Leo Frank research files, circa 1914-2004

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

Title: Leo Frank research files, circa 1914-2004
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 1252
Extent: 4 linear feet (4 boxes) and 1 oversized papers box (OP)
Abstract: Material collected by Tom Watson Brown while conducting research on the Leo Frank murder case, including printed material, correspondence, and legal records. Also included are some of Brown's writings about the case.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access
Special restrictions apply: Due to preservation concerns, OP1 is restricted from use.
Researchers must contact the Rose Library in advance for access to audiovisual material in this collection.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction
Special restrictions apply: The collection contains some copies of original materials held by other institutions. These copies may not be reproduced without the permission of the owner of the originals.

Related Materials in This Repository
Leo Frank collection

Source
Gift of Tad Brown, 2013.

Custodial History
The donor is the son of records creator, Tom Watson Brown.

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Citation
[after identification of item(s)], Leo Frank research files, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Appraisal Note
Acquired by Curator of Political, Cultural, and Social Movements Collections, Randy Gue, and Curator of African American Collections, Randall Burkett, as part of the Rose Library's holdings in Atlanta history.

Processing
Unprocessed collection.

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Collection Description

Biographical Note
Leo Max Frank (1884-1915), a Jewish businessman, helped his uncle, Moses Frank, establish the National Pencil Company factory in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1908. Frank served as the company's superintendent and vice president. When thirteen year old factory employee Mary Phagan was murdered in 1913, Frank, who had been the last person to see her alive, was arrested. He was convicted and sentenced to be hanged, and a series of appeals going all the way to the United States Supreme Court failed to overturn the conviction. Lingering doubt about Frank's guilt, however, eventually led Governor John M. Slaton to commute the sentence to life in prison on June 20, 1915. Outrage in the community and concern for Frank's safety led officials to transfer him from Atlanta to a prison farm outside Milledgeville, Georgia. On the night of August 16, 1915, a mob kidnapped Frank from the prison; he was found in Marietta, Georgia, the next morning, hanged from a tree. On March 11, 1986 the State Board of Pardons and Paroles granted a posthumous pardon to Leo Frank on the grounds that the State failed to adequately protect his life and chance for further appeal.

Thomas Watson Brown (1934-2007), Georgia businessman, lawyer, and philanthropist, was born in Washington, D.C. He attended Princeton University and Harvard Law School before moving to Atlanta. Brown was the owner of Spartan Communications, a company founded by his father, Walter "Red" Brown. He supported numerous philanthropic causes, including several Georgia universities and historical societies, as well as numerous political causes. Brown was also the great-grandson of Georgia Senator Thomas E. Watson, who had been an ardent believer in Leo's Frank guilt during the trial and whose publications, Watson's Magazine and The Jeffersonian, published numerous editorials provoking public opinion against Frank.

Scope and Content Note
The collection consists of Thomas Watson Brown's research files relating to the Leo Frank murder case including printed material, legal records, and correspondence. Printed material is
primarily comprised of newspaper and magazine articles written about the case many years after the trial. Legal records include copies of briefs and other documents contemporary to the case, as well as material relating to the posthumous pardon of Leo Frank. Correspondence is primarily between Brown and others, and reflects Brown's research. Also included in the collection are some of Brown's own writings about the case including "Notes on the Leo Frank Case and Its Aftermath" (1982) and other speeches. Finally, the collection contains one sound recording: an interview with Jack Lemmon about his role as Governor John Slaton in the TV miniseries *The Murder of Mary Phagan* (1988).

**Arrangement Note**
Unprocessed collection.
## Container List

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2 - Atlanta Bar Association, circa 1988
2 - Watson-Brown Foundation, Inc., general correspondence, circa 1979
2 - Television tape transcript, posthumous pardon announced, 1986
2 - Larry McMurtry, "The Ballad of Mary Phagan" parts one and two, 1986
3 - "Ballad of Mary Phagan" teleplay script part one, 1986
3 - Georgia legal history seminar, November 17, 1988
3 - Tom Watson Brown, essay on the Leo Frank case
3 - Tom Watson Brown, Marietta (Georgia) Golden K Kiwanis Club speech, 2001
3 - Tom Watson Brown, "Notes on the Leo Frank Case and Its Aftermath", 1982
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3 - Tom Watson Brown, WGST-AM guest editorial, 1988
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3 - Printed material and photo of Leo Frank lynching
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4 - Microcassette: Jack Lemmon interview
OP1 1 The Detroit News, August 17, 1915 [RESTRICTED]
OP1 1 Macon Daily Telegraph, May 25, 1913 [RESTRICTED]