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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Leila Danette Madison Small family papers

1889-1988 [bulk 1913-1987]

Sc MG 365

Summary

Creator: Small, Leila Danette-Madison, 1909-2012

Title: Leila Danette Madison Small family papers

Date: 1889-1988 [bulk 1913-1987]

Size: 2.25 linear feet (3 boxes)

Source: Gift of Leila Danette Small, April 1990.

Abstract: The Leila Danette Madison Small family papers document the lives of an African-American upper middle class family from Baltimore and Florida in the late 19th through the 20th centuries. The papers include wills, certificates, travel logs, and property documents.

Preferred citation: [Item], Leila Danette Madison Small family papers, Sc MG 365, 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 Janice Quinter and Miranda Mims, 2012 and 2015.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: audio and moving image materials. For more information, please contact the division at schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org or 212-491-2270.

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: various photographs

Creator History

The family papers of Leila Danette Madison Small document the lives of a twentieth-century African-American upper middle class family from Baltimore. Leila, also known as "Lela", Danette Madison Small (1909-2012) was born to Leila Madison Williams (ca. 1879-1969) and Daniel J. Madison. Her father died in 1912; the following year her mother married Walter R. Williams. The second marriage produced

Mildred Margarite Williams (1913-1988). Her mother also raised Leila's cousin, Edith Margarite Macbeth Saunders (1895-1983), after the death of Edith's mother. The family moved from Jacksonville, Florida to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1925.

Both Leila Danette Madison Small and her sister, Mildred Margarite Williams, had careers in the arts. Leila Danette was a stage, film, and television actress, who began performing professionally at age 67. She acted in the Crossroads Theatre Company's performance of *Steal Away* (1984). Mildred Margarite, after receiving a Master of Arts in Musicology from Catholic University, became the organist and choir director of Baltimore's Sharon Baptist Church in 1935. She served there actively until 1979. Mildred Margarite was also a music instructor with the Baltimore City Public Schools System. In 1987, the Virginia Seminary and College presented her with an honorary Doctorate of Sacred Music.

Edith Margarite Macbeth Saunders, Leila Danette's and Mildred Margarite's cousin, married Frank Augustus Saunders (1892-1967) in 1920. Coincidentally the same year, Dr. Saunders was awarded his medical degree from Howard University. They lived in Baltimore and were long-term members of the locally-based Falcon Rod and Gun Club. Edith Margarite served as president of the club's Auxiliary from 1957-1968 and Mildred Margarite served as coordinator for contributions.

Scope and Content Note

The Leila Danette Madison Small family papers have been organized according to the family's genealogy. The bulk of the papers, however, relate to Edith and Frank Saunders. The papers include several last wills and testaments (1912-1970), for both the Williams and Madison families, and content from a family Bible noting births, marriages, and deaths (1889-1913). There are property documents for land owned by Daniel J. Madison in Duval County, Florida (1901-1940); estate documents; and a scrapbook belonging to Leila Madison Williams, containing congratulatory messages and tributes for a testimonial banquet given in her honor (1965).

Items relating to Leila Danette Madison Small include a program for *Steal Away* (1984) and a last will and testament (1942). Mildred Margarite Williams's files primarily concern her music career and consist of programs for organ recitals at Sharon Baptist Church, among other churches. Her files also include a scrapbook containing programs, snapshots, and a guest list for the tribute held at Sharon Baptist Church where Virginia Seminary and College conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Sacred Music (1987).

The bulk of the papers belong to the Saunders; most notably are travel logs (1955-1970) maintained by Edith, which document her vacations to various regions of the United States, Canada, and Bermuda, often accompanied by her cousin, Mildred M. Williams. Furthermore, there are documents relating to real estate; in particular, there is a legal brief regarding a restrictive racial covenant, which forbade blacks from living on a title of land in Baltimore. Frank and Edith Saunders filed a suit and won their appeal to live on the property. Additionally, materials relating to Frank Saunders include his letters (1917-1918) to Edith prior to their marriage; the letters discuss their relationship and his medical examinations at Howard University, and include two printed items related to the Black National Medical Association's convention in 1955.

There is a small amount of materials pertaining to the Falcon Rod and Gun Club, whose purpose was "to help the members of the Falcon Rod and Gun Club morally, financially, and socially". Records for the Auxiliary, for which Edith and Frank Saunders were active members, encompass minutes, correspondence, and printed matter.

There are a small number of documents for a few family members not described above. In addition,

there are obituaries for non-family members containing abundant genealogical information (1950-1988), programs for music and non-music events at Sharon Baptist Church and other churches in Baltimore, and printed material on black history in Baltimore.

Arrangement: The Leila Danette Madison Small family papers have been organized according to the family's genealogy.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American choral conductors
African American church musicians
African American churches
African American women musicians
African Americans -- Families

Geographic Names

Baltimore (Md.)

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Wills

Names

Sharon Baptist Church (Baltimore, Md.)
Small, Leila Danette-Madison, 1909-2012

Container List

- b. 1 Certificates 1909-1976
- b. 2 f. 1 Items found in family Bible 1889-1913
- b. 2 f. 2 Family life insurance policies 1912-1975
- b. 2 f. 3-4 Madison, Daniel J 1901-1970
Includes bank book, property deed documents, and estate.
Williams, Leila Madison 1912-1970
- b. 2 f. 5 Correspondence 1912-1966
- b. 2 f. 6 Scrapbook 1965
- b. 2 f. 7 Obituaries, estate, and burial 1927-1970
- b. 2 f. 8 Legal papers for land owned the Reese Family in Duval, Florida 1925-1943
- b. 2 f. 9 Deed for East Lewisville, Jacksonville, Florida 1964
- b. 2 f. 10 Last will and testament of Libbie O. Rogers (Leila Madison Williams's sister)
1944-1978
- b. 2 f. 11-12 Small, Leila Danette Madison 1942-1984
Includes last will and testament, correspondence, and program for *Steal Away*.
Williams, Mildred Margarite
- b. 2 f. 13 Correspondence, last will and testament, and obituaries 1942-1980
- b. 2 f. 14 Education, Catholic University of America 1954-1980
- b. 2 f. 15 Scrapbook
Includes tribute from the ceremony for her Honorary Doctorate of Sacred Music, Virginia Seminary and College of Lynchburg, VA, June 19, 1987.
Music programs
- b. 2 f. 16 1926-1985
- b. 2 f. 17 Baltimore and Washington, DC 1946-1987
- b. 2 f. 18 Williams, Jocelyn Coleman
Includes graduation program.
Saunders, Edith Margarite Macbeth 1915-1984
- b. 2 f. 19 Correspondence and address book 1915-1973
- b. 2 f. 20 Estate 1983-1984
- b. 2 f. 21 Power of attorney, last will and testament, and obituaries 1970-1983
- b. 2 f. 22 Legal documents regarding property 1946-1983
- b. 2 f. 23 Travel logs 1955-1970
- b. 2 f. 24 Membership cards and plaque 1959-1976
- b. 2 f. 25 Phi Beta Sigma fraternity programs 1969
Includes Mildred Margarite Williams.
- b. 2 f. 26 Last will and testament of Lilla May 1929
Possibly from the Saunders clan, but no last name provided.
Saunders, Frank 1913-1974
- b. 2 f. 27 Personal documents 1917-1951
- b. 2 f. 28 Death (correspondence, programs, etc.)
- b. 2 f. 30 Courtship letters to Edith Margarite Macbeth 1917-1918
- b. 2 f. 31-33 Plaques 1956-1966

Saunders, Frank and Edith 1920-1986

- b. 2 f. 34 Marriage certificate and household expenses 1920-1974
- b. 2 f. 35-36 Legal documents regarding property and estate 1929-1970
- b. 2 f. 37 Legal documents regarding racial restriction covenant involving Saunders property in Maryland 1948-1952
- b. 2 f. 38 Family obituaries 1967-1983
Falcon Rod and Gun Club Auxiliary 1950-1986
- b. 3 f. 1-2 Minutes 1957-1968
- b. 3 f. 3-4 Correspondence 1950-1986
- b. 3 f. 5 Notes 1964
- b. 3 f. 6 Newsletter 1956
- b. 3 f. 7 Printed matter 1952-1965

Sharon Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland 1935-1987

- b. 3 f. 8-9 History 1935-1987
- b. 3 f. 10 Printed matter
- b. 3 f. 11-12 Other Baltimore churches, programs and invitations 1966-1986

Baltimore

- b. 3 f. 13 Programs (non-music and non-church) 1970-1987
Obituaries (non-family)
 - b. 3 f. 14 1950-1982
 - b. 3 f. 15 1983-1985
 - b. 3 f. 16 1985-1988
- b. 3 f. 17 Printed matter on personalities 1971-1980
- b. 3 f. 18 News clippings on blacks 1950-1987