

WILHELMINA F. ADAMS

PAPERS

The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research  
in Black Culture  
515 Malcolm X Boulevard  
New York, New York 10037

## PREFACE

This inventory is one of several prepared as a part of the archival preservation program at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a research division of The New York Public Library.

The Schomburg archival preservation program involves the organization and preservation of primary source material held by the Center and of significance to the study of the Black experience. It furthermore includes the preparation of detailed inventories of these records, making the information contained therein accessible as well as available to scholars.

The necessary staff and supplies for this program were made available through a combination of Library, National Endowment for the Humanities grant, and State of New York grant funds.

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ADAMS, WILHELMINA F. (c1900-198 ). PAPERS, 1914-1963.  
5 boxes, 22 lin. ft.

### Biography

Wilhelmina Ferris Adams, a native Floridian, came to New York City around 1900 when she was three months old. She was educated in the public schools and attended Hunter College.

"Willy" as her friends liked to call her, was considered to be a very beautiful woman. In 1924, she was crowned Queen of the Hotel Tattler's Ball and Beauty Pageant.

Her fund raising talents surfaced around the early 1920's when she served as Vice-President of the Utopia Neighborhood Club for several years and helped to raise the down payment on the Utopia House for underprivileged children. Concerned with Harlem's "forgotten aged," Miss Adams organized the Aeolian Ladies of Charity, Inc. in 1930. Around the same time, she succeeded in bringing Guy Lombardo, world renowned orchestra leader, to Harlem's Savoy Ballroom. She was also chairman of the Finance Committee of the Gibson Committee Relief Fund, which functioned before the advent of public welfare. In that capacity, she became the first black woman permitted the use of a booth in the main arcade of Grand Central Station, a privilege usually reserved solely for the use of Red Cross and American Legion representatives.

During her lifetime, Wilhelmina Adams pursued a number of careers. In 1927 she worked as a fashion expert and interior decorator for D. I. Hess and Company. She was also a florist and over the years operated several shops in various sections of Harlem including West 110th St., West 135th St., and 1925 Seventh Avenue.

For eight years, she worked as a supervisor in the Department of Welfare, resigning in February 1939. A few weeks later she became a Democratic candidate for the Co-Leadership of the 17th Assembly District because she felt that she could best help the black community through political speaking and organizing. In 1939 she was elected Co-Leader of the 14th Assembly District (formerly the 17th A.D., West Side), a post she held for five years. Her political achievements included chairmanship of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Convention and Co-Leadership of the 14th A.D. She also became the first woman to be appointed to the Law Committee of Tammany Hall, although she was not a lawyer. In July 1944, she was the first black woman to be appointed as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Wilhelmina Adams was also one of the organizers of the New York Urban League and worked closely with its first Executive Director, James Hubert.

Several organizations such as the Negro Actors Guild, Inc.;

### Biography

Prince Hall, Chapter #27, Order of the Eastern Star; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and The National Council of Negro Women claimed her as a member. She attended Abyssinian Baptist Church and was an avid supporter of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and the politics of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Wilhelmina Adams never married. She passed away in 1987.

### Scope and Content Note

The Wilhelmina F. Adams Papers (1914-1963) reflect primarily her participation in the various organizations of which she was a member. Little information concerning her personal life is included in the collection. The papers consist of correspondence, invitations, programs, printed material and newspaper clippings, which are arranged into two series: PERSONAL PAPERS and an ORGANIZATIONAL FILE.

PERSONAL PAPERS, 1921-1962, consist of incoming and outgoing correspondence as well as invitations and many miscellaneous programs. A scrapbook and newspaper clippings contain the majority of the biographical data in the collection.

The ORGANIZATIONAL FILE, 1914-1963, pertains to Wilhelmina Adams' activities within eleven social, political and civic groups in New York, including the Aeolian Ladies of Charity, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Council of Negro Women. This series has been arranged alphabetically by organization name. Material on each organization ranges in date and may include correspondence, minute books, press releases, invitations, programs, printed material and newspaper clippings in that order. Each file does not contain every type of material.

The Aeolian Ladies of Charity, Inc., 1930-1955, first called "Wee Pals," was organized and founded by Miss Adams to assist the aged at Christmas and other seasons of the year.

The Democratic Club file (1935-1963) represents Miss Adams' various activities and offices held within the Democratic Party such as Co-Leadership of the 17th Assembly District (redesignated the 14th A.D., West Side), delegate to the National Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1944 and member of the Women's Division of the Democratic State Committee, Executive Committee of the Democratic State Convention and the New Deal Democratic Club (14th A.D.).

Scope and Content

Friends of Northside, 1949-1950, were a group of individuals in the Harlem community responsible for raising funds for support of the Northside Center for Child Development, a child guidance center founded by the psychologists, Kenneth and Mamie Clark, to deal with the emotional problems of children and adolescents to prevent delinquency and maladjustment.

The Harlem Cooperating Committee on Relief and Unemployment, 1931, gave a "Charity Ball" for the benefit of the relief work that was done by this committee for the unemployed of Harlem.

The Nannie Burroughs Philanthropic Club, 1930-1931, was named after Nannie Helen Burroughs who played an important role as the first president in founding the National Training School for Girls in Washington, D. C. in 1909.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People file, 1927-1963, pertains to Wilhelmina Adams' activity in various capacities with the New York branch as chairman of the branch and member of the Women's Auxiliary, Executive Committee and Entertainment Committee.

The National Committee for the American Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Liberia, 1947, covers the July 26, 1947 ceremony held in Washington, D. C. in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Liberia,

The National Council of Negro Women file, 1927-1960, spotlights Wilhelmina Adams in many roles: as a member of the Committee of Friends-Hazel Scott Benefit Concert, President of the Manhattan Council of NCNW, 1952-1954, NCNW representative to the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing and numerous other projects aimed at implementation of the eleven point program of the NCNW.

The New York State Committee on Discrimination in Housing, 1951-1958, included the Commission on Intergroup Relations, the Joint Committee of the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, the Commission on Human Relations (Philadelphia) and other organizations concerned with ending discrimination in housing.

The New York World's Fair Committee of Negro Women, 1938, operating under the sponsorship of the Business and Professional Women's Club, Inc., represented more than forty New York women's organizations concerned with the participation and employment of blacks in the New York World's Fair activities of 1939.

Scope and Content

The Utopia Neighborhood Club, Inc., 1919-1935, was concerned with the welfare of small children who were often left alone. Their Utopia House served as a day nursery center.

Provenance

Presented by Wilhelmina F. Adams between 1968-1972.  
SCM78-23

S. M. Howard/S. E. Davis  
9 May 1979

Container List

Box      Folder

PERSONAL PAPERS

		Correspondence
1	1	1922-1940
	2	1941-1959
	3	Invitations
		1921-1959
		Programs
	4	1925-1940
2	1	1941-1949
		1950-1958
		1959-1962
		Clippings, 1924-1958

ORGANIZATIONAL FILE

    Aeolian Ladies of Charity, Inc.  
    Correspondence - Printed  
    Material, 1930-1955 Minute Books

3	1	1930
	2	1931-1938
		Democratic Club
	3	Correspondence, 1939-1963
	4	Press Releases and Lists, n.d.
	5	Invitations, 1940-1959
		Programs, 1940-1951
	6	Printed Material and Clippings, 1935-1941
4	1	Friends of the Northside Center 1949-1950
	2	Harlem Cooperating Committee on Relief and Unemployment, 1931
	3	Nannie H. Burroughs Philanthropic Club, 1930-1931
		National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
	4	Correspondence, 1927-1959
		Invitations, 1932-1959
	5	Program, 1929-1963
		Printed Material and Clippings, 1914-1960
	6	National Committee for the American Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Liberia, 1947
	7	National Council of Negro Women Correspondence, 1943-1958 Invitations, 1927-1960

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
		ORGANIZATIONAL FILE
4	7	National Council of Negro Women Programs, 1942-1960
5	1	Printed Material, 1949-1960
		N.Y.State Committee on Discrimination in Housing
	2	Correspondence, 1954-1958 Printed Material, 1951-1958
	3	N.Y. World's Fair Committee of Negro Women, 1938
	4	Utopia Neighborhood Club, 1919-1935

SEPARATION RECORD

The following items were removed from the Wilhelmina F. Adams Papers, accession number SCM78-23, and have been sent to the division or section indicated, either to be retained or disposed of there. Any items that should receive special disposition are clearly marked.

Schomburg Library: (Books, pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers, government publications).

See attached list

Art and Artifacts

Schomburg Iconographic Collection: (Photographs, prints, film strips, broadsides, circulars, printed ads, motion picture film, and trade catalogs as well as unprocessed tapes and phonodiscs)

Sheet music: WE ARE AMERICANS, TOO, words and music by: Andy Razaf, Eubie Blake and Charles L. Cooke

See also attached list

Separation Record continued

Periodicals

Alabama, 1953, March 10

The Arts Quarterly (Dillard Univ.), 1937, October-December

The Democratic Digest, 1950, February

Ebony, 1953, February

Jet 1955, August 11

National Association of Colored Womens Clubs, Inc., 1960, July and 1961, Fall-Winter

Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life, 1928, December

Responsibility (National Association of Negro Business & Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.), 1953, Spring; 1957, Spring; 1962, Spring

The Voice, 1962, May

Pamphlets/Books

Historic Sites of New York State

This Is New York State

Your Business: A Handbook of Management Aids for the New York Businessman

372nd Infantry, 1944

Newspapers

The Advance, 1926, August 14; 1929, March 9; 1930, October 11; 1932, July 16; 1932, August 20; 1932, July 23

The Inter-State Tattler, 1931, May 7; 1930, August 1; 1932, June 16, pp 3,4,9,10

The Handy News, Vol. 9, 1955 [?]

Photographs

Bert Williams-autographed, "Sincerely your friend...."Bert Williams to Tom"

1. Alone-WFA (includes one original, one copy and one negative)
2. WFA and others (includes one original, one copy and one negative)
3. WFA and Family (includes one original, one copy and one negative)
4. WFA and another woman behind poster of F.D. Roosevelt
5. Woman-unidentified, 1930's [?]
6. Ethel Waters-signed, "Sincerely, Ethel Waters"
7. WFA-white coat
8. Boy-smiling (damaged)
9. Utopia Neighborhood Club, 1923, January 14

Separation Record continued

10. Twenty-fifth anniversary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1934, March 13
11. Testimonial dinner tendered to Gov. Herbert H. Lehman, the Waldorf Astoria, N. Y., 1943, January 9
12. Grand St. Boys Party to Justice Francis E. Rivers, 1943, December 18
13. Testimonial dinner in honor of the Hon. James W. Johnson, sponsored by the Reveille Club of New York, Hotel Roosevelt, 1944, May 27
14. Testimonial dinner given to Wilhelmina Adams, Woodstock Hotel, 1944, July 7
15. Birthday Testimonial dinner in honor of William Christopher Handy, under the auspices of Negro Actors Guild of America, 1944, November 19
16. The Democratic County Committee of New York County Roosevelt-Truman-Wagner victory dinner, Hotel Commodore, 1945, February
17. Thirtieth award to Paul Robeson, The National Association for Advancement of Colored People, Hotel Biltmore, 1945, October 18
18. Testimonial dinner tendered to Ethel Waters, Park Sheraton, 1950, October 29
19. Citizens Planning Council, dinner in honor of Mrs. Edith Sampson, 1950, October
20. Fourth Annual Conference of the National Council of Negro Women, Y.M.C.A., Newark, N. J., 1952, March
21. National Council of Negro Women, n.d.
22. Same as above.
23. Banquet, New York Club, The National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc., 1953, June 5
24. Testimonial honoring Silas Frazier Taylor, Sheraton Plaza Hotel, Boston, Massachusetts, 1956, December 18
25. Utility Club, Waldorf Astoria, 1957, June 15