

MSS. Collection #229

Ida Freeman Jenkins Papers, ca. 1911-2012. ½ box (8 folders), 15 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

The Ida Freeman Jenkins Papers consist of a biographical scrapbook and 100th birthday booklet, as well as diplomas and awards, all of which highlight the interests and accomplishments of a local African American educator and activist. Ida Jenkins was a social studies teacher at Greensboro's segregated Dudley High school and then NC A&T State University. She also devoted herself to many community causes and her church. The richest items in the collection are the scrapbook and booklet, which both contain newspaper clippings and profiles of her background, family, and accomplishments. These materials reveal a life of dedication and quiet persistence in the face of segregation and societal neglect of her community. Researchers interested in lesser-known African American community leaders will find photographs spanning five generations and over 100 years, as well as biographical details and some personal perspective.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into three series and arranged within series by document type and/or subject. The series are: **Photograph**, 1960s; **Printed Material**, 1937-2012; and **Scrapbook**, ca. 1911-2006.

Provenance: This collection was donated by Ida Jenkins' adopted daughter, Florine S. Jackson, in July 2014 and assigned the accession number 2015.44.1.

Processing: This collection was organized and the finding aid was completed by volunteer Ann Koppen in January 2022.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ida Freeman (1911-2015) was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and attended Lincoln High School. Both of her parents were accomplished and civically engaged, and she was raised in comfortable and socially active circumstances until the Great Depression, which forced her to suspend her studies at Talladega College. She wanted to be a doctor, but Alabama had no medical schools for African Americans. Instead, she earned a degree at Alabama State Teachers College (later Alabama State University) in 1932 followed by a B.S. (1937) and M.S. (1947) in social studies from A&T College (later NC A&T State University), as well as master's certificates in education from UNC-Chapel Hill and UNC Greensboro.

Ida Freeman married her neighbor Benjamin Jenkins in 1949. As a social studies teacher at Greensboro's segregated Dudley High School for 30 years, she inspired her students with stories

of African American and white leaders and thinkers. She taught three of the students who later participated in the Woolworth's sit-ins, one of whom credited her with instilling responsibility, courage, and pride. She also taught and mentored Josephine Boyd, the first African American to graduate from Greensboro (later Grimsley) Senior High School. After her retirement from Dudley High School in 1970, Jenkins taught African American history at NC A&T State University for five years. She also continued to teach students of all ages who regularly visited and studied in her basement library. Her husband died in 1972, and when her last relative died in 1984, she designated as her heir a former high school homeroom student, Florine Jackson, whom she considered her daughter and who organized her 100th birthday celebration.

Jenkins was honored by many of the institutions she served, as well as by the NAACP as Woman of the Year in 1982 and by *The Carolina Peacemaker*. A senior center, the Coley-Jenkins Independent Living Center, was named in her honor. She was clerk of Providence Baptist Church for 35 years and active in all its outreach. She also served as president of her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha. A board member, two-time "woman of the year," and volunteer at the Hayes-Taylor YMCA, which she saw as crucial to the future of the neighborhood's children, she was instrumental in fundraising and planning to save the Y, which became a showcase among such facilities for African Americans in the United States.

Biographical Sources: The biographical information was acquired from materials in the collection, a feature article entitled "[Teaching from memory](#)" (*News & Record*, February 25, 2001), and an obituary entitled "Noted educator, Ida Jenkins dies at 103" (*The Carolina Peacemaker*, April 11, 2015).

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains a biographical scrapbook and booklet, as well as diplomas, awards, and photographs belonging to Ida Freeman Jenkins. The awards point to the high esteem in which she was held by the many institutions she served professionally and as a volunteer. The richest items in the collection, the scrapbook (3:1-2) and booklet produced for her 100th birthday (2:3), provide the main facts of her upbringing, education, professional career, and civic activities. The news clippings in these items hold the most flavor, especially those whose authors solicited her experiences with segregation and civil rights. The interview at the end of the booklet contains enlightening information on the details of segregation.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Photograph. 1 folder (1 item). 1960s.

This color portrait of Ida Freeman Jenkins was likely made in the 1960s.

2. Printed Material. 5 folders (7 items). 1937-2012.

The highlight of this series is a booklet produced in honor of Jenkins' 100th birthday. It documents her life through items from her scrapbook, as well as other photographs, newspaper

articles, and tributes from family, friends, and colleagues. Also of note are various documents of recognition that include a certificate of merit from Greensboro Public Schools, where she taught for 30 years; a certificate in recognition of her contributions to the Hayes-Taylor Memorial YMCA, one of her strongest causes; a resolution by NC A&T saluting Jenkins on her 100th birthday as an outstanding teacher and humanitarian; and a proclamation from her sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, naming March 24, 2012, as “Soror Ida F. Jenkins Day.” The series also contains Jenkins’ diploma from A&T College and a program from an awards banquet at Hayes-Taylor Memorial YMCA.

3. Scrapbook. 2 folders (7 items). ca. 1911-2006.

This scrapbook was prepared for Ida Jenkins by Carliss Lee Jacobs in 2006. The volume holds captioned photographs and newspaper articles covering her life from childhood, as well as photographs of and brief information about her parents and grandparents. Some photographs feature social and community service events, and the newspaper articles add biographical details. The loose items include the studio portrait used in some later newspaper articles about her, a copy of the statement of intent that established her endowment fund for scholarships at NC A&T State University, a newspaper article with her reflections on urban renewal (and its effects on Greensboro’s primary black neighborhood), and scrapbook pages containing photographs of Talladega College, Alabama’s oldest historically black college.

FOLDER LISTING

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
1	1	Photograph	-- Jenkins, Ida (1960s)
2	1	Printed Material	-- Agricultural & Technical College (NC A&T) (B.S. degree; 1937)
	2	“	-- Awards and Recognitions (2004-2012)
	3	“	-- Booklet -- “A Century Past” (2011)
	4	“	-- Greensboro Public Schools (Certificate of Merit; 1970)
	5	“	-- Hayes-Taylor Memorial YMCA (Awards banquet program; 2003)
3	1	Scrapbook (ca. 1911-2006)	
	2	Scrapbook -- Loose items (ca. 1929-1998)	