



Oscar Farmer Collection (S0585)

Collection Number: S0585

Collection Title: Oscar Farmer Collection

Dates: 1940-2005

Creator: Oscar Cecil Farmer, 1916-2005

Abstract: The Oscar Farmer Collection documents Farmer's career working for the Saint Louis Police Department. It also contains an oral history interview and photographs related to his work at Club Riviera, a supper club that hosted prominent entertainers and served as a base for local politician Jordan Chambers.

Collection Size: 0.5 cubic feet
(11 folders, 1 tape, 37 photographs)

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.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given, assigned, and transferred to the Society all copyrights, and associated rights the Donor may possess in the materials.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Oscar Farmer Collection* (S0585); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Custodial History: The Oscar Farmer Collection was originally recorded under additional collection number S0737. In 2022 the collections' records were incorporated into S0585 and the physical materials were processed together.

Donor Information: The collection was donated to the University of Missouri by Oscar Farmer on April 19, 1994 (Accession No. SA3656). An addition was made on February 16, 2006 by Kenneth Farmer (Accession No. SA3656).

Alternate Forms Available: Images from this collection are available online at the State Historical Society of Missouri Digital Collections: <https://digital.shsmo.org>.

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Oscar Farmer Collection can be found in the following collections:

Austin Wright Papers, (S1022)

Lift Every Voice and Sing Oral History Project, (S0609)

Processed by: Processed by WHMC Staff, date unknown. Finding aid updated by Erin Purdy, April 2022.

Biographical Note:

Oscar Cecil Farmer was born in 1916 and raised in St. Louis. His father, Buster, worked hauling coal during the Great Depression. Oscar Farmer participated in sports while attending Vashon High School, and was offered a scholarship at an Ivy League school. He attended Lincoln Law School.

Farmer worked for the Tom Carbone Bowling Company, which had bowling alleys in St. Louis, Chicago and New York. Farmer then served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After exiting the Navy, Farmer was involved with Jordan Chambers in the operation of the Club Riviera, a supper club located at 4460 Delmar Boulevard, which was a center of entertainment for St. Louis' African American community from 1944 to the 1960s. Like Chambers, Farmer was also interested in the Civil Rights movement and was involved in the Democratic Party. They used Club Riviera for political meetings.

Farmer graduated from the St. Louis Police Academy in 1948 and began working for the St. Louis City Police Department. He worked in the Major Case Squad as a detective and reached the rank of Lieutenant in 1972. He was only the ninth Black officer on the force to achieve that rank. He retired from the St. Louis Police after 33 years and then served as chief of police for the City of Wellston, Missouri from 1983 to 1985. Farmer was recognized with many awards from the St. Louis Police Department and the community, including a commendation on his public service by the St. Louis *Argus* newspaper.

Farmer died in 2005 at the age of 89 and is buried in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following 3 series:

Police

Club Riviera Photographs

Oral History

Scope and Content Note:

Police

This series contains awards, correspondence, newspaper clippings, a scrapbook, and 23 photographs documenting Oscar Farmer's career in law enforcement.

Club Riviera

This series contains 14 images of Oscar Farmer and others at Club Riviera. People in the photographs include Jordan Chambers, Josephine Baker, Erskine Hawkins, Count Basie, Spider Burke, Maurice Morocco, Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Jordan, Louis Armstrong, Cozy Cole, Lionel Hampton, Nat King Cole, Jackie Wilson, and Earl Hines. Also included are images of Oscar Farmer as part of the Navy baseball team in New York, and of him in his Naval uniform with Frank Wilson.

Oral History

The oral history interview discusses Farmer's memories of Jordan Chambers, including Chambers' political and community organizing. Farmer also talks about working in the police department, and the Civil Rights movement's effect on the department. Farmer discusses the nightclub business in St. Louis as well as other Black-oriented businesses. Part of the interview includes Farmer's descriptions of photographs that are included in the collection. In the last part of the interview Farmer talks about the closing of Homer G. Phillips Hospital. The interview was conducted with Oscar Farmer by Anne Morris on April 19, 1994. The recording lasts for 71 minutes.

Container List:

f. 1-9	Police
f. 1	Awards, 1948-1987
f. 2	Correspondence, 1961-2005
f. 3-5	Newspaper clippings, no date
f. 6	Obituaries, 1991-2005
f. 7	Scrapbook and newspaper clippings, 1948-1969
f. 8	Photographs, 1948-1983
f. 9	Scrapbook, 1948-1969
f. 10	Club Riviera photographs
f. 11	Oral history

Index:

Index Terms	Folder	Image
Armstrong, Louis, 1901-1971	10	Yes
Baker, Josephine, 1906-1975	10	Yes
Basie, Count, 1904-1984	10	Yes
Bradley, "Bill" William	6	Yes
Burks, Jessie "Spider"	10	Yes
Chambers, Jordan W.	6, 10-11	Yes
Club Riviera (Saint Louis, Mo.)	10	Yes
Cole, Cozy	10	Yes
Cole, Nat King, 1919-1965	10	Yes
Farmer, Oscar Cecil, 1916-2005	1-11	Yes

Index Terms	Folder	Image
Gillespie, Dizzy, 1917-1993	10	Yes
Hampton, Lionel, 1908-2002	10	Yes
Hawkins, Erskine, 1914-1993	10	Yes
Hines, Earl, 1903-1983	10	Yes
Homer G. Phillips Hospital	11	
Jordan, Louis, 1908-1075	10	Yes
Morocco, Maurice	10	Yes
Police	1-9	Yes
Saint Louis (Mo.). Police Department	1-9	Yes
Wellston (Mo.)	2, 5, 9	
Wilson, Jackie, 1934-1984	10	Yes