

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

Emory University
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Adams, Oscar W.
Title: Oscar W. Adams papers, 1910-1978
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 931
Extent: 4.5 linear feet (9 boxes), 1 bound volume (BV), and 1 oversized papers box and 1 oversized papers folder (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.

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Advertising, local, 1919-1923
1	2	Advertising, national, no date
1	3	Advertising, national, 1919-1921
1	4	Advertising, national, 1922 January-April
1	5	Advertising, national, 1922 May
1	6	Advertising, national, 1922 June-September
1	7	Advertising, national, 1923
1	8	Christmas edition, 1926
1	9	Christmas edition, 1927-1928
2	1	Correspondence, no date
2	2	Correspondence, 1918-1921
2	3	Correspondence, 1922
2	4	Correspondence, 1923 January-February
2	5	Correspondence, 1923 March
2	6	Correspondence, 1923 April-May
2	7	Correspondence, 1923 June-July
2	8	Correspondence, 1923 August-October
2	9	Correspondence, 1924-1953
2	10	Donor mailing lists, March 1923
3	1	Financial records, Invoices, 1922-1923
3	2	Financial records, Invoices, 1923-1924
OP1	1	Financial records, Commission account of Oscar W. Adams, 1922
3	3	Printed material
3	4	Sales agents directories

3	5	Sales agents monthly efficiency charts
3	6	Sales agents weekly reports, 1924-1925
BV1		Sales agents weekly reports, Ledger, 1927 October-1929
3	7	Sales agents weekly reports, [Requests], no date
3	8	Sales agents weekly reports, 1919-1923
4	1	Sales agents weekly reports, 1924 January-June
4	2	Sales agents weekly reports, 1924 July-September
4	3	Sales agents weekly reports, 1924 October-December
4	4	Sales agents weekly reports, 1925-1926
4	5	Subscriptions, 1918-1923 February
4	6	Subscriptions, 1923 March-June
4	7	Subscriptions, 1923 July-1927

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.

Box	Folder	Content
5	1	Biography (Obituaries)
5	2	Correspondence, 1919-1923 April
5	3	Correspondence, 1923 May-1924
5	4	Correspondence, 1939-1944 March
5	5	Correspondence, 1944 April-May
5	6	Correspondence, 1944 June -September
5	7	Correspondence, 1944 October
5	8	Correspondence, 1944 November-December
5	9	Correspondence, 1945-1947
5	10	Correspondence, Drafts
6	1	Financial records, Ledger, 1910-1925
6	2	Financial records, Check stubs, 1940 January-April
6	3	Financial records, Check stubs, 1941 February-July
6	4	Financial records, Insurance Policies, 1946-1947
6	5	Financial records, Receipts
6	6	Financial records, Receipts
6	7	Financial records, Receipts
6	8	Financial records, Receipts
6	9	Financial records, Weekly budget expenses, 1944-1946
6	10	Legal documents, 1940-1955
6	11	Printed material, "Alabama State Federation of Colored Civic Leagues at Congregational Church," Program, December 31, 1944
6	12	Printed material, "Civic Organization Memberships," 1923-1944
6	13	Printed material, Tickets, "Concert of the Gay Harmonizers," December 14, 1952
6	14	Speeches, 1923 and no date
6	15	Travel itinerary

Series 3
Organizational files, 1919-1953
Boxes 7-8; OP1-2

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

Box	Folder	Content
7	1	Advertisements from Knights of Pythias Lodges
7	2	Annual report, 1937
OP2	-	Blueprint, Interstate Hotel Company Project and Pythian Building, Birmingham, Alabama, no date
OP1	3	Certificate, Endowment Policy for Henry E. Jones, Harmony Lodge #105, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, May 10, 1925
7	3	Circular letters, 1938-1958
7	4	Circular typescript, August 3, 1937
7	5	Contribution and delegate lodging lists, May 1954
7	6	Correspondence, 1923-1954
7	7	Ephemera, Medals and organizational membership cards, 1944
7	8	Financial records, Project budgets, 1933
7	9	Financial records, Quarterly reports, 1925-1947
7	10	Financial records, Receipts, 1923-1944
7	11	Legal, 1927-1933
7	12	Meeting minutes and statements, 1939-1954
7	13	Photographs, Amos Carnegie, January 13, 1942
7	14	Printed material, Programs, 1944-1961
7	15	Property, Pythian Bath House-Sanitarium Bonds, September 18, 1947
7	16	Property, Pythian Farm, Madison Park, Alabama, 1938
7	17	Property, Pythian Temple and Fraternal Hotel, 1937
7	18	Property, Pythian Temple building tenants, 1952-1954

- 7 19 Property, Pythian Temple, Specification for Repairing Fire Loss, no date
- 7 20 Property, Windham and Son, Contractors, 1923-1947
- 7 21 Speech, no date

Other Organizations

- 8 1 A.M.E Zion Church, Church Extension Department
- 8 2 Birmingham and Jefferson County Negro Hospital Association
- 8 3 *Birmingham News- Birmingham Age-Herald*
- 8 4 *Birmingham World*
- 8 5 Children's Home Hospital Association
- 8 6 Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church [Scott's Chapel AME Zion Church]
- 8 7 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- 8 8 United Negro College Fund

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.

Box	Folder	Content
9	1	Correspondence, 1919-1978
9	2	Correspondence, <i>Birmingham World</i> , 1947-1958
9	3	Financial records, Weekly Accounts, 1923
9	4	Fragment
9	5	Printed material, Camp Pauline Bray Fletcher, 1951
9	6	Printed material, Civic Organizations, 1952-1953
9	7	Printed material, Collins Tailoring School, January 14, 1952
9	8	Printed material, Eighth Annual Vulcan Bowl Game Letterhead, circa December 1948
9	9	Printed material, "Stay out of Downtown Birmingham" Anti-Segregation Flier, no date
9	10	Speech, "Introduction of Margery Brawley Gaillard," March 15, 1953
9	11	Speech, "Rev. William J. Walls as a Christian Worker," St. James Baptist Church, February 17, 1952
9	12	Subject files, Children's Aid Society, Colored Advisory Committee, 1951-1953
9	13	Subject files, Colored Parent-Teacher Associations, Birmingham Council, Officer Directories, 1951-1952 and Quotes
9	14	Subject files, Jefferson County Negro High School Citizenship Tour, 1949
9	15	Subject files, Race Relations, 1944-1948
9	16	Subject files, Social Hygiene and Mental Health Association, 1952-1953
9	17	Subject files, Women's Day Pledge List, May 25, 1952
9	18	Transcript, "Fourth War Loan Drive," Radio Station WSGN, February 13, 1944
9	19	Writings, Gaston, A.G. - "Report of Negro Division of the War Finance Committee of Birmingham," no date
9	20	Writings, March of Dimes Campaign (Negro Division), 1953

9 21 Writings, "What Negroes Are Doing," Column Submissions, 1944
