



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

Guide to the

**Vulcan Society collection**

1898 - 1994 [bulk 1960 - 1990]

Sc MG 467

## Summary

**Creator:** New York (N.Y.). Fire Department. Vulcan Society

**Title:** Vulcan Society collection

**Date:** 1898 - 1994 [bulk 1960 - 1990]

**Size:** .75 linear feet (2 1/2 archival boxes)

**Source:** Gift of Robert O. Lowery and Julius W. Vincent in 1993 and 1997.

**Abstract:** The Vulcan Society is a fraternal organization of black fire fighters employed by the NYCFD. Included are files kept by Robert O. Lowery, the first black New York City Fire Department commissioner and president of the Society for several years, and his successor, Vincent Julius.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. To request access to materials in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, please visit: [http://archives.nypl.org/scm/request\\_access](http://archives.nypl.org/scm/request_access)

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Vulcan Society collection, Sc MG 467, 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 P. Williams in May 1998.

### Related Materials:

Related collections also located at Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture: Wesley Williams papers and the International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters papers.

## Creator History

The Vulcan Society is a fraternal organization of black fire fighters employed by the New York City Fire Department (NYCFD). It was founded in 1940 by the late Battalion Chief Wesley Williams, who was also instrumental in establishing the Guardians, a fraternal organization of black policemen in the New York City Police Department. Initially formed for comradeship and to eliminate and monitor discrimination within the NYCFD, the Society also provides education and training for individuals interested in careers as fire fighters, and financial aid to its members and members' children who attend institutions of higher education. In addition, the Society provides moral support and raises funds for other black organizations.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The bulk of the Vulcan Society collection (1961-1994) consists of minutes, correspondence, newsletters, souvenir journals, news clippings, and other printed material. Included are files kept by Robert O. Lowery, the first black New York City Fire Department commissioner and president of the Society for several years, and his successor, Vincent Julius. Julius's files contain information on a 1986 lawsuit brought by the Vulcan Society on behalf of present and future black fire fighters against the NYCFD in order to redress employment discrimination based on race. His files also contain his comments on the suit, correspondence, and a chronology of the Society.

Additionally, there is documentation and biographical information on pioneer black fire fighters in a diary-type volume (1898-1899) kept by William H. Nicholson, the first black fire fighter employed by the NYCFD. This volume lists routine activities in a fire station. This collection also contains biographical information on Wesley Williams, the first black battalion chief. Finally, the collection contains tributes and correspondence regarding Vulcan Society activities and involvement in the community, and printed material issued by the NYCFD.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American fire fighters  
African American fire fighters -- New York (State) -- New York -- Societies, etc  
African Americans -- Employment -- New York (State) -- New York  
Associations, institutions, etc -- African American membership  
Associations, institutions, etc -- United States  
Discrimination in employment  
Fire fighters -- Employment -- New York (State) -- New York  
Fire fighters -- Employment -- United States

### **Names**

Julius, Vincent W.  
Lowery, Robert O. (Robert Oliver), 1916-  
Williams, Wesley A., 1896-1984  
New York (N.Y.). Fire Department  
New York (N.Y.). Fire Department. Vulcan Society

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Wesley Williams, founder 1944 - 1990
  - Officers and Directors
  - Robert O. Lowery
- b. 1 f. 2-3 Printed matter 1962 - 1972
- b. 1 f. 4 Press releases 1963 - 1977
- b. 1 f. 5 Recommendation letters 1965
- b. 1 f. 6 Correspondence 1966 - 1989
- b. 1 f. 7 Dinner dance honoree 1968
  - Vincent W. Julius
- b. 1 f. 8-10 Correspondence 1965 - 1977
- b. 1 f. 11 Suit and chronology
- b. 1 f. 12 David J. Floyd 1986
- b. 1 f. 13 Elbert Washington 1988
  - Official documents
  - b. 1 f. 14 By-laws undated
  - b. 1 f. 15 Constitution 1959 - 1975
  - b. 1 f. 16 Executive Board/Trustees minutes 1966 - 1969
  - b. 1 f. 17 Minutes 1969 - 1970
  - b. 1 f. 18 Annual audits and reports 1966 - 1967
  - b. 1 f. 19 Vulcan Society vs. New York City
  - Membership activities
- b. 1 f. 20-21 Correspondence 1959 - 1990
  - b. 2 f. 1 Monthly expenses 1966 - 1969
  - b. 2 f. 2 Scholarship fund 1961 - 1966
  - b. 2 f. 3 Joint Committee on Human Relations 1967 - 1968
    - Includes minutes and correspondence.
  - b. 2 f. 4 Death benefit fund 1964 - 1968
  - b. 2 f. 5 Vulcan News press releases 1969 - 1993
  - Events
- b. 2 f. 6-7 Anniversary/testimonial dinner dance journals 1965 - 1985
- b. 2 f. 8 Memorial Scholarship dinner dance journal 1990
  - Community relations
  - b. 2 f. 9 Correspondence 1967 - 1968
  - b. 2 f. 10 Afro-American Civil Service Employees, Inc 1966
  - b. 2 f. 11 369th Veterans Association 1966 - 1968
  - b. 2 f. 12 The Federation of Negro Civil Service Organizations, Inc 1969 - 1970
  - b. 2 f. 13 Recruitment and training program for NYC firefighters 1970 - 1991
  - Printed matter
  - b. 2 f. 14 Vulcan Society, Lowery 1961 - 1977
  - b. 2 f. 15 Augustus A. Beekman 1977 - 1978

Printed matter (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 16 Charles Hunt, Jr 1977  
New York City firefighters
- b. 3 f. 1 William H. Nicholson's diary 1898 - 1899
- b. 3 f. 2 Black history 1898 - 1989  
Fire Department of New York City
- b. 3 f. 3 Correspondence 1919 - 1991
- b. 3 f. 4 Press release 1966
- b. 3 f. 5 Newspaper clippings on female firefighters 1986