

Gino J. Simi Papers

CMS.120

Finding aid prepared by Mary Elizabeth Brown

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Center for Migration Studies

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Summary Information

Repository	Center for Migration Studies
Creator	Simi, Gino J., 1902-1990
Title	Gino J. Simi Papers
Date [inclusive]	1920-1976
Extent	7.0 Linear feet
General Physical Description note	in one document box and five scrapbooks, each about 15" long
Location note	CMS.120 is housed at the Center for Migration Studies, 307 East 60th Street, Third Floor, New York, New York, 10022.
Language	English
Material Specific Details note	Scrapbooks labeled Washington Times 1-3 were bound with material that is crumbling into dust, which may present some issues with inhaling particles and keeping one's hands clean enough to handle documents.
Abstract	CMS.120 comprises the personal papers of Gino J. Simi (1902-1990), an Italian immigrant who settled in Washington, D.C. Five scrapbooks of clippings from Washington, D.C., newspapers document Simi's youthful and eventually professional interest in sports--between 1928 and 1938 he worked as an assistant editor of sports for the Washington Times. A document box contains material from Simi's early retirement, when he was an active member of the Holy Name Society and the Parish Council of Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Washington, D.C.

Preferred Citation note

Center for Migration Studies, Gino J. Simi Papers (CMS.120), Box and Folder or Scrapbook number.

Biographical/Historical note

Gino J. Simi was born in Lucca, Italy April 19, 1902. His father, Attilio, was a stonemason. The family emigrated to the United States in 1911 and settled in Washington, D.C., in 1912, where Gino joined his father as a mason and tile setter, attending night classes to get a high school diploma from McKinley Technical High School; he also attended American University. He left working with his hands for more white-collar work as a Treasury Department accounting clerk, translator, and supervisor. He then moved into the private sector as assistant sports editor for the Washington Times from 1928 to 1938; during his time there his participation in the organization of a chapter of the American Newspaper Guild got him fired and then reinstated by the then-new National Labor Relations Board. In 1939 he became a radio script and staff writer for the Department of the Interior. During the 1940 Census he was a special writer and statistical officer for the Census Bureau, then joined the Labor Department's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. He became chief of the Bureau's Washington Field Office in 1943, and retired from that position in 1964.

The year after the Simi family arrived in Washington, Father Nicholas De Carlo became the founding pastor of Holy Rosary, a Catholic parish especially for Italian-speaking people. Simi's first noteworthy involvement there came April 12, 1925, when he and other young men founded the Junior Holy Name Society. The Holy Name movement attempts to call mature men to greater practice of the Catholic faith by encouraging them to practice their faith together; at Holy Rosary this meant participation at Mass and help around the parish plant, and also group socializing and participation in sports. During the 1920s Simi's name can also be found on lists of Sunday school teachers at the church. In 1930 he married one of the other teachers, Regina Lavezza, and they continued to teach during the early 1930s. In 1963, Simi wrote a history of Holy Rosary for the parish's fiftieth anniversary souvenir journal. In 1968, he became Secretary of the Holy Name Society (no longer the "junior" society) and editor of its newsletter; he also sat on Holy Rosary's Parish Council. During the 1980s Simi contributed a local features column to the parish newspaper, *Voce Italiana*. He died of congestive heart failure at his home in Bethesda on February 6, 1990, at age 87.

Scope and Contents note

CMS.120 documents some aspects of the life and career of Gino J. Simi, an Italian immigrant who came to the United States as a young child, settled with his family in Washington, D.C., and stayed there until his death. His life spanned much of the twentieth century, and his papers open windows onto several of his interests.

The largest part of Simi's collection consists of five scrapbooks that he made from discarded government registers that he picked up. One register comes from his time in the Treasury Department in the early

1920s; the others cannot be further identified. He filled all of them with clippings from local newspapers; four scrapbooks are identified as clippings from the Washington Times, for which Simi worked from 1928 to 1938. The clippings documents sports in Washington in all its aspects: professional and amateur; Olympian, national and local; school and sandlot; male and female; team and individual. A variety of sports are represented including baseball, basketball, bicycling, billards, bowling, boxing, football, golf, lacrosse, racing (auto, greyhound, horse, human), swimming and tennis. It is a treasure trove of information on Washington, D.C., athletic life in the 1920s and 1930s.

A smaller box of papers document Simi's retirement years, during which he was active at Holy Rosary Catholic Church, which was organized especially for Italian-speaking in immigrants in 1913, a year after his family's arrival in Washington. This part of the collection is especially interesting for the rapidity of assimilation documented therein. Scholarship on Italian-American Catholics usually discusses their religious organizations in terms of "mutual benefit societies," created by migrants from the same location in Italy, dedicated to honoring the hometown patron saint or Madonna and to assisting members' families with insurance to cover expenses of illness and death. Simi, though, was part of an organization characteristic of non-Italian parishes in the United States, a Holy Name Society, through which parish men could practice their faith, help out around the church, and socialize with each other. Similarly, Vatican II sometimes seen as alienating older Catholics, especially ethnic American Catholics, who felt disrespected by the Council's lack of attention to traditional pious practices and devotions. Simi, though, gave of his considerable experience to Holy Rosary's first parish council. Smaller collections of miscellaneous clippings and ephemera from events attended, round out Simi's papers.

Arrangement note

CMS.120 is arranged in two series:

Series I: Papers

Series II: Scrapbooks

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Center for Migration Studies October 27, 2017

Conditions Governing Access note

Open to researchers by appointment.

Conditions Governing Use note

The Center for Migration Studies does not hold the copyright to all the material in CMS.120. It is incumbent upon researchers to clear copyrights prior to publication.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Gino Simi's son Robert F. Simi gave these papers to Mary Brown and Father Charles Zanoni, c.s., for Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Washington, D.C., August 16, 2000. On September 22, 2004, they were transferred to the Center for Migration Studies, which holds many of Holy Rosary's papers.

Processing Information note

In October 2017 CMS volunteer Mary T. Sanders and Mary Brown unpacked this collection from the two bankers' boxes in which it had been kept. They arranged Simi's papers, placed them in folders and in a box, and labelled them, then dusted the scrapbooks to remove particles of newsprint and binding, labelled them, and wrapped them in stockinettes and twine. Mary prepared the finding aid.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

CMS.010, Nicholas De Carlo Papers CMS.036, Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Washington, D.C., Records

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Holy Name Society.
- Holy Rosary Parish (Washington, D.C.).

Subject(s)

- American newspapers |z Washington (D.C.)
- Italian Americans |z Washington, D.C.
- Parish councils |z Washington (D.C.)
- Sports journalism

Papers

Collection Inventory

Papers		
	Box	Folder
Festivals 1972-1978	1	1
Holy Name Society Minutes 1968-1972	1	2
Holy Name Society Newsletter 1968-1976	1	3
Holy Rosary Parish Council 1968-1970	1	4
Miscellaneous undated	1	5
Newspaper clippings 1969-1971	1	6
Scrapbooks		
Arrangement note		
The scrapbooks are numbered 1-5. However, they are titled as their creator, Gino Simi, titled them, and he had two volumes he labeled as volume 4.		
		Volume
Sports Notes Local and General, "Scrapbook No. 4" 1920-1929		1

Scrapbooks

Washington Times Book One 1929 to December 1930

2

Washington Times Book Two January-December 1931

3

Washington Times Book Three December 1931 - April 1933

4

Washington Times Book Four 1933-1950

5