



Charles and Marian O'Fallon Oldham Papers (S1112)

Collection Number: S1112

Collection Title: Charles and Marian O'Fallon Oldham Papers

Dates: 1913-2004

Creator: Oldham, Charles Richard, 1922-2006

Abstract: This collection contains correspondence, photographs, court transcripts, and newspaper clippings pertaining to the lives of Civil Rights activists Charles and Marian Oldham. Charles Oldham was instrumental in organizing picket lines and demonstrations that helped open college admission for African Americans at Washington University in St. Louis in 1948. The Oldhams were also active members of the St. Louis chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and participated in the Jefferson Bank protests in 1963. Other subjects of interest include Marian O'Fallon Oldham's tenure as a member of the University of Missouri's Board of Curators and Charles Oldham's time as the National Chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality. The materials in this collection date from 1913 to 2004.

Collection Size: 2 cubic feet
(38 folders, 179 photographs, 10 oversize items, 2 cassette tapes)

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](http://www.shsmo.org). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given and assigned to the University all rights of copyright, which the Donor has in the Materials and in such of the Donor's works as may be found among any collections of Materials received by the University from others.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Charles and Marian O'Fallon Oldham Papers* (S1112); 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 Dr. Lisa M. Oldham on November 20, 2006 (Accession No. SA3704). An addition was made on January 24, 2007 by Dr. Lisa M. Oldham (Accession No. SA3712).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Charles and Marian O'Fallon Oldham Papers can be found in the following collections:

Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E.), Columbia, Missouri, Papers (C2508)

Margaret and Irvin Dagen History of St. Louis CORE Collection (S0661)

Missouri Federation of Teachers Records (S0447)

University of Missouri-Columbia, Black Studies Program Records (C4125)

Processed by: Processed by A.J. Medlock and Nicholas Lawson, September 17, 2019

Biographical Note:

Charles Oldham was born in Kansas City, Missouri, on November 7, 1922. Oldham spent his formative years in Marceline, Missouri, and attended college at Central Methodist College (1940-1942) and the University of Missouri (September-December 1942). Upon America's entry into World War II, Oldham left the University of Missouri and enlisted in the United States Signal Corps in December 1942. He later transferred to the United States Army Air Force in August 1942, where he remained through the duration of the war until November 1945. After the war, Oldham resumed his studies at Washington University, eventually obtaining his Bachelor of Laws in 1948. During his time at Washington University, Oldham became active in the civil rights movement, serving as the chairman for the Student Committee for the Admission of Negroes (SCAN) from 1946 to 1948.

During his initial involvement in the civil rights movement, Oldham became one of the founding members of the St. Louis Committee of Racial Equality (CORE), a chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, in 1947. Oldham's co-founders included a collection of middle-class whites, African Americans, and unionists, who wanted to dismantle segregation in St. Louis. St. Louis CORE's early campaigns included distributing leaflets in support of a proposed Board of Alderman bill outlawing Jim Crow in municipal buildings in 1948. The group also launched pickets and sit-ins at segregated St. Louis businesses. One of St. Louis CORE's first major sit-ins was at Stix, Baer and Fuller, a local department store. Beginning in 1949, St. Louis CORE members began weekly sit-ins at the department store's lunch counter, eventually leading upper-management to open its first-floor lunch counter to all races in 1954.

While participating in these numerous protests, Oldham met Marian O'Fallon, one of the St. Louis CORE's co-founders. O'Fallon was born on March 31, 1927, St. Louis, Missouri. She graduated from Stowe Teachers College, a college for African Americans, in St. Louis City, and was teaching Kindergarten when she met Oldham. O'Fallon tested racial segregation in Missouri outside of her involvement with CORE, applying to the then-segregated University of Missouri's graduate education program in 1948. Upon her rejection from the school, she went on to earn a Masters in Education University of Michigan (The University of Missouri would later create a scholarship program in Marian Oldham's name in 1989 for minority students in St. Louis). After a two-year courtship, Charles and Marian O'Fallon married on August 18, 1951, in Detroit, Michigan, due to Missouri's anti-miscegenation laws.

The couple continued their civil rights activism throughout their lives. Charles Oldham served as chairman of St. Louis CORE (1956-1963) and became instrumental, along with Marian, in the group's protests against Jefferson National Bank's discriminatory hiring practices on August 27, 1963. The case arose out of accusations made by the St. Louis CORE chapter that the bank did not employ African Americans based on their ethnicity. The St. Louis CORE members had voted

and agreed to picket the bank after many attempts to negotiate with the bank had failed. Hundreds of demonstrators began picketing the bank in the late afternoon of August 27th. The demonstration escalated when protestors, many of whom were not members of the Saint Louis branch of CORE, sat on the steps of the bank locking arms. Protesters blocked the bank's exit, and a small group entered the bank initially, but the rest of the protestors outside soon followed suit and entered the bank. Once inside the bank, the bank began chanting and clapping in order to disrupt the bank's operation.

St. Louis City Circuit Court Judge Michael J. Scott issued a restraining order against the protestors on August 30, prohibiting the group from interfering with Jefferson Bank's operations. Despite the ruling, the protests continued, resulting in Judge Scott charging nine St. Louis CORE leaders, including Charles and Marian, with contempt of court on September 1, leading to their arrest. Throughout the protests, 52 people were jailed due to the Jefferson Bank and Trusts protests and fined anywhere between \$500 to \$1000 dollars. On March 31, 1964 after months of protests and arrests the bank buckled and hired six African American tellers. Over the following months, 35 to 45 African Americans were hired at the bank. The Jefferson Bank protests gave rise to many St. Louis financial institutes and department stores to hire more African American employees in fear of their companies being protested.

In their later years, the Oldham's remained committed to the civil rights movement. Charles continued practicing law, specializing in civil rights and employment discrimination. Marian joined the Board of Curators at the University of Missouri in 1977 at the appointment of then Missouri Governor Joseph P. Teasdale and served 8 years. During her tenure on the Board of Curators, she pushed the University to have an aggressive affirmative action plan. Marian O'Fallon Oldham passed away in 1994 at the age of 66. Her husband Charles Oldham passed away in 2006 at the age of 83.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following five series:

- Biographical Material
- Civil Rights Activism
- Photographs
- Newspaper Clippings
- Oral History and Campaign Literature
- Oversize Materials

Scope and Content Note:**Biographical Material**

This series contains biographical sketches, yearbooks, report cards, and awards documenting Charles and Marian's early lives, including Charles Oldham's military service in World War II. Other items of interest include yearbooks and school report cards from the Oldham family, as well as, Marian's Marshal and Sumner High School report cards and yearbooks. This series also include speeches given by Charles Oldham to various organizations on the civil rights law and black history. The materials in this series date from 1913 to 2002 and are arranged alphabetically.

Civil Rights Activism

This series consists of correspondence, oral histories, newspaper clippings, pertaining to Charles and Marian O'Fallon Oldham's civil rights activism, including their involvement with St. Louis CORE, and the NAACP. Subjects of interest include the Anheuser-Busch controversy in which St. Louis CORE accused the company of not employing African Americans. Included in this series are the court transcripts between the Jefferson Bank and Trust Company and Robert B. Curtis on October 4, 1963. The transcripts hold the court proceedings and what transpired on August 30th and the following months during the Jefferson Bank protests. The transcripts contain witnesses and their statements. Other topics of interest include Marian O'Fallon Oldham's fight to increase African-American faculty at the University of Missouri while serving on the University's Board of Curators. The materials in this collection date from 1950 to 1998 and are arranged chronologically.

Photographs

This series contains photographs pertaining to the personal lives of Charles and Marian O'Fallon Oldham, such as portraits, graduations, vacations, and weddings. Photographs of Charles and Marian O'Fallon Oldham's civil rights activism can be found here as well, including images of St. Louis CORE protests against Jefferson Bank and Trusts and other unidentified department stores in the St. Louis region for discriminatory business practices. The materials in this collection date from 1943-1977 and are arranged chronologically.

Newspaper Clippings

This series contains extensive newspaper clippings chronicling Marian and Charles civil rights career. Materials in these files cover the Jefferson Bank and Trust protests as well as coverage of the CORE-sponsored Freedom Rides in 1961. Also found in this series are editorials from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* chronicling Marian O'Fallon Oldham's role in advocating for minority students at the University of Missouri can be found in this series. The series contains photographs of Charles Oldham with Martin Luther King Jr at a St. Louis CORE dinner in 1960 reflecting on King's legacy. The dates range from 1929-1979 and are arranged chronologically.

Oral History and Campaign Literature

This series contains an oral history between Corrine Edwards interviewing Charles Oldham on the subject of St. Louis civil rights activism. This interview is recorded on two tapes with a combined total of one hour and fifty-five minutes. Also included are the campaign pamphlets pertaining to St. Louis CORE, Fredrick N. Weathers, Frank S. Bledsoe, and Carl Dudley. The materials in this series date from 1962-1963 and are arranged chronologically.

Oversize Materials

This series consists of large oversized material including awards and certificates of appreciation given to Marian and Charles Oldham for their contributions in the area of education, real estate, and civil rights. It also contains oversized posters featuring newspaper articles and editorials pertaining to their lives. The materials in this series date from 1940 to 1994 are arranged chronologically.

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