

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vivian D. Hewitt

PERSON

Hewitt, Vivian D.

**Alternative Names:** Vivian D. Hewitt;

**Life Dates:** February 17, 1920-May 29, 2022

**Place of Birth:** New Castle, Pennsylvania, USA

**Residence:** New York, NY

**Occupations:** Art Collector; Librarian

## Biographical Note

Art lover and librarian Vivian Hewitt was born on February 17, 1920, in New Castle, Pennsylvania. Hewitt was the fourth of five children, her elder siblings all born in North Carolina. Her father, Arthur, was a skilled laborer, and her mother, Lela, worked as a teacher and housewife. After completing high school, Hewitt attended Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, where she earned a B.A. in 1943. The following year, she graduated from Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh with an M.S. in library science. She attended the University of Pittsburgh for further graduate studies in 1947 and 1948. Geneva awarded her an honorary degree in 1978.

Hewitt began her career working in libraries in 1944, when she was hired by the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh as the senior assistant librarian. Relocating to Atlanta in 1949, Hewitt took a position as a librarian and instructor at Atlanta University's School of Library and Information Science. Hewitt and her husband, John, had a son in 1952, and Hewitt returned to work in 1954 as a researcher for Crowell-Collier Publishing. Hewitt joined the Rockefeller Foundation in 1956, and in 1963 she was hired by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to serve as chief librarian. She remained there until her retirement in 1983. Since then, she has served on the Council on Foreign Relations and on the faculty of the University of Texas at Austin.

A lover of travel, Hewitt and her husband began buying works of art wherever they would go, and gave them as gifts on special occasions. They began their collection in earnest by collecting Haitian art for fifteen years. Living near and knowing many of the African American artists from New York, they began to collect their works, as well. In recent years, the collection, considered one of the finest of African American art in the world, was bought by Bank of America and given as a gift to the Afro-American Cultural Center in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Hewitt was also active in other areas, serving on the Board of Governors of the Laymen's Club of the Episcopal Church of the Diocese of New York, and served as the secretary of the board of the Graham Windham Child Care & Adoption Agency. She also received the Distinguished Service Award of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and was inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Special Library Association.

Vivian Hewitt was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on June 18, 2003.

Hewitt passed away on May 29, 2022, at the age of 102.

## Related Entries

**Martin Gantz School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**North Street School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**George Washington Intermediate School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**New Castle Junior/Senior High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Geneva College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**A.D.**

**University of Texas, Austin** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Council on Foreign Relations** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Carnegie Library** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1944 to ?]

**Senior Assistant Librarian**

**Atlanta University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1949 to ?]

**Librarian and Instructor**

**Crowell-Collier Publishing** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1954 to ?]

**Researcher**

**Rockefeller Foundation** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1956 to ?]

**Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1983 to ?]

**Chief Librarian**