Materials Series, circa 1910-1980s and undated, bulk 1979-1980s

4 boxes

Consists of audio and video magnetic tape recordings and photographs. The recordings include BBC productions on Dawn Simmons and Margaret Rutherford, spoken renditions of Simmons' work, and a tape of Simmons' wedding. The photographs cover a wide variety of subjects including Isabel and Martha Whitney's family, Dawn Simmons' family, relatives, friends. Other photographs documenting Simmons' life are included in the Writings Series with material collected for publication in *Dawn: A Charleston Legend*, and in the Scrapbooks Series. The material is in rough chronological order.

Audio and Video Materials Subseries, 1969-1980s and undated

2 boxes

Conditions Governing Access note

[Originals CLOSED to use. Use copies for most items are available in Box 67. Otherwise, Technical Services staff must arrange for use copies to be made before contents can be accessed. Please contact Research Services staff before coming to use this collection.]

1969, Recording made by Pauline Ticehurst at Dawn Langley Simmons' wedding, (audio 1/4" tape, 5" reel)

Box 66

Conditions Governing Access note

[Use copy on audiocassette tape and CD-R available in Box 67.]

1979 Apr. 3, Voice recording of Margaret Rutherford - Talk on "Women's Hour," B.B.C. (audio cassette tape)

Box 66

Conditions Governing Access note

[Use copy on audiocassette tape available in Box 67.]

1980, Rumer Godden, "Memories of Margaret Rutherford" (audio cassette tape)

Box 66

Conditions Governing Access note

[Use copy not available; contact Research Services staff to arrange access before coming to use this collection.]

1985 Sept. 11, Wicker's World: "British Women in America," Program No. 50 NBSE 4084, B.B.C., (Umatic video cassette tape) Box 66

Conditions Governing Access note

[Undated master preservation copy on BetacamSP available in Box 67. Use copy not available; contact Research Services staff to arrange access before coming to use this collection.]

Undated, The Pierre Berton Show: "The Boy Who Should Have Been a Girl," Program No. 1647 (audio 1/4" tape, 7" reel) Box 66

Conditions Governing Access note

[Use copy on audiocassette tape and CD-R available in Box 67.]

Undated, The Pierre Berton Show: "Terrors of a Southern Mixed Marriage," Program No. 1648 (audio 1/4" tape, 7" reel) Box 66

Conditions Governing Access note

[Use copy on audiocassette tape and CD-R available in Box 67.]

USE COPIES Box 67
[See listings above for titles and use copy information.]

Photographic Materials Subseries, circa 1910-1980s and undated

2 boxes

Photographic materials, circa 1910-1980s and undated Box 68

Large format photographic materials, undated Box 31

10. Oversize Materials

2 folders

Printed Materials Series, 1958-1994 and undated

Cover proofs for *Dawn*, *A Charleston Legend*, circa 1994 Oversize-folder 1

Bette Davis movie poster; oversize newspaper clippings; magazine article about Simmons marriage; *Look* magazine issue; award and diploma; architect plans for door frame; publicity poster for *The People* with Simmons as "famous author" in wedding dress, entitled "My New Life as a Woman." Oversize-folder 2

Historical Note

Chronology

Date	Event(s)
1922	Probable year for the birth of Gordon Langley Hall born, Sussex, England, illegitimate child of Jack Copper, Vita Sackville-West's chauffeur, and Marjorie Hall Ticehurst (the couple subsequently married). Other dates given by Hall: 1930, 1937
1946	Emigrated to Canada, to Ojibway Reservation, Lake Nipigon, Canada; served as missionary, teacher, and midwife
1947-1949	Returned to England, taught theater and art at the Gregg School, Croydon

1950-1952	Returned to the U.S., worked as a society editor for <i>The Nevada Daily Mail</i> , Missouri
1952	Met Isabel Whitney, artist and future benefactor Moved to New York, became society columnist for the <i>Port Chester Daily Item</i>
1955	Published <i>Me Papoose Sitter</i>
1957	Hall's play, <i>Saraband for a Saint</i> , performed in Harlem, New York
1957	Published <i>Princess Margaret: An Informal Biography</i>
1960	Met Margaret Rutherford
1962	Hall moved permanently to Charleston Hall and Whitney purchased home at 56 Society Street, Charleston, S.C. Two weeks later, death of Isabel Lydia Whitney Hall legally adopted by Margaret Rutherford and her husband
1963	Publication of <i>Vinnie Ream: The Story of the Girl Who Sculpted Lincoln</i>
1967	Hall entered the Gender Identity Clinic, Johns Hopkins University for sex-reassignment surgery, and adopted name Dawn Pepita Langley-Hall; Hall claimed the surgery was for correction and not for change of sex
1963	Publication of <i>Jacqueline Kennedy, a Biography</i>
1969 Jan.	Married John-Paul Simmons in Charleston, first legal interracial marriage in South Carolina; second wedding ceremony performed in England
1970	Publication of <i>Rose for Mrs. Lincon: A Biography of Mary Todd Lincoln</i>
1971	Natasha Simmons born; birth certificate, created at a later date, declares Dawn Langley Simmons the birth mother
1974	Ostracized from Charleston society, threatened, and attacked, Simmons and family moved to Catskill, N.Y.
1982	Divorced John-Paul Simmons
1983	Published biography, <i>Margaret Rutherford: Blithe Spirit</i>
1995	Published autobiography, <i>Dawn: A Charleston Legend</i>
2000 Sept. 18	Died, Charleston, S.C.
2004	Biography of Dawn Langley Simmons published by Edward Ball: <i>Peninsula of Lies: A True Story of Mysterious Birth and Taboo Love</i>

Subject Headings

- [Authors, American -- Biography](#)
- [Authors, American -- Southern States](#)
- [Charleston \(S.C.\) -- Social life and customs](#)
- [Copper, Marjorie Hall Ticehurst](#)
- [Combs, Sarah](#)
- [Diaries](#)
- [Holmes, Robert](#)
- [Interracial marriage -- South Carolina -- Charleston](#)
- [Kent \(England\) -- Social life and customs](#)
- [Mothers and sons -- Great Britain](#)
- [Nicolson, Nigel](#)
- [Nicolson, Harold George, Sir, 1886-1968](#)
- [Photographs](#)
- [Peacock, Edwin, 1910-1989](#)
- [Rutherford, Margaret, 1892-1972](#)
- [Sound recordings](#)
- [Scrapbooks](#)

- [Sex change -- United States](#)
- [Simmons, Dawn Langley](#)
- [Simmons, Dawn Langley](#)
- [Sackville-West, V. \(Victoria\), 1892-1962](#)
- [Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture](#)
- [Transgender people -- United States](#)
- [Transsexuals -- South Carolina -- Charleston](#)
- [Video recordings](#)
- [Women authors, American -- Biography](#)
- [Women authors, American -- Southern States](#)
- [Whitney, Isabel Lydia](#)

Related Material

- Isabel Whitney Papers, Gordon Langley Hall Papers, and *Two Lives of Baby Doe* Collection (manuscript) (*Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota.*)

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Dawn Langley Simmons Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

Provenance

The Dawn Langley Simmons Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift from 1966-2005.

Processing Information

Processed by Daniel Breen, Lee Cloninger, Melissa Delbridge, Paula Jeannet Mangiafico, and Tania Roy, July 2007

Encoded by Lee Cloninger and Paula Jeannet Mangiafico.

Completed August 2007

All accessions from 67-352 to 2005-0035 were merged into one collection, described in this finding aid.