Finding Aid

Title: Frank W. and Lillian Spencer Collection, 1921-1987.

Administrative Information: All the papers are open to researchers. Contact the Head of Special Collections, Lane Library, 11935 Abercorn, Savannah, GA. 31419-1997 hopkinca@armstrong.edu

Preferred Citation: Frank W. and Lillian Spencer Collection, 1921-1987. Armstrong Atlantic State University. Lane Library. Special Collections. Savannah GA. 31419-1997. Box/folder number.

Physical Description: 2.6 linear feet. Photographs, award plaques, ephemera.

Accession Number: 99-17.

Collection Processed by: Alexandra Thompson.

Table of Contents

Record Group  Frank W. and Lillian Spencer Collection, 1921-1987  Page

Biographical Note  3
Scope and Content Note  3
Related Source  4
Subject Headings  4
Organization and Arrangement  5

Record Subgroups 1-2, Descriptions
  Frank W. Spencer Papers  5
    Series 1: Subject Files, 1921-1979  5
    Series 2: Biographical  7
  Lillian Spencer Papers  7
    Series 1: Subject Files, 1940-1987  7

Container lists arranged by box number  8
Biographical Note:

Frank W. Spencer was born November 19, 1882, the son of a 52-year master river pilot, in Savannah, Georgia. He embarked on a nautical career at the age of sixteen, attending New York Nautical College and eventually holding the U.S. Master’s and Marine Engineer’s licenses for ocean-going vessels and the State of Georgia License for Pilotage Service. He served as Master Pilot for the Port of Savannah from 1917 to 1947 and as General Manager of the Atlantic Towing Company from 1920 to 1968. He is credited with the opening of a new channel in the upper stretch of the Savannah Harbor for ocean going vessels in 1915-17, which allowed the development of the Savannah Sugar Refinery and, later, other industrial plants. He served as the French Consular Agent from 1929 to 194-?; as the local manager of the U.S. Shipping Board Recruiting Service during World War II; as district representative and finance committee member of the American Pilot’s Association; and as director of the Atlantic Coast and Gulf of Mexico Tow Boat Association.

Known for his civil rights activism, Spencer’s community involvement included service with the Chatham Council Boy Scouts of America, where he started a Sea Scouting program and the first Negro Scout Troop in the county; the Savannah Rotary Club; the Mayor’s Commission that established Armstrong Junior College in 1935; the bi-racial Chatham Council on Human Relations, 1961-1968; the Georgia Council on Human Relations, 1960-1974; the Georgia State Board of Public Welfare, 1935-1945; the Georgia Academy for the Blind in Macon, Georgia; Greenbriar Children’s Center, becoming the board’s first white board member in 1945; the West Board Street YMCA; the NAACP, 1945-1973; and the local American Red Cross chapter. He served on the Chatham County Board of Education for eighteen years and in 1955, after his retirement, he was named Honorary School Board President and a Black elementary school was named in his honor.

Spencer married Lillian Windau, his second wife, in New York in 1938. He had twin sons, Frank Wilson and Hugo Johnson, and three daughters, Margaret, Adelaide, and Jeanne, from an earlier marriage. During the latter part of their life the Spencers maintained residences in Savannah and at Hilton Head, South Carolina. Spencer died on July 26, 1979.

Lillian Windau Spencer was born on September 14, 1901 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She had a degree in social work and moved to Savannah in the early 1930s. She actively supported her husband’s career and was a driving force behind his community service. Through her philanthropy and community involvement she continued to support their common causes after his death. She moved back to Wisconsin in 1987 to be cared for by her niece, Patricia Windau. She died on October 14, 1996 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Scope and Content Note:

The collection comprises of the papers of Frank W. Spencer Papers (1921-1979) and Lillian W. Spencer (1940-1987). The bulk of the collection is subject files arranged by Frank W. Spencer over his lifetime. The bulk of the papers range from the 1940s through the end of the 1960s. The papers were weeded by Spencer’s niece, Patricia Windau, before being donated to AASU. Those that remain focus on his community and civil rights activism, with the exception of one file, titled Port and Trade, which deals with his career and the development of Savannah’s port. About half the materials are newspaper clippings. The subject files also include correspondence, meeting agendas, photographs, ephemera, and publications. All types of materials are scattered throughout the subject files. The collection is particularly pertinent to the history of the civil rights movement in Savannah. Spencer kept some files on national civil rights efforts to inform his local efforts and they can be found the Desegregation folders, #24-35 or, in the case of some prominent people, filed by name. However, the vast majority of the papers reflect his work at the local level. Correspondence with the major civil rights leaders and activists including, among others, Martin Luther King, Ralph Mark Gilbert, M.E. Tilly, R. L. Russel, R.M.L. Kirkwood, Rev. Charles M. Jones,
Bishop James A. Pike, and J. Waties Waring are scattered throughout the subject files. Lillian E. Smith (b.1897-d.1966), a prominent author and civil rights activist, is well represented in five folders #66-70, which contain predominantly correspondence and clippings from 1941 to 1979. Biographical information and death notices along with the text of his Memorial Service are also included.

The second record group is a small collection of the papers of Spencer’s wife, Lillian W. Spencer. They include one file on her activity with the League of Women Voters. Her other remaining papers deal largely with her support of her husband’s causes and correspondence dealing with her efforts to honor him after his death. Because she worked collaboratively with her husband, some of her correspondence related to their work with organizations can be found in his subject files. Both record groups also contain correspondence with various members of Hubert Humphrey’s family.

Original order and file names have been maintained for the collection with the exception of the biographical information about Frank W. Spencer. Found in an unmarked folder, it did not appear to be a part of Spencer’s original subject files but did appear to have been collected and filed separately by him and his wife, Lillian. It has been arranged in a second series within record group 1. The collection was donated to AASU in 1998 by Spencer’s niece, Patricia Windau. Dr. Robert Strozier, AASU alumni, professor of English Emeritus and close personal friend of the Spencers, encouraged the donation. Strozier delivered the eulogy at Frank W. Spencer’s funeral in 1979, the text of which can be found in Box #78. He also delivered the eulogy at Lillian Spencer’s funeral in 1996.

Related Source:

Spencer, Frank W. *Savannah: The River and the Port, 1900-1962*. Savannah, GA: [s.n., 1962?].
(Call number F292.S3 S386 1962)

Subject Headings:

Descriptor:
- African Americans – Civil Rights
- African Americans – Southern States
- Civil Rights – Georgia
- Harbors – Georgia – Savannah – History
- Savannah (Ga.) – Harbor
- Savannah (Ga.) – Port
- Savannah River (Ga. and SC)
- Segregation – Education

Named Person:
- Clay, Lucius D. (Lucius DuBignon), 1897-1978
- Gilbert, Ralph Mark
- Humphrey, Hubert H. (Hubert Horatio), 1911-1978
- Humphrey, Hubert Sr.
- Jones, Charles M.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.
- Kirkwood, R.M.L.
- Pike, James A.
- Russel, R.L.
- Smith, Lillian E., 1897-1966
Spencer, Frank W., 1882-1979
Spencer, Lillian Windau, 1901-1996
Tilly, M.E.
Waring, Julius Waties, 1880-1968

Named Corporation:
Armstrong Junior College
Armstrong State College
Atlantic Towing Company (Savannah, Ga.)
Chatham Council on Human Relations
Chatham County School Board
Frank W. Spencer School (Savannah, Ga.)
Georgia Council on Human Relations
Georgia State Board of Public Welfare
Georgia Academy for the Blind
Greenbriar Children’s Center (Savannah, Ga.)
League of Women Voters
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Port of Savannah
Savannah Sugar Refinery

Organization and Arrangement:

Folders are numbered sequentially throughout the collection.

Record Groups and Sub-groups:
1: Frank W. Spencer Papers, 1921-1979, 2.37 linear feet
Correspondence, memos, reports, newspaper clippings, speeches, photographs, biographical information, award plaque and other ephemera, of Frank W. Spencer (b.1882-d.1979), Savannah riverboat captain and civil rights activist. Includes some correspondence of his wife, Lillian W. Spencer (b.1901-d.1996), and correspondence with Lillian E. Smith (b. 1897-d.1966), author and civil rights activist, and other leaders of the civil rights movement. The papers are arranged into two series:

Series 1: Subject Files
Series 2: Biographical

Series 1: Subject Files, 1921-1979, 2.08 linear feet
File folders are arranged alphabetically by topic; material within the folders is arranged in reverse chronological order. Folder titles reflect organizations, people, or general topics.

File Listing for Series 1:
1. And A Little Child Shall Lead Them, 1961
2. Bi-Racial Committee, 1960
4. Board of Education, appointment of Negro to board, 1945-1965
5. Board of Education, integration suit, 1963
15. Chatham Council on Human Relations, School Committee, 1963
17. Civic Club, 1965
19. Committee on Community Problem, 1964
20. Committee on Integration – OPTICS, 1963
22. Community support, other
23. Crusade for Justice, 1963
24. Desegregation, Albany, Georgia
25. Desegregation, Atlanta, Georgia
26. Desegregation, Baltimore, Maryland
27. Desegregation, Birmingham, Alabama
28. Desegregation, Charlotte, North Carolina
29. Desegregation, Dallas, Texas
30. Desegregation, Jacksonville, Florida, 1960
31. Desegregation, Little Rock, Arkansas
32. Desegregation, Louisiana
33. Desegregation, Mississippi
34. Desegregation, Nashville, Tennessee
35. Desegregation, Norfolk, Virginia
37. Frank W. Spencer School
38. Georgia Council on Human Relations, 1960-61
40. Georgia Council on Human Relations, 1963
41. Georgia Council on Human Relations, 1964
42. Georgia Council on Human Relations, 1965-66
44. HOPE, Inc., 1958-61
45. Hospital, Hil Burton Funds, 1963
46. Human Relations, 1952-53
47. Human Relations, 1954-57
48. Human Relations, 1958-64
49. Human Relations, 1965-66
50. Interracial, 1940-43
51. Interracial, 1944-47
52. Interracial, 1948-49
53. Interracial, 1950
54. Interracial, 1951, (includes Lillian W. Spencer correspondence)
55. Interracial Data, 1945-68
56. Johnson, Otis Samuel, 1963
57. Jones, Charles M., Rev., Race Relations or Human Relations, Which Do We Want? 1963
58. NAACP, 1945-1950
59. NAACP, 1951-1958
60. NAACP, 1959-1973
62. Port and trade
63. Segregation data, 1954-1962
64. School Board
65. School integration
66. Smith, Lillian, 1941-49
Series 2: Biographical. 0.29 linear feet
File folders are arranged from most personal to least personal; material within the folders is arranged in reverse chronological order. This series constitutes biographical information compiled by Spencer and his wife. It includes death notices and the text of his memorial service, photographs, and some genealogical data.

File Listing for Series 2:
77. Biographical information
78. Death and memorial service
79. Miscellaneous
80. Photographs
81. Genealogical

Series 1: Subject Files, 1940-1987

Series 1: Subject Files, 1940-1987, 0.21 linear feet.
Six file folders are arranged alphabetically by topic; material within the folders is arranged in reverse chronological order. Folder titles have been maintained. The bulk of the Lillian Spencer’s correspondence deals with her efforts to honor her husband after his death. Two handwritten and signed letters by Hubert H. Humphrey Sr. can be found amongst her correspondence in Folder # 82. Because much of her volunteerism was done in collaboration with her husband, some of her correspondence can be found in Series 1 of the Frank W. Spencer Papers. A survey of housing conditions among the fourteen Negro schools in Chatham County, conducted by Lillian Spencer in 1940 for the Chatham County School Board, is found in folder # 83. The text of a speech she gave in 1972 at the retirement of Ayler Mae Lovett, the principal of the Frank W. Spencer School, is in folder #86.

File Listing for Series 1:
82. Correspondence
83. Housing survey, 1940
84. League of Women Voters
85. Living quarters
86. Lovett retirement speech
87. West Broad Street YMCA Centenary Club, 1968, award for service.
**Container lists arranged by box number:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box Number</th>
<th>Box Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frank W. Spencer Papers, Series 1, Folders 1 -15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frank W. Spencer Papers, Series 1, Folders 16-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Frank W. Spencer Papers, Series 1, Folders 42-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Frank W. Spencer Papers, Series 1, Folders 54-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Frank W. Spencer Papers, Series 1, Folders 67-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Frank W. Spencer Papers, Series 2, Folders 77-81; Lillian Spencer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Papers, Series 1, Folders 82-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Realia, two plaques accompanying the papers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>