

# Watkins Family Collection (AC53)

## *Introduction*

The Watkins Family Collection includes documents, photographs, and artifacts related to Theron B. Watkins, Olivia Watkins Shaw, Bruce R. Watkins, and Watkins Bros. Funeral Home.

## *Descriptive Summary*

Creator: Watkins Family  
Title: Watkins Family Collection  
Dates: 1936-1981  
Size: 0.3 linear feet, 1 box  
Collection Number: AC53

## *Donor Information*

Found in collection.

## *Citation Note*

Watkins Family Collection (AC53), Black Archives of Mid-America, Kansas City, Missouri.

## *Administrative Information*

Reproduction Restrictions: Unrestricted.  
Access Restrictions: Unrestricted.

## *Biographical Sketch*

Theron B. Watkins (1877-1950), businessman, civic leader, and philanthropist, opened Watkins Brothers Funeral Home with his brother J. T. Watkins in 1909. Upon marrying Oliva Riley, T. B. Watkins adopted the Riley children.

Bruce Riley Watkins (1924-1980) was a dedicated public servant to the people of Kansas City and Jackson County, Missouri. One of the founding members of Freedom, Inc., in 1962, Watkins was also one of the first African Americans elected to the City Council of Kansas City, Missouri, in 1963. Watkins served in numerous civic roles during his distinguished career. In 1979, Watkins became the first African American to run for mayor of Kansas City, narrowly losing to opponent Richard Berkley.

## *Scope and Content Note*

The collection consists of three series arranged by item type.

**Series 1: Textual Materials, 1944-1981**

This series consists of textual materials related to Watkins Bros. Funeral Home, the life and career of Bruce R. Watkins, and the Spirit of Freedom Fountain. The majority of materials in this series concern the Bruce R. Watkins' 1979 mayoral campaign, including campaign brochures, bumper stickers, flyers, and posters. Oversize bumper stickers have been withdrawn to oversize box 2; oversize posters have been withdrawn to map cabinet drawer 3.

**Series 2: Photographs, 1936-1980**

This series consists of photographs of Theron B. Watkins, Oliva Watkins Shaw, Bruce R. Watkins, and Watkins Bros. Funeral Home. A framed photograph of Bruce R. Watkins, ca. 1970s, is located at the back of the collection box.

**Series 3: Artifacts, 1979**

This series consists of artifacts, including a Watkins Bros. Funeral Home address book and Bruce R. Watkins mayoral campaign buttons.

***Collection Inventory*****Series 1: Textual Materials, 1944-1981**

- f. 1 Watkins Bros. Funeral Home advertisement and brochure, ca. 1950s
- f. 2 Watkins Bros. Funeral Home fans, n.d.
- f. 3 Bruce R. Watkins military training and service documents, 1944-1945
- f. 4 Bruce R. Watkins mayoral campaign brochures and flyers, 1979
- f. 5 Bruce R. Watkins mayoral campaign bumper stickers, 1979 (withdrawn to oversize box 2)
- f. 6 Bruce R. Watkins mayoral campaign correspondence, 1979
- f. 7 Bruce R. Watkins mayoral campaign event flyers, 1978-1979
- f. 8 Bruce R. Watkins mayoral campaign posters, 1979 (withdrawn to map cabinet drawer 3)
- f. 9 Tributes, 1980, n.d.
- f. 10 Bruce R. Watkins Foundation reservation card, 1981
- f. 11 Spirit of Freedom Fountain campaign materials, 1977-1981
- f. 12 Spirit of Freedom Fountain dedication, 1981

**Series 2: Photographs, 1936-1980**

- f. 13 Theron B. Watkins, 1936-1948, n.d.
- f. 14 Oliva Watkins Shaw, n.d.
- f. 15 Bruce R. Watkins, ca. 1944-1980
- f. 16 Watkins Bros. Funeral Home, n.d.

**Series 3: Artifacts, 1979**

- f. 17 Watkins Bros. Funeral Home address book, n.d.

f. 18 Bruce R. Watkins mayoral campaign buttons, 1979

**Processed by Michael Sweeney, Collection Librarian, May 2015.**