



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Canada Lee Foundation records

1952-1956

Sc MG 295

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project and Schomburg NEH Blacks on Stage:
African-American Theater Arts Collections Project

Processed by Janice Quinter, June 2000.

Summary

Creator: Canada Lee Foundation

Title: Canada Lee Foundation records

Date: 1952-1956

Size: 5.0 linear feet (5 boxes)

Source: Gift of Frances Lee Pearson, 1989.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: The Canada Lee Foundation, which honored African American actor Canada Lee, sought to assist in the full integration of African American youth in all phases of the performing arts. The Canada Lee Foundation records consist of organizational records.

Preferred citation: [Item], Canada Lee Foundation records, Sc MG 295, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Janice Quinter, June 2000.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

Related Materials:

Also housed in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture:

Canada Lee papers, Sc Micro R-6764, General Research and Reference Division

Canada Lee research material collection, Sc MG 238, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Creator History

Canada Lee was an African American actor who performed on stage, screen, radio, and television; his most well-known performances included roles in Richard Wright's *Native Son*, *Cry the Beloved Country*, and *On Whitman Avenue*. Born in New York City in 1907, Lee's diverse career included stints as a jockey, prizefighter, bandleader, and violinist.

Following Lee's death in December 1952, his widow, Frances Lee, and leaders in entertainment and politics, including Walter White, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Oscar Hammerstein II, and Margaret Webster, organized the Canada Lee Foundation to preserve his memory and ideals through aid and encouragement to talented youth in the dramatic arts. The Foundation sought to assist in the full integration of African American youth in all phases of the performing arts including writing, producing, directing, and acting, both amateur and professional. It provided scholarships to talented young actors and presented awards of recognition to individuals representing various aspects of the theatrical arts. It also produced a posthumous private edition record album, entitled *The Canada Lee Memorial Record*, which included readings and dramatic presentations by Lee. The Foundation, which was not conceived as a permanent body, ceased functioning in the mid-1950s.

Scope and Content Note

The Canada Lee Foundation records consist of organizational records including by-laws, minutes of the board of trustees, a draft of the organizational manual, and brochures. Correspondence with Frances Lee and members of the board document the promotion of the objectives of the organization, especially the memorial album privately produced in Canada Lee's honor. There is also material regarding the presentation of awards and scholarships, and questionnaires and correspondence used to encourage summer stock theaters and colleges to accept more African American students. Also included are Lee's address books, which were possibly used to identify potential donors. There are numerous index cards listing names and addresses of individuals. Some financial records are also included in the collection.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American actors
African Americans -- Societies, etc
African Americans in the performing arts
Associations, institutions, etc -- United States

Names

Lee, Canada, 1907-1952
Pearson, Frances Lee, 1919-
Canada Lee Foundation

Container List

- Board of Trustees
 - b. 1 f. 1 By-laws
 - Organizational records
 - b. 1 f. 2 undated
 - b. 1 f. 3 1952-1953
 - b. 1 f. 4-6 Los Angeles 1953
 - b. 1 f. 7 Minutes of Advisory Board 1952
 - b. 1 f. 8-9 1953-1954
 - b. 1 f. 10 Executive Committee Meeting 1955
 - b. 1 f. 11 Reports 1952-1953
- Correspondence
 - b. 1 f. 12 Frances Lee's letter defending Canada Lee's democratic stance 1952
 - b. 1 f. 13 General 1952-1954
- Canada Lee Memorial Record
 - b. 1 f. 14 Correspondence 1952
 - b. 1 f. 15 Legal documents 1952
 - b. 1 f. 16 "The Search for Material" 1952
 - b. 1 f. 17 Introductory material
 - b. 1 f. 18 Correspondence 1952-1953
 - b. 1 f. 19 Solicitations
 - b. 1 f. 20-21 Clearances
 - b. 1 f. 22 Lamont Library, Harvard College correspondence 1952-1953
 - b. 1 f. 23 Financial records and correspondence
 - b. 1 f. 24 S. K. D. Company
 - b. 1 f. 25 Sponsorship list
 - b. 1 f. 26 Completed order cards
 - b. 1 f. 27 Financial record book and list of record orders
- Scholarships and awards
 - b. 1 f. 28 Party for award recipients 1953
 - b. 1 f. 29 Scholarship Committee 1953-1956
 - b. 1 f. 30-31 National Achievement Awards presentation 1954
- Public relations
 - b. 1 f. 32 Brochure draft
 - b. 1 f. 33 Memberships and programs
 - b. 1 f. 34 Public service contacts
 - b. 1 f. 35 Commemorative program 1954 May 13
 - b. 1 f. 36 Summer theater questionnaires and report (foundation apprentices) 1953
 - b. 1 f. 37 Drama schools open to African American students
 - b. 1 f. 38 Sample letters to colleges 1953

- b. 1 f. 39 Material for speeches and articles
- b. 1 f. 40-41 Address books
 - b. 1 f. 42 Canada Lee's address book
- b. 1 f. 43-44 Lists of names and addresses
 - b. 1 f. 45 Photocopies of artwork depicting Canada Lee
- Name and address file
 - b. 2 A-D
 - b. 3 E-K
 - b. 4 L-R
 - b. 5 S-Z and geographic list