

Meek Family Collection (AC60)

Introduction:

The Meek Family Collection contains photographs, documents, and newspaper clippings related to Mrs. Meek's Mortuary, the American Legion Junior Baseball team "The Sparklers", sponsored and financed by Mrs. Meek, the Meek family, and the civic and social life of Mrs. Fannie Lowe Meek herself.

Descriptive Summary:

Creator: Meek Family
Title: Meek Family Collection
Date Range: 1934-1997
Bulk Dates: 1941-1975
Size: 1.75 linear feet (2 boxes)
Collection Number: AC60

Donor Information:

Donated by D'andrea A. Sprott, 2021

Citation Note:

Meek Family Collection (AC60), Black Archives of Mid-America, Kansas City, Missouri.

Administrative Information:

Reproduction Restrictions: Unrestricted.
Access Restrictions: Unrestricted.

Biographical Sketch:

Fannie L. Meek was born in Waverly Hill, Georgia, 1898, to Frank and Emma Lowe. Before her time in Kansas City, Meek studied botany under Dr. George Washington Carver at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. It is here that she first met Edward (E.W) Meek, an instructor in the printing department at Tuskegee. She then went on to teach industrial arts at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and at Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia. During her time in Virginia, Fannie renewed her acquaintance with Edward and they wed in July of 1923. The Meeks moved to Kansas City, Missouri where Edward opened the Quality Printing Company at 1710 E 18th St. Once in Kansas City, Fannie enrolled in the William's Institute of Embalming in Kansas City, Kansas, becoming the first woman to graduate from the program in 1935. Just a year or two later, she opened Mrs. Meek's Mortuary at 1707 E 18th St, across the street from her husband's printing shop. Fannie Meek gave birth to a daughter, Yolande, in 1925. In the mid-1950s, Mrs. Meek moved her mortuary from 1707 E 18th St to the northwest corner of

19th & Park Ave. Mrs. Meek was renowned in Kansas City for her signature pink aesthetic. The exterior of her mortuary as well as the mortuary's hearses were bright pink.

Beyond her career as a mortician, Fannie Meek was involved in many regional and national civic and church affairs. She was a lifelong member of the National Funeral Directors and Embalmers Association. She was active with the Kansas City Urban League, the NAACP, the National Business League, the National Council of Negro Women, the YMCA, the United Negro College Fund, the National Conference of Christian and Jews, and the Calanthe Court of the Eastern Star. She was a board member and fundraiser for the Wheatley-Provident hospital. Fannie Meek was the first woman to become president of the Local Funeral Directors Association and, in 1954, became the president of the Missouri State Funeral Directors Embalming Association. In the 1960s, Meek sponsored an American Legion summer baseball team, the Sparklers. Adorned with 'Mrs. Meek's Mortuary' across their jerseys, the team enabled many young men to gain scholarships for a college education and further their careers in baseball.

Mrs. Meek passed away peacefully on July 30, 1979. She was 81 years old.

Scope and Content Note:

Series 1: Newspaper Clippings, n.d – 1997

This series consists of clippings from various newspaper outlets. The clippings feature a posthumous 1997 profile of Fannie L. Meek in the Kansas City Call, a photo printed in a newspaper of Yolande and Fannie Meek, and various profiles concerning Yolande Meek and James T. Spratt's marriage and life.

Series 2: Photographs, 1960-1972, n.d.

This series consists of various photographs of the Meek family's endeavors. Many of the photos are undated and the condition of the photographs scale from very poor to fair. The photographers and photo studios who produced the photographs are Lyman Photo Service, Louise Martin Art Studios, Percy C. Myers, Matthew W. Washington, Shelby T. Freeman, Irving A. Williamson and Anderson Photo Co. The photographs are arranged by subject matter:

Mrs. Meek's Mortuary: Photos 1-38 include images of the interior and exterior of Mrs. Meek's Mortuary. Photos 1-10 are colored photos that feature the woodrose hues often associated with Mrs. Meek's business. Photos 11-23 are greyscale exterior photos from various angles. Photos 24-38 are interior shots of various locations within the mortuary. This includes the lobby, chapel, office of Fannie Meek, and the emblem of Mrs. Meek's Mortuary embedded into the stone floor of the building. The images are undated.

Sparklers Baseball Team: Photos 39-82 include images of the American Legion summer baseball team that Fannie L. Meek sponsored from 1960-1972. Images include the baseball players, as well as Fannie L. Meek, Don Motley, and Yolande Meek.

Fannie L. Meek Civic Life: Photos 83-111 include images of Fannie L. Meek's civic life around Kansas City. These include photos of Meek at various events, accepting awards, and giving speeches.

Fannie L. Meek Social Life: Photos 112-133 include images of Fannie L. Meek's social life. These include photos of large groups of friends and family of the Meek family, as well as portraits of Fannie L. Meek.

Series 3: Flyers and Promotional Material, 1942 – 1964

This series consists of various promotional materials for Mrs. Meek's Mortuary (1-4), as well as the American Legion Junior baseball team "The Sparklers" (5-7). Many of the items in this series are photocopied images of the original material. Included in this series are: three photocopied church fans advertising the mortuary and the baseball team, a photocopy of an ad for Mrs. Meek's Mortuary featured in the 1941-42 Kansas City Negro City Directory, and a flyer for a 1964 Open House Dedication held at Mrs. Meek's Mortuary.

Series 4: Documents, 1934 – 1976

This series is comprised of various diplomas, awards and certifications earned by Yolande Meek-Wilson and Fannie L. Meek. This series also includes a written postcard by Fannie L. Meek to Mrs. Sallie Malcolm.

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Newspaper Clippings

f. 1 Clippings 01-06, n.d. – 1997

Series 2: Photographs

f. 2 Photographs 001-020, n.d.

f. 3 Photographs 021-040, n.d.

f. 4 Photographs 041-060, n.d.

f. 5 Photographs 061-080, n.d.

f. 6 Photographs 081-100, n.d.

f. 7 Photographs 101-120, n.d.

f. 8 Photographs 121-130, n.d.

f. 9 Photographs 131-133, n.d.

Series 3: Flyers and Promotional Material

- f. 10 Promo Material 01-04, 1942-1964
- f. 11 Promo Material 05-07, n.d-1965

Series 4: Documents

- f. 12 Kansas City Public Elementary School Diploma of Yolande Meek, 1937
- f. 13 Lincoln High School Diploma of Yolande Constance Meek, 1941
- f. 14 Alpha Delta Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Business Achievement Award to Fannie L. Meek, 1957
- f. 15 St. Stephen Baptist Church Leadership award to Fannie L. Meek, 1976
- f. 16 Missionary Society of Ward Chapel A.M.E. Church Leadership award to Fannie L. Meek, 1964
- f. 17 Kansas State Funeral Director License of Fannie L. Meek, 1939
- f. 18 Kansas State Funeral Director License of Fannie L. Meek, 1941
- f. 19 Kansas State Funeral Director License of Fannie L. Meek, 1942
- f. 20 Williams Institute of Embalming Certificate to Fannie L. Meek, 1934
- f. 21 Postcard from Fannie L. Meek to Sallie Malcolm, Las Vegas, NV, July 8, 1968

Processed by Nic Gibson, Americorps VISTA, September 2023.