Henrietta Ambrose Papers  
(S0698)

Collection Number: S0698

Collection Title: Henrietta Ambrose Papers

Dates: 1887-1999

Creator: Ambrose, Henrietta, 1928-1999

Abstract: The Henrietta Ambrose Papers includes correspondence, newspaper clippings, awards, memorial service programs, scrapbooks, graduation programs, meeting minutes, and photographs. Together they chronicle Henrietta Ambrose's interest in the public life of Webster Groves, Missouri.

Collection Size: 3.5 cubic feet  
(96 folders, 3 oversize folders, 666 photographs, 7 volumes)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis. If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] Henrietta Ambrose Papers (S0698); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Henrietta Ambrose on November 19, 1998 (Accession No. SA3319).

Biographical Note:

Henrietta Smith Ambrose was born on February 26, 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri. She lived most of her life in Webster Groves, Missouri. In 1944, Ambrose graduated from Douglass High School, then attended Tucker Business College. She married her husband, Walter L. Ambrose, Sr., in 1948. He died on January 30, 1998 of a heart attack. Together they had two daughters, Karlah and Cheryl, and a son, Walter, Jr.

Following her graduation from Tucker Business College, Ambrose was employed by the Division of Family and Children's Services in Clayton, Missouri. In 1964, Ambrose joined the Social Security Administration, where she stayed for over 20 years before retiring in 1985. In the mid-1960s, she became involved in the political life of Webster Groves and participated in the planning and zoning processes of the city. Ambrose was appointed to the Webster Groves City Council in 1986, becoming the first African American to serve on the city’s council. Following her appointment, Ambrose ran for re-election twice and was elected to the council both times, serving a total of ten years before declining to run again in 1996. During her council terms, she was named liaison to the Historic Preservation Commission, served as a member and president of the Board of Directors of the Webster Groves Historical Society and the Webster Groves Optimist Club, and was a trustee of the State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia. In addition, Ambrose served on the boards of the Nursery Foundation of St. Louis, Missouri, Humanities Council, Friends of the Missouri Archives in Jefferson City, the North Webster Neighborhood Coalition, the Interfaith Housing Commission, and Friends of the Father Dickson Cemetery.

In 1991, the Webster Groves Area Chamber of Commerce named Ambrose and her husband Citizens of the Year. Two years later, in 1993, Ambrose published the book *North Webster: A Photographic History of a Black Community* with co-authors Ann Morris and John Nagel. Ambrose was also the recipient of numerous distinctions and honors including the Missouri Historical Society Brownlee Fund Award and the St. Louis County Historical Society Book Award. She moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, in November 1998, where she died two months later, on January 14, 1999. Her memorial service was held on January 20, 1999 at St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church in Brentwood, Missouri.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following six series with three subseries:

Personal Papers

*North Webster: A Photographic History of a Black Community*

Webster Groves, Missouri

Douglass High School

North Webster Neighborhood Coalition

Publications

Photographs

Books

Oversize
Scope and Content Note:

Personal Papers

This series contains awards, correspondence, newspaper clippings, business cards, and memorial service programs documenting Ambrose’s life and her participation and interest in local politics and philanthropy. The correspondence discusses topics such as writing and publishing the book *North Webster: A Photographic History of a Black Community*, African American history, award nominations, and local politics. Also included are flyers from Ambrose’s election to Webster Groves City Council. This series contains one subseries: *North Webster: A Photographic History of a Black Community*. The materials in this series date from 1918 to 1999 and are arranged alphabetically.

The *North Webster: A Photographic History of a Black Community* subseries contains biographies, photograph captions, edits of the introduction to *North Webster*, and a reception list to the release party for the book. This subseries also contains notes on African American history, specifically of Webster Groves, Missouri, and the North Webster neighborhood, which Ambrose gathered for use in her book. The materials in this subseries date from 1918 to 1993 and are arranged alphabetically.

Webster Groves, Missouri

This series contains building surveys, meeting minutes, correspondence, membership lists, newsletters, and newspaper clippings regarding Webster Groves, specifically North Webster, a majority-Black neighborhood in the city. These materials also document Ambrose’s involvement in various organizations in the Webster Groves area including Citizens Advisory Committee for Community Development, Historic Preservation Commission and Centennial Committee, Missouri Humanities Council, and Our Day Together Club of Webster Groves. This series contain two subseries: Douglass High School and North Webster Neighborhood Coalition. The materials in this series date from 1910 to 1997 and are arranged alphabetically.

The Douglass High School subseries contains commencement programs, class rosters, faculty rosters, histories, and alumni meeting minutes regarding the North Webster high school. This series also contains a copy of the 1935 edition of *The Douglass Oracle*, the yearbook for Douglass High School, and a scrapbook containing student portraits, newspaper clippings, and invitations to school events. The materials in this subseries date from 1929 to 1992 and are arranged alphabetically.

The North Webster Neighborhood Coalition subseries contains incorporation papers, organizational goals, correspondence, and membership lists regarding the Coalition’s governance and efforts at maintaining and improving the living standards of the North Webster community. This subseries also includes correspondence, memoranda, press releases, flyers, and budgets for the Black History Program, a yearly event held by the Coalition to celebrate Black history and raise money for community improvement. The materials in this subseries dates from 1987 to 1997 and are arranged alphabetically.

Publications

This series contains articles, booklets, brochures, conference programs, flyers, magazines, newsletters, and newspaper clippings reflecting African American heritage and history. The
majority of the materials in this series document African American life in the St. Louis metropolitan area and were presumably gathered for use or reference in Ambrose’s book *North Webster*. The other materials seem to reflect her interest in local affairs. The materials in this series date from 1933 to 1998 and are arranged alphabetically.

**Photographs**

This series contains print photographs, slides, and negatives documenting African Americans in the North Webster neighborhood. Many of the photographs were used in *North Webster* and contain detailed transcripts of the image on the backs of the photographs. The photographs in this series date from 1898 to 1985 and are arranged by medium type.

**Books**

This series contains a city plan, a Douglass High School yearbook, three volumes of *American Heritage*, and a hymnal that once belonged to Eliza Smith. This series also contains a book of meeting minutes from the Our Day Together of Webster Groves organization. The volumes in this series date from 1947 to 1980 and are arranged chronologically.

**Oversize**

This series contains *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* magazines, North Webster Neighborhood Coalition organizational goals, *Webster-Kirkwood Times* newspapers, and a Regal Quartet program poster. Additionally, this series contains maps of the Webster Groves area. The maps detail former slave owners, the North Webster neighborhood, and proposed county roads. The materials in this series date from 1967 to 1999 and are arranged chronologically.

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