



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

Guide to the

**Wesley Williams papers**

1909-1984 [bulk 1919-1984]

Sc MG 379

## Summary

**Creator:** Williams, Wesley A., 1896-1984

**Title:** Wesley Williams papers

**Date:** 1909-1984 [bulk 1919-1984]

**Size:** 0.88 linear feet (3 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of James H. Williams, July 1986.

**Revision History:** Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

**Abstract:** Wesley Williams was New York City's first African American fire fighter and fire official in the New York City Fire Department, and he was a founder of the Vulcan Society. The Wesley Williams papers consist of correspondence, news clippings, material about the Vulcan Society, and information about Williams's father, James H. Williams, Chief of the Red Caps at Grand Central Station, and Robert O. Lowery, first African American fire commissioner in New York City.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Wesley Williams papers, Sc MG 379, 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:** Accessioned by Willa Thomas Edomobi, July 1986.7/31/86

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

## Creator History

Wesley Williams was New York City's first African American fire fighter and fire official in the New York City Fire Department, ascending through the ranks from driver (1919) to battalion chief (1952). He was a founder of the Vulcan Society, a Black firemen's professional and social organization which sought better employment conditions. Williams was also renowned in the world of physical fitness and weight-

training. He also inspired civic pride in the Black youths of New York City. Williams retired in 1952; the City of New York renamed West 135th Street in his honor.

## **Scope and Content Note**

This collection consists of correspondence, news clippings, commendations for courageous actions, and plaques, all of which reflect Williams's career; materials regarding the Vulcan Society; and clippings about Williams's father, James H. Williams, Chief of the Red Caps at Grand Central Station and Robert O. Lowery, the first African American fire commissioner in New York City.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American fire fighters

African American fire fighters -- New York (State) -- New York

Fire chiefs

Fire fighters -- Employment -- New York (State) -- New York

### **Names**

Lowery, Robert O. (Robert Oliver), 1916-

Williams, James H. (James Henry), 1878-1948

Williams, Wesley A., 1896-1984

New York (N.Y.). Fire Department. Vulcan Society

## **Container List**

- b. 1 f. 1-2 Correspondence 1976
- b. 1 f. 3 Education and promotions
- b. 1 f. 4-5 Speeches
- b. 1 f. 6 Williams, James H
- b. 1 f. 7 Memberships
- b. 1 f. 8 Award programs
- b. 1 f. 9 Certificates (copies)
- b. 1 f. 10 Fundraising
- b. 1 f. 11 Lowery, Robert O
- b. 1 f. 12 Vulcan Society
- b. 1 f. 13-14 Clippings
  - b. 2 f. 1
- b. 2 f. 2-3 Miscellaneous
  - Includes material on job opportunities.
- b. 3 Plaques