



Austin Seminary Archives, Stitt Library

AMES (JESSIE DANIEL) ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN WOMEN FOR THE PREVENTION OF LYNCHING COLLECTION, 1930-1944

Descriptive Summary

Title: Jessie Daniel Ames Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching collection

Dates: 1930-1944

Accession Number(s): 2014-005

Extent: 2 inches

Language: Materials are written in English.

Biographical Note:

Thomas White Currie (1879-1943) received his B.D. from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 1911, and served as president of the Seminary from 1922 until his death in 1943. He also served on the board of the historically black Tillotson College in Austin (now known as Huston-Tillotson University) and was an advocate for equal opportunities for African American students in higher education. Part of this advocacy involved leading a group that successfully lobbied for Texas to pay for African American students to pursue professional degrees at universities in other states, since at that time Texas universities were segregated. In 1941, the campaign was written up in the Texas Issue of the *Southern Frontier*, a quarterly publication of the Atlanta-based Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC).

The CIC was founded in 1919 in Atlanta to oppose racial violence and abuse, primarily through education. Born out of post-World War I racial tensions, the Commission's membership included blacks and whites. It comprised state branches throughout the south, as well as local councils in many cities. The CIC was moderate, valuing education over action, but effectively organized southerners who wanted to end lynching and other violent crimes against African Americans. The CIC and its local councils regularly held conferences to discuss the state of race relations. In addition to the *Southern Frontier*, it published a great deal of educational material. In 1944, many people felt the CIC's methods were outdated, and the Southern Regional Council was formed in its place.

Jessie Daniel Ames (1883-1979), a friend of Currie's, was prominently involved with the CIC. She was originally a resident of Georgetown, TX, where she raised three children after the death of her husband in 1914. Ames founded the Texas League of

Women's Voters in 1919, and became the director of the Texas branch of the CIC in 1924. In 1929, Ames moved from Texas to Atlanta, Georgia to become the national director of the CIC's Committee of Women's Work. She began the publication of the *Southern Frontier*, and edited many of its issues.

In 1930, in Atlanta, Ames founded the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL). The CIC and the ASWPL were not formally connected, but the ASWPL received a great deal of support from the CIC, including financial support at the time of its founding. The ASWPL was designed to prevent lynching by collecting information about its causes and informing and educating southerners about the facts surrounding actual lynchings. The founders of ASWPL, including Ames, saw that communities commonly justified lynching as retribution for violence against white women. They concluded that as white women, they would be instrumental in ending lynching (and were morally called to action).

The ASWPL consisted of a main branch in Atlanta, which Ames directed. There were fifteen other independent councils located in southern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

These branches reached out to women's associations and churches in their states, asking them to participate and work within their own communities to change public opinion about lynching. Often, these women's associations and church groups had education programs already in place, and ASWPL representatives from the communities would give presentations about lynching. They then collected pledges against lynching, first from the women of these groups, and then from administrators such as sheriffs. The goal was for enough people to pledge their support that in a circumstance that might result in a lynching (for example, the arrest of a black man), people in power would actively prevent a killing.

Should a lynching occur, women from the ASWPL investigated it. They used their local connections to collect detailed information about the victims, suspected perpetrators, their relationship to each other, the crime the victim was accused of, as well as information about the lynching itself. In addition to using this information in its educational presentations, the ASWPL published information about lynchings in the south in news sources, pamphlets, bulletins, and publications such as the *Southern Frontier*.

Scope and Contents:

The collection consists of two inches of material, comprising one photograph, one news clipping, typewritten notes, and multiple publications including pamphlets, bulletins, and reports. Aside from the *Southern Frontier*, this material came to the seminary in 1964. At that time, Nancy Braun, a librarian at the Austin Presbyterian

Theological Seminary, found Thomas White Currie's issues of the *Southern Frontier* while sorting through his papers. She wrote to Ames requesting information about the publication and a full set of issues. Ames replied that the only remaining copies of the *Southern Frontier* were at the Library of Congress, but she could give the Seminary duplicates of material related to the ASWPL as well as material from the CIC. She had recently donated all of the original material to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The collection is divided into two series: Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (1930-1944), and Commission on Interracial Cooperation (1940-1943). The first series contains publications (including news reports) about the ASWPL or about lynching in general. It includes educational material published by the ASWPL, and conference notes from the formation of the association. Additionally, the first series contains case files about specific lynchings throughout the south. These contain specific information about killings, some of which a reader might find disturbing.

The second series contains material published by the CIC, as well as typewritten conference notes and membership lists. It should be noted that since the two organizations were informally connected, there is crossover between the series—material published by the CIC but about the ASWPL is found in the first series.

Material in this collection contains language that is offensive, derogatory, outdated, and/or disrespectful. While we have preserved the original titles of materials in the contents list of this finding aid, the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary does not endorse this language.

Processing Information:

Processed by Jane Field, student in the School of Information at The University of Texas at Austin, Fall 2014.

Related Collections

Jessie Daniel Ames Papers #3686, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Jessie Daniel Ames papers. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

Restrictions:

Materials are available by appointment only. Contact the archivist for details.

Index Terms:

Ames, Jessie Daniel, 1883-1972.

Currie, Thomas White, 1879-1943.
Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching.
Commission on Interracial Cooperation.
Georgia Committee on Interracial Cooperation.
Civil rights.
Human rights.
Lynching.

Preferred Citation: Jessie Daniel Ames Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching collection, 1930-1944, Austin Seminary Archives, Stitt Library, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Inventory:

<u>Box</u>	<u>Contents</u>
E039	<p>Series 1: Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, 1930-1944</p> <p>Subseries 1: ASWPL administrative documents: Conference notes and case files, 1930-1935 Report on alleged lynchings, 1930-1944</p> <p>Subseries 2: Educational material: bulletins, pamphlets, and leaflets: Annual Bulletin of ASWPL, 1933 "Southern Women and Lynching," 1936 "With Quietness They Work: Report of the Activities of Southern Women in Education Against Lynching During 1937," 1938 "Ladies and Lynching," 1939 "The Changing Character of Lynching, 1931-1941," 1942</p> <p>Series 2: Commission on Interracial Cooperation, 1938-1943</p> <p>Subseries 1: Conference and committee notes: Georgia Committee of the CIC, 1938 Pamphlet, "Publications of the CIC," 1942 "Conference of White Southerners on Statement Issued By Southern Negroes," 1942-1943</p> <p>Subseries 2: Periodicals: <i>The Southern Frontier</i>, 1940-1941 <i>The Georgia Observer</i>, 1941-1942</p> <p>Subseries 3: Educational material: pamphlets and leaflets: "Summary of Findings Concerning Negro Life," 1940 "Repairers of the Breach: A Story of Interracial</p>

Cooperation Between Southern Women," 1940
"Democratic Processes at Work in the South," 1941
"Brothers In Black," 1941
"Negro Homicides and Their Causes," 1941
Analysis, Federal Aid to Publication Act, 1941
"Community Programs in Relation to Defense and
Morale," 1942
"Interracial Leadership in this Time of Crisis," 1942
"Supreme Court Decisions Affecting Southern
Customs," 1942
"What About It?: Series Studies for Local Interracial
Committees," 1942
Reprinted news article, Louisville Courier-Journal,
1942

Subseries 4: Formation of the Southern Regional Council:
Atlanta, Durham, Richmond: Committee
statements, 1942-1943
Reprint from *Southern Frontier*, 1943