ADAMS, OSCAR W.
Oscar W. Adams papers, 1910-1978

Emory University
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library
Atlanta, GA 30322
404-727-6887
rose.library@emory.edu

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Adams, Oscar W.
Title: Oscar W. Adams papers, 1910-1978
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 931
Extent: 4.5 linear ft. (9 boxes), 1 bound volume (BV), and 2 oversized papers (OP)
Abstract: Papers of Oscar W. Adams, African American journalist, newspaper publisher, and a national fraternal leader for the Knights of Pythias including correspondence, financial records, printed material, organizational records, subject files, writings and ephemera.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access
Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction
All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Source
Purchase, 2002.

Citation
[after identification of item(s)], Oscar W. Adams papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing
Processed by Randy Gue and Alicia Monroe, February 2008.
Collection Description

Biographical Note
Oscar W. Adams (1882-1946), was an African American journalist, newspaper publisher, and a national fraternal leader for the Knights of Pythias. He also served as an administrator for the A.M.E. Zion Church Extension Department. Adams was born in Gulf Crest, Alabama, a small town near Mobile, in 1882. After graduating from Alabama Agriculture and Mechanical College in 1906, Adams headed to Birmingham where he founded a weekly newspaper called the *Birmingham Reporter*.

The *Birmingham Reporter* had sales agents across Alabama and Mississippi. The paper was available outside the South in cities such as Springfield, Missouri, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Clarksburg, West Virginia. The paper was published on Thursday so the paper's sales agents could distribute it on Saturday.

In 1917, the *Birmingham Reporter* was adopted as the official organ of the Order of the Eastern Star, and Adams claimed the *Reporter's* circulation was approximately 27,500 in 1922. The *Reporter's* projected circulation numbers reached this size because Adams worked out agreements with local civic groups to make the newspaper an "official organ" of communication for their organizations. The paper suspended publication in 1934 as a result of the economic hardship of the Great Depression.

Besides his duties at the *Birmingham Reporter*, Adams also wrote for a local white paper, the *Birmingham News*. He penned a column entitled "What Negroes Are Doing" in Sunday editions of the paper beginning in 1918. He died in 1946.

Scope and Content Note
The collection consists of the papers of Oscar W. Adams from 1910-1978. The papers contain correspondence, financial records, printed material, organizational records, subject files, writings and ephemera. The *Birmingham Reporter* series includes business correspondence, advertisement drafts, receipts for advertisement spaces in the newspaper, as well as subscription requests.

Personal papers consist of biographical information about Adams, business and personal correspondence, financial records, legal documents, printed material, and two speeches.

The organizations series contain records relating to his service as a member and Grand Chancellor of the national organization of the Knights of Pythias, as well as A.M.E. Zion Church Extension Department and other civic and religious groups. The Knights of Pythias records include circulars, correspondence, ephemera, financial records, legal documents, and papers relating to the administration of property owned by the group.

The Mattie Rowe series contains communication directed to and from Mattie B. Rowe, who was Adams' assistant and secretary. She took over Adams' *Birmingham News* column after his death in 1946, and worked for the new Grand Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias after Adams died.

Arrangement Note
Organized into four series: (1) *Birmingham Reporter* files, (2) Personal papers, (3) Organizational files, and (4) Mattie Rowe papers.
Description of Series

Series 1: Birmingham Reporter files, 1918-1953
Series 2: Personal papers, 1910-1955
Series 3: Organizational files, 1919-1953
Series 4: Mattie Rowe papers, 1919-1978
Series 1
*Birmingham Reporter* files, 1918-1953
Boxes 1-4, OP 1; BV 1

Scope and Content Note
The series consists of records relating to the *Birmingham Reporter*, founded by Oscar Adams in 1906. The paper focused on events in the black community in Alabama and larger national issues affecting black communities. Both local and national businesses advertised in the newspaper. The series includes advertisement drafts and receipts for advertisement spaces, as well as weekly reports from sales agents from 1919-1926 and subscription requests dating from 1918-1927. The series also includes incoming and outgoing business correspondence dating from 1918 to 1953. The bulk of this correspondence dates from 1919-1923. Financial records consist of receipts and invoices of expenses charged to and by the *Reporter*.

Arrangement Note
Arranged by record type.

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<td>Advertising, national, 1922 June-September</td>
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<td>Advertising, national, 1923</td>
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Series 2  
Personal papers, 1910-1955  
Boxes 5-6

Scope and Content Note  
The personal papers consist of biographical information about Adams, business and personal correspondence, financial records, legal documents, printed material, and two speeches. The business and personal correspondence directed to and from Oscar Adams is from 1919-1946. The biographical folder contains material memorializing Adams after his death. The financial records include mostly receipts and check stubs.

Arrangement Note  
Arranged by record type.

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**Series 3**  
**Organizational files, 1919-1953**  
**Boxes 7-8; OP2-3**

**Scope and Content Note**
The series consists of records relating to Adams' participation and leadership in several civic and religious organizations. Adams served as an officer of the local Grand Lodge Knights of Pythias in Birmingham, Alabama. Under his direction the organization paid off its many debts, and became an economically viable institution. Adams later became the Grand Chancellor of the national organization of the Knights of Pythias and the bulk of material in the series is related to his administrative duties as Grand Chancellor. The series also contains materials relating to Adams service as the secretary/treasurer of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Extension Department and the Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

**Arrangement Note**
Knights of Pythias records arranged by record type. Other organizations arranged in alphabetical order.

**Knights of Pythias**

<table>
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<td>Annual report, 1937</td>
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<td>Blueprint, Interstate Hotel Company Project and Pythian Building, Birmingham, Alabama, no date</td>
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<td>Certificate, Endowment Policy for Henry E. Jones, Harmony Lodge #105, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, May 10, 1925</td>
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<td>Circular letters, 1938-1958</td>
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<td>Circular typescript, August 3, 1937</td>
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<td>Contribution and delegate lodging lists, May 1954</td>
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<td>Meeting minutes and statements, 1939-1954</td>
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<td>Photographs, Amos Carnegie, January 13, 1942</td>
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<td>Property, Pythian Farm, Madison Park, Alabama, 1938</td>
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<td>Property, Pythian Temple and Fraternal Hotel, 1937</td>
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<td>Property, Pythian Temple building tenants, 1952-1954</td>
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<td>Property, Windham and Son, Contractors, 1923-1947</td>
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**Other Organizations**

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<td>A.M.E Zion Church, Church Extension Department</td>
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<td>Birmingham and Jefferson County Negro Hospital Association</td>
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<td>United Negro College Fund</td>
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Series 4
Mattie Rowe papers, 1919-1978
Box 9

Scope and Content Note
The series consists of papers of Mattie Rowe, the secretary of Oscar Adams dating from 1919 to 1978. After Oscar Adams' death, Rowe continued to serve as the secretary for the Grand Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias, and she continued to write the column "What Negroes are Doing" for the white newspaper, the *Birmingham News*. Correspondence includes incoming and outgoing letters relating to the *Birmingham Reporter* and local civic organizations requesting the participation of Adams or Mattie Rowe in local events and on civic committees. Printed material includes event invitations and announcements.

Arrangement Note
Arranged by record type.

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<td>Printed material, Eighth Annual Vulcan Bowl Game Letterhead, circa December 1948</td>
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<td>Printed material, &quot;Stay out of Downtown Birmingham&quot; Anti-Segregation Flier, no date</td>
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<td>Speech, &quot;Introduction of Margery Brawley Gaillard,&quot; March 15, 1953</td>
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<td>Speech, &quot;Rev. William J. Walls as a Christian Worker,&quot; St. James Baptist Church, February 17, 1952</td>
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