MS-322

James H. McGee Papers

Wright State University
Special Collections and Archives

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Introduction

The James Howell McGee Papers contain materials which document his life and his dedication to community development and civil rights. As an African American Politician and the first black mayor of Dayton, his political contributions to civil rights during the 1960s and 1970s are of major importance. In addition to the political documents, this collection contains speeches and records of his involvement with civil rights and social organizations. This collection also preserved documentation of his domestic and foreign travels, mostly professional.

The James H. McGee Papers consist of 11 boxes and 5.5 linear feet. The dates of the papers range from the late 1920s to 1995. The papers were donated to Special Collections and Archives at Wright State University by his daughters Frances E. McGee-Cromartie and E. Annette McGee-Wright on November 6, 2003. There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

Series List

Series I	Personal Papers and Law Career
Series II	Political Life
Series III	Speeches
Series IV	Organizations (Political and Civil Rights)
Series V	Civil Rights Issues

Biographical Sketch

James Howell McGee (1930-) was born in West Virginia and spent his developmental years in Steubenville, Ohio. He received his undergraduate degree from Wilberforce University and his law degree from Ohio State University in 1948. Upon graduation, McGee practiced law in the Miami Valley and became involved in Dayton city politics. He then became assistant to Congressman Rodney M. Love in the War on Poverty in 1966.

McGee served as Dayton City Commissioner beginning in 1967, following an appointment to complete the unfinished term of Don Crawford who went on to become the city's clerk. In 1970, he was appointed to Mayor after Dave Hall retired from the position due to illness. McGee was later elected to this position in 1973, and re-elected in 1977 serving until 1982. During his tenure as Mayor, McGee greatly improved the well being of the city and testified before Congress on behalf of Dayton. He traveled extensively throughout the US and abroad, on behalf of both political and civil organizations.

McGee was a member of various organizations including the Masons, NAACP, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, National League of Cities, Sister Cities International, and the National Bar Association.

McGee was married to Elizabeth McCracken and had two daughters, Annette McGee-Wright and Frances E. McGee-Cromartie, who both reside in the Dayton area.

Scope and Content Note

Series I (Box 1) Personal Papers and Law Career

This series contains personal documents such as photographs, poetry, invitations, and memorial service cards. Included are memorial speeches written by McGee, and other biography sketches about important figures in politics. Of major importance is a school paper done by McGee titled *The Negro Wage Earner and His Home Conditions*, which earned him a grade of B.

Series II (Box 2-5) Political Life

This series contains documents spanning from McGee's appointment as assistant to Congressman Rodney M. Love in 1966 through his terms as City Commissioner (1967-1970) and Mayor (1970-1982). This series is broken down into four subseries: Subseries A- Early politics and City Commissioner of Dayton, Subseries B- Mayor of Dayton, Subseries C- Political Travels, and Subseries D- Political Correspondence. Included within this series are his duties, travels, speeches, and correspondence. *The researcher should know that within the correspondence box (Box 5) some of the constituent correspondences are very racist and contain vulgar language.*

Series III (Box 6-7) Speeches

This series contains speeches given by McGee throughout his life. Although most of these are political in nature, some other topics include civil rights and religion. *Note to*

the researcher that within this series also are correspondence and programs relating to the speeches.

Series IV (Box 8-10) Organizations (Political and Civil Rights)

This series contains documents about McGee's involvement in different social and political organizations. The series is broken down into two subseries: Subseries A- Civil Rights Organizations and Subseries B- Political Organizations. These organizations include NAACP, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, Masons, Sister Cities International, and National League of Cities.

Series V (Box 11) Civil Rights Issues

This series contains documents spanning from the 1950s through the 1990s. Issues include equal employment, poverty, housing, segregation, and civil suits. McGee played a vital role in speaking and promoting community activism regarding these issues. His political placement made him an important person to advocate and fight conditions and unfair laws that many blacks and minorities face. This series along with the civil rights organizations found in Series IV are of major significance to this collection as a representation of African American life in Dayton during the second half of the twentieth century.

Box and File Listing

Series I		**Personal Papers and Law Career**	
Box	File	Description	Date
1	1	Early Photographs	1929-1943
	2	Poetry	Undated
	3	Personal Invitations, Cards, Announcements, ect.	1931-1992
	4	Memorial Speeches and Cards	1954-1992
	5	Church Materials	1960-1985
	6	Wedding Ceremony Forms	1974
	7	Pamphlets and Programs	1970's, Undated
	8	Biography Sketches by McGee	Undated
	9	School Paper by McGee—*The Negro Wage and His Home Conditions*	Undated
	10	Early Law Career	1950's
Series II		**Political Life**	
Subseries A		**Early Politics and City Commissioner of Dayton**	
Box	File	Description	Date
2	1	Appointment to Special Assistant to Congressman Love	1966
	2	Congressman Rodney M. Love	1966
	3	Social Programs in War on Poverty	1966
	4	City Commissioners Duties	1967-1970
	5	Election/ Re-election Materials	1967-1969
Subseries B		**Mayor of Dayton**	
Box	File	Description	Date
3	1	Mayoral Duties	1970-1982
	2	Mayor Prayer Breakfasts	1970-1980
	3	Re-election Materials	1973-1976
	4	Re-election	1977-1979
	5	Petition for Mayor	1977
	6	Dayton Convention Center Opening	1971
	7	Judge Alcee Hastings	1987-1988

Subseries C		**Political Travels**	
Box	File	Description	Date
4	1	Tanglewood Planning Conference, North Carolina	Nov. 1976
	2	USC, Philadelphia	May 1977
	3	Naval War College, Rhode Island	Jun. 1977
	4	Nimitz Cruise, Virginia	Sep. 1977
	5	Planning Conference, North Carolina	Nov. 1977
	6	Public Affairs Forum, St. Louis	Nov. 1977
	7	Conference of Mayors (several locations)	1978
	8	National Payer Breakfast, Washington D.C.	Feb. 1978
	9	USC, Chicago	Apr. 1978
	10	Urban Policy Legislation, Washington D.C.	Oct. 1978
	11	Conference of Mayors (several locations)	1979
	12	Department of Transportation Meeting, Washington D.C.	Feb. 1979
	13	Urban Renewal, Washington D.C.	May 1979
	14	Masonic Group Meeting, Toronto	May 1979
	15	Conference of Mayors (several locations)	1980
	16	HUD Forum, Atlanta	Jan. 1980
	17	Ohio Municipal League, Columbus	Sep. 1980
	18	National Community Partnership Week, Minneapolis	Oct. 1980
	19	Municipal Bond Research Department, New York	Nov. 1980
	20	Legislative Action Committee, Chicago	Nov. 1980
	21	Conference of Mayors (several locations)	1981
	22	Legislative Action Committee, Chicago	Jan. 1981
	23	Legislative Action Committee, Washington D.C.	Jan. 1981
	24	International Union of Local Authorities, Columbus	Jun. 1981
	25	Ohio Municipal Conference, Cincinnati	Sep. 1981
	26	Democratic Gala, Washington D.C.	Sep.-Oct. 1981
	27	Liberia	Nov. 1981
	28	Mayor Leadership Graduate Institute, San Juan	Feb. 1977
	29	US Conference of Mayors, Taiwan	Nov. 1978
	30	European Travels	1970-1980
Subseries D		**Political Correspondence**	
Note to researcher: Some correspondence in Box 5 contains racist language			
Box	File	Description	Date
5	1	Correspondence	1959-1966
	2	Correspondence	1968

	3	Correspondence	1969
	4	Correspondence	1970
	5	Correspondence	1971
	6	Correspondence	1972
	7	Correspondence	1973
	8	Correspondence	1974
	9	Correspondence	1975-1977
	10	Correspondence	1978
	11	Correspondence	1979
	12	Correspondence	1980
	13	Correspondence	1981-1982
	14	Correspondence	1983
	15	Correspondence	1985
	16	Correspondence	1986-1991
	17	Correspondence	Undated
Series III		**Speeches**	
Box	File	Description	Date
6	1	Speeches	1959-1968
	2	Speeches	1969-1970
	3	Speeches	1971-1972
	4	Speeches	1973
	5	Speeches	1974
	6	Speeches	1975-1976
	7	Speeches	1977
7	1	Speeches	1978
	2	Speeches	1979
	3	Speeches	1980
	4	Speeches	1981
	5	Speeches	1982-1983
	6	Speeches	1984-1995
	7	Speeches	Undated
Series IV		**Organizations**	
Subseries A		**Civil Rights Organizations**	
Box	File	Description	Date
8	1	Langston Hughes *Fight for Freedom: The Story of the NAACP*	c. 1962
	2	NAACP History and NAACP writings by McGee	Undated

	3	NAACP	1949
	4	NAACP	1953
	5	NAACP	1958
	6	NAACP Housing and Unfair Ordinance Case in Dayton	1963-1964
	7	NAACP	1965
	8	NAACP	1966
	9	NAACP	1967-1968
	10	NAACP	1973
	11	NAACP	Undated
9	1	Alpha Phi Alpha	1954-1983
	2	Masons	1965-1967
	3	Melissa Bess Day Care Center	1965-1976
Subseries B		**Political Organizations**	
Box	File	Description	Date
9	4	Democratic Voters League	1970-1980
	5	Sister Cities International	1973-1976
	6	Sister Cities International	1979
	7	Sister Cities International	1980
	8	Sister Cities International	1981
	9	Sister Cities International	1982
	10	Sister Cities International	1985, 1989
10	1	National League of Cities Movie Script	Undated
	2	National League of Cities	1973
	3	National League of Cities	1975
	4	National League of Cities	1977
	5	National League of Cities	1978
	6	National League of Cities	1979
	7	National League of Cities	1980
	8	National League of Cities	1981
Series V		**Civil Rights**	
Box	File	Description	Date
11	1	Guide to Negro History by State	Undated
	2	Articles about racism and black leadership	1950-1980
	3	Equal Employment	1953, 1986
	4	Civil Rights Act of 1964	1964
	5	Case Against Civil Rights Legislation	1964

	6	Housing Ordinance	1965-1969
	7	Civil Rights and Civil Right Legislation	1965-1969
	8	Housing Study and NAACP	1966
	9	War on Poverty	1966-1967
	10	Urban League	1969-1970
	11	Elimination of Ghettos and Poverty	1970
	12	Urban Development	1970’s
	13	Black History Month	981
	14	AFIT Black Awareness	1984
	15	Unfair Youngstown Ordinances	1985
	16	School Segregation	Undated
	17	Church Leadership	Undated
	18	Community Outreach	Undated
	19	Civil Suit Against Dayton	1991