



Guide to the Harlem River Consumers Cooperative records, 1967-1973

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Summary

Collection Title:

Harlem River Consumers Cooperative records, 1967-1973

Creator:

Harlem River Consumers Cooperative, Inc.

Source:

John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History

Abstract:

The Harlem River Consumers Cooperative was a Black shareholder-owned cooperative society that operated a supermarket on Lennox Avenue in Harlem, N.Y., active from 1967 to around 1976. Cora T. Walker, one of the first Black women attorneys in New York, served as General Counsel. The collection includes by-laws, financial reports, meeting minutes, memos and notices to shareholders, newsletters and other printed materials. Materials discuss general organizational policies, seasonal and holiday matters, and the effects of a strike during efforts by Local 338 of the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union to unionize some of the cooperative's employees. Acquired as part of the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History.

Extent:

0.1 Linear Feet

Language:

Materials in English.

Collection ID:

RL.13017

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1vb3m>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Harlem River Consumers Cooperative records, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

The collection includes by-laws, financial reports, meeting minutes, memos and notices to shareholders, newsletters and other printed materials. Materials discuss general organizational policies, seasonal and holiday matters, and disputes concerning efforts to unionize some of the cooperative's employees.

Biographical/Historical

The Harlem River Consumers Cooperative was a shareholder-owned cooperative society that operated a supermarket in the Lennox Avenue area of Harlem, N.Y. Initially the cooperative was Black-owned by 2500 Harlem residents who joined by purchasing shares for \$5 each; eventually the cooperative attracted a more diverse membership and grew to around 4000 member shareholders. The cooperative was incorporated in 1967 and opened its supermarket in 1968. Soon after opening its store the cooperative was approached by Local 338, a union that represented a number of grocery store employees in New York City. The cooperative originally declined but some Board members later signed an agreement with the union that was disputed by some shareholders and the General Counsel. The union initiated a strike in 1969; the dispute led to the replacement of the Cooperative Board and a series of litigations against union organizers and leaders of a local activist group, Co-Ordinated Community Services (CSS), which were accused of various conspiracies and interlocking relationships between the union and CSS that allegedly violated the Sherman antitrust act. Litigation and appeals continued until 1976; around this time the Cooperative ceased to function.

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Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

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Acquisition Information

The Harlem River Consumers Cooperative records were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a purchase from Caroliniana Books in 2023.

Processing Information

Processed by Richard Collier;

Accession described in this collection guide: 2023-0088.

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Related Materials

Related Material

Related materials may be found in the following Hartman Center collections:

Consumer Reports. Colston E. Warne papers;
Consumer Reports. Consumer-Farmer Milk Cooperative records;
Consumer Reports. Consumer newsletters collection;
Consumer Reports. Institutional records;
Consumer Reports. Office of the Executive Director records;
Consumer Reports. Office of Public Information records;
Consumer Reports. Persia Campbell papers;
Consumer Reports. Robert L. Smith papers;
Consumer Reports. Walker Sandbach papers;
Consumer Reports. William S. Taylor papers;
J. Walter Thompson Company. Public Relations records.

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Names and Subjects

- African Americans -- Economic conditions -- 20th century
- Cooperative societies -- New York (State)
- Labor unions -- Organizing
- Strikes and lockouts -- United States
- Food cooperatives
- Harlem (New York, N.Y.)
- Walker, Cora T. (Cora Thomasina), 1922-2006
- John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History
- Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union

Collection Inventory

Application for purchase of stock, approximately
1968

Box 1

By-laws, 1968	Box 1
Income statement, 1969	Box 1
Information leaflet #2, 1968	Box 1
Memo from Stanley Dreyer (Cooperative League of the USA), 1968	Box 1

Scope and Contents

Stanley Dreyer (1931-2017) served as President of the Cooperative League and was a co-founder of the National Cooperative Bank; inducted into the Cooperative Hall of Fame in 1997. In the memo Dreyer discusses the position of trade unions regarding employee eligibility for cooperative membership in relation to the egalitarian philosophy of membership recognized by the cooperative movement.

Memos to stockholders, 1967-1972	Box 1
Newsletter special issue "Together We Stand", 1969	Box 1

Scope and Contents

Newsletter focuses on unionization efforts, the strike and picket line, and the legality of the actions of the Board relative to cooperative by-laws. Board members had apparently signed a contract with the union without submitting unionization to a membership-wide discussion and vote as stipulated in the by-laws.

Shareholders' newsletter, 1968	Box 1
Stockholder Board ballot, 1971	Box 1
Stockholders meeting minutes, 1969	Box 1
Stockholders meeting notices, 1969-1973	Box 1