



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

Guide to the

Earl Brown papers

1934-1976

Sc MG 254

Compiled by Cheryl P. McDaniels, 1996.

Summary

Creator: Brown, Earl, 1903-1980

Title: Earl Brown papers

Date: 1934-1976

Size: .67 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Donated by Emma Mosley Brown in 1996.

Abstract: Earl Brown was an African-American journalist and Harlem politician. The Earl Brown papers date from 1934 to the 1970s and document aspects of Earl Brown's journalistic and political careers, and include correspondence (1934-1960), drafts of his memoirs and other personal observational essays, copies of legislation he sponsored (1950-1952), certificates, invitations, financial records, a commencement address (1952), copies of his published articles, and a scrapbook of news clippings (1949-1961).

Conditions Governing Access:

All reproduction requests subject to limitations noted in divisional policies.

Conditions Governing Use: Information on copyright available from repository.

Preferred citation: [Item], Earl Brown papers, Sc MG 254, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Cheryl P. McDaniels, 1996. Photographs transferred to Photographs and Prints Division. Finding aid edited and adapted to digital form by Kay Menick in 2016.

Creator History

African-American journalist and Harlem politician, Earl Brown was a native of Charlottesville, Virginia, and a graduate of Harvard University (1929). He worked for the *Amsterdam News*, *Life*, and *Time* magazines before entering politics. In 1949, while employed as an editor at *Time*, he accepted

Tammany Hall's request to run against the incumbent, Benjamin Davis, for New York City Council. Brown defeated Davis, a Communist Party candidate, and duly served from 1949 to 1961. During his tenure, he investigated police corruption and brutality, co-sponsored legislation to end discrimination in housing, and headed a special committee on the use of narcotics in New York City. In 1958 he attempted to unseat Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and lost. In 1961 he left the Council to become a member of the City's Housing and Redevelopment Board. Two years later Brown was named Acting Manhattan Borough President, and in 1965 was appointed the first paid chairman of the City's Commission on Human Rights, retiring a short time later.

Scope and Content Note

Earl Brown was an African-American journalist and Harlem politician. The Earl Brown papers date from 1934 to the 1970s and document aspects of Earl Brown's journalistic and political careers, and include correspondence (1934-1960), drafts of his memoirs and other personal observational essays, copies of legislation he sponsored (1950-1952), certificates, invitations, financial records, a commencement address (1952), copies of his published articles, and a scrapbook of news clippings (1949-1961).

The correspondence files contain: critiques of Brown's articles; responses to article proposals; letters requesting Brown to serve on committees; telegrams concerning meeting schedules; letters (1957) related to revisions of U.S. Senate Rule 22 (which pertains to breaking a filibuster); minutes of committee meetings. Correspondents include John K. Jessup (Fortune Magazine), Langdon W. Post (New York City Housing Authority), F.W.H. Adams (New York City Police Commissioner), Senator Robert Wagner, Governor Herbert Lehman, Lieutenant Governor Charles Poletti, and Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Organizations include the National Democratic Committee, Council for Democracy and the National Urban League.

The writings include handwritten and typescript drafts of his memoirs and observations as a public official, including discussions about the way African Americans have voted in New York city and state elections (1970s), in addition to a commencement address given at Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal College in Pine Bluff, Arkansas (1952). There are copies of his published articles: "American Negroes and the War" (*Harper's*, April, 1942); "The Negro Vote, 1944: A Forecast" (*Harper's*, July, 1944); "Uncle Mike's Boxing Racket" (reprint from *Life*, June 17, 1946).

There are also copies of legislation sponsored by Brown as a City councilman (1950-1952), certificates, and a scrapbook of news clippings documenting Brown's political activities (1949-1961) from the *New York Amsterdam News*, the *New York Age Defender*, *New York World Telegram and Sun*, *Atlanta Journal*, and the *Atlanta Constitution*.

Also contained are financial records (1952) of the New York Citizens Committee to Elect Adlai Stevens; Brown's Certificate of Election to the New York City Council (1953) and the certificate appointing him to the Commission on Human Rights (1965). There are engraved invitations to special events: Fiorello H. LaGuardia's invitation to welcome King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (1939); the Inaugural Committee's invitations to Lyndon Baines Johnson inaugural activities (1965); a White House dinner menu (1965) autographed by Lyndon Baines Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American journalists
African American legislators
African American politicians
African Americans -- authors
Discrimination in housing -- New York (N.Y.)
Harlem (New York, N.Y.)
Politicians -- New York (N.Y.)
Politics and government -- New York (N.Y.)
Race relations -- United States
Voting -- New York (N.Y.)

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Articles
Correspondence
Invitations
Minute books
Scrapbooks
Speeches (documents)

Names

Lehman, Herbert H. (Herbert Henry), 1878-1963
Poletti, Charles, 1903-2002
Powell, Adam Clayton, Jr., 1908-1972
Wagner, Robert F. (Robert Ferdinand), 1877-1953

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical
Correspondence
- b. 1 f. 2 A-G 1934-1958
- b. 1 f. 3 H-M 1938-1941
- b. 1 f. 4 M-W 1936-1960
Writings circa 1934-1970s
- b. 1 f. 5 Autobiography/Memories
- b. 1 f. 6 Writings
- b. 1 f. 7 Speeches
- b. 1 f. 8 NY Citizens Committee to Elect Adlai Stevenson 1952
- b. 1 f. 9 NY City -- City Council -- Bills Sponsored 1952
- b. 1 f. 10 Letters Re: Rule 22 (Revision of Rules Debate in US Debate) 1957
- b. 1 f. 11 Commission on Human Rights 1965
- b. 1 f. 12 The Negro Democratic Vote by David Grant
Clippings
- b. 1 f. 13 1965 January
- b. 1 f. 14 1965 February
- b. 1 f. 15 Clippings
- b. 1 f. 16 Invitations
- b. 2 f. 1 Scrapbook 1949-1961
- b. 2 f. 2 Certificate of Election to New York City Council 1953 December 1