

Collection #
M0472
BV2627-2628
OMB0028
OM0446

HENRY J. (HENRY JOHNSON) RICHARDSON PAPERS, 1910-1992 (BULK 1960-1979)

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Reprocessed by

Elizabeth Kunstman
16 April 2007

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION:

Manuscript Materials: 37 manuscript boxes, 2 bound volumes, 3
OMB boxes, 2 OM folders

Visual Materials: 2 photograph boxes, 1 box color photographs,
1 OVB box of photographs, 1 OVB graphic folder, 5 panoramic
photographs, 1 VHS tape, 2 slides.

COLLECTION DATES:	Inclusive 1910–1992; Bulk 1960-1979
PROVENANCE:	Roselyn Richardson, Indianapolis, IN, 12 June 1985
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	Held by Indiana Historical Society
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	Many of the 8mm films have been reproduced in a videotape (VHS) format.
RELATED HOLDINGS:	None
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1985.0613; 1992.0860
NOTES:	Biographical sketch was prepared by Charles Latham. Summer assistants, Courtney DeMoss and Ellen Swain, completed the physical arrangement of the collection. Wilma Gibbs prepared initial scope and content note in 1992. Updates to collection in 2002 and 2005 were made by staff. Collection reprocessed by Elizabeth Kunstman in 2007.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Henry Johnson Richardson, Jr., (1902-1983) was a lawyer and a leader for many years in the struggle for civil rights in Indiana. He broke barriers in the 1930s by serving as both state representative and judge; was active in the fight for desegregation in schooling and housing; and was mainly responsible for organizing the local unit of the Urban League.

Richardson was born in Huntsville, Alabama, the son of Henry J. and Louise Martin Johnson Richardson. His father, a veteran of the Spanish American War, was an agent for several different insurance companies, and organized a Negro chapter of Spanish War Veterans in 1931. In his teens Richardson was sent to Indianapolis to study at Shortridge High School. He graduated from there in 1921, and then spent two years studying at the University of Illinois. While there, he was an editor of a student paper called *The College Dreamer*. He returned to Huntsville because of his mother's death. Then, in 1925, he returned to Indianapolis and attended the Indiana Law School, earning a LLB degree in 1928.

Soon after graduation he became active in politics. In 1930, he was appointed a temporary judge in Marion County Superior Court, said to have been the first black to serve as a jurist in Indiana. Two years later he ran successfully for a seat in the Indiana legislature. He and Robert Stanton were the first blacks in the twentieth century to be elected to the Indiana General Assembly. During his three terms in the Assembly he was co-author of welfare legislation; was author of the first fair employment practices law in the country (1933); helped end discrimination in the dormitories at Indiana University; and helped change the state constitution to permit blacks to serve in the Indiana National Guard.

In 1933-1934, Richardson served as an attorney for the Home Owners Loan Corporation in Indiana. From 1932 to 1938, he was director of the Civil Liberties Division of the National Bar Association. In 1938, he helped found the Federation of Associated Clubs, which four years later led the fight to end segregation in theaters in Indianapolis. In 1940, he was appointed to the Indiana Board of Public Welfare, on which he served for four years.

Richardson married Roselyn V. Comer in 1938. They had two sons, Henry J. III and Rodney C.

In 1939, Senator Sherman Minton nominated Richardson to be a federal judge in the Virgin Islands; ten years later Rep. Andrew Jacobs, Sr. nominated him for governor of the Virgin Islands; neither nomination was successful. In 1948, he was appointed a special judge in the Marion County Criminal Court. In 1947, Richardson acted as chairman of a committee to write the Indiana Anti-Hate Law which was passed in that year. In the following year he obtained an injunction to keep the Dixiecrat Party off the ballot in Indiana. In 1949, he was a leader in obtaining passage of Indiana's school desegregation law.

In 1953, the NAACP, of which Richardson had been a legal representative since 1935, won an important case for integrated housing in Evansville. In this case he worked in cooperation with Thurgood Marshall. In 1958, he became the first Indiana Life Member of the NAACP, and in the next three years he got over fifty others to take out life memberships.

For many years, Richardson was a very active member of Witherspoon United Presbyterian Church. In 1957, he was a leader in a campaign to raise funds to build a new education wing for the church. Particularly during the 1950s, he was active in other religious affairs; he worked for the Senate Avenue Y.M.C.A., and served on the board of the Indianapolis Church Federation. From 1963 to 1967, he was a member of the Indiana State Real Estate Commission, and from 1964 to 1968 he was a member of the Federal Civil Rights Commission. Richardson organized and founded the Indianapolis affiliate of the Urban League in 1965, and was active in that organization. He was on the board of the National Urban League from 1966 to 1970.

For many years Richardson was active in the United Negro College Fund, serving both as local chairman and as a member of the national board. In 1965, when his oldest son was a student at Yale Law School, he participated as a chief judge at a moot court at the school. He maintained an active interest in the Indiana Law School, which became a part of Indiana University and from 1969 to 1977, was a member of the Visiting Board.

Throughout his long career, Richardson was a spokesman for equality and civil rights. Though he maintained regular correspondence with such national leaders as Benjamin Mays, Whitney Young, and to a lesser extent Martin Luther King, Jr., he was especially active in the local area. He was constantly called on as a speaker at churches and meetings. His effectiveness as a spokesman was increased by his capacity to make personal friends among the leaders of the 'establishment'—such men as Tom Binford, Prentice Browning, Nick Frenzel, Andrew Jacobs, Jr., and Michael Carroll. During the last two decades of his life he served on the Mayor's Advisory Council and the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee. He was a prolific letter writer, both for maintaining friendly contacts and for pointing out, to both friend and adversary, occasions where he felt civil rights were slighted or violated. He showed a particular interest in housing and education: such things as the preservation of Lockefield Gardens and Crispus Attucks High School, and busing for school integration.

Richardson was also the recipient of many citations and awards. Perhaps the most important were three appointments as a Sagamore of the Wabash and an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Indiana Central University (now University of Indianapolis) awarded in 1978.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

January, Alan F. and Walsh, Justin E. *A Century of Progress: Black Hoosiers in the Indiana General Assembly, 1881-1986*. Indianapolis: Select Committee on the Centennial History of the General Assembly, 1986.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Henry J. Richardson, Jr. Papers are comprised of 13 cubic feet of material. It consists primarily of correspondence with smaller amounts of printed matter, legal material, programs, scrapbooks, and clippings. Also included are photographs, slides, audiotapes, and 8 mm films. Many of the 8mm films have been reproduced into a videotape (VHF) format. All visuals are designated throughout the collection guide.

The collection is divided into twelve series: biographical information and personal correspondence, 1911 – 1962; general correspondence, 1921 – 1984; obituaries, 1983, papers, 1983 and 1985, and certificates, 1923 – 1984; organizations, A – U; organizations, Urban League of Indianapolis; organizations, National Urban League – YMCA; topical– African American history; topical–legal, minority housing; topical–racial relations and school desegregation; topical–essays, speeches, statements, and programs; clippings and scrapbooks; and audio tapes. The first part of the collection (series 1) contains personal correspondence which chronicles much of Richardson's life from 1911-1983. It contains family correspondence to and from Richardson; his father, Henry Sr.; Roselyn, his wife; her mother, Evalina Comer; and his sons, Henry III and Rodney. Of particular note is the correspondence to and from Henry J. III, who as a young man attended Antioch College and Yale Law School. The letters between father and son are exchanged frequently, often detailing current events and family experiences. Contained within this section are numerous photographs and home movies. There are several individual photographs of Richardson, as well as photos of him with family members and others, at home and other places. There are pictures of him and/or family members in Dayton, Ohio, the Virgin Islands, and in New Haven. Henry J. Richardson, Jr. was honored with testimonial dinners in 1963 and again in 1976. The latter was in celebration of 50 years of service in the legal profession. Scrapbooks describing both events are contained in BV 2627-2628, respectively.

Arranged chronologically, general correspondence is contained in series 2. Richardson was a prolific writer who exchanged letters with innumerable individuals. A list of some of his correspondents is appended; it includes local civic leaders; politicians; and nationally prominent individuals.

Henry J. Richardson received numerous awards and certificates throughout his lifetime. These are located in series 3, along with his obituaries and related papers.

Henry J. Richardson was associated with several civic, social, and religious organizations and institutions. Materials pertaining to these are arranged alphabetically by organization in series 4, 5, and 6. Especially prevalent in this section is information regarding the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, Federation of Associated Clubs, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, United Negro College Fund, and the Witherspoon United Presbyterian Church. Richardson was a founding member of the Indianapolis Urban League, and was a board member of the National Urban League. There are six boxes of Urban League material, evenly divided between the national organization and the local affiliate. To a lesser degree, there is information about the Legal Aid Bureau, the National Bar Association, Poro Beauty College, and the Senate Avenue Young Men's Christian Association.

The next section (series 7, 8, and 9) incorporates several topical issues including African-American history, legal activity (contains several briefs from cases that Richardson litigated), minority housing, race relations, and school desegregation. Much of the latter material is in reference to the Indianapolis Public Schools. Henry J. Richardson, Jr. was involved in several civil rights activities, as a civic leader, as well as a legal representative. Materials pertaining to his work with the Evansville Housing Case and the 1949 Indiana school desegregation bill are contained here.

Speeches, statements, and essays on numerous subjects written by Henry J. Richardson, Jr. and others are contained in series 10. Richardson participated in many religious, social, educational, and civic programs, often as a speaker. Scores of programs, arranged chronologically, are in boxes 29-31. Arranged chronologically, programs are divided by those that list Richardson as a speaker (box 29) and those that do not (boxes 30-31).

General news clippings arranged by date and subject-specific clippings are in series 11. There are several scrapbooks in the collection dating from 1928 through 1975. Many of the scrapbooks depict a particular event in Richardson's life, e.g. his 1949 unsuccessful nomination for governor of the Virgin Islands. Most of the scrapbooks are oversized and are contained in OMB 0028, boxes 1-3. There are several audio tapes contained in series 12.

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CORRESPONDENTS

Barr, Joseph W.
Barton, John J.
Bayh, Birch
Bayt, Philip L.
Binford, Thomas W.
Bond, Julian
Boswell, Charles
Bowen, Otis
Branigan, Roger
Brokenburr, Robert L.
Brooke, Edward W.
Brown, Rev. Andrew J.
Browning, H. Prentice
Brownson, Charles B.
Carter, Lillian
Collins, LeRoy
Craig, George N.
Craine, Rt. Rev. John P.
East, P.D.
Farley, James A.
Graham, Shirley
Greenlea, Pleas
Hall, Lloyd A.
Handley, Harold W.
Hartke, Vance
Hatcher, Andrew
Humphrey, Hubert H.
Hudnut, William, III

CONTAINER

Box 34

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Box 36

Box 37

Jacobs, Andrew, Jr.
Kennedy, Robecrt
King, Martin L., Jr.
Kuykendall, Rufus C.
Larrabee, William H.
Losche, Albert
Ludlow, Louis
Lugar, Richard
McGill, Ralph
Marshall, Thurgood
Mays, Benjamin E.
Minton, Sherman
Moore, Rev. Paul, Jr.
Murphy, Frank
Ralston, Glenn B.
Ransom, Willard B.
Rowan, Carl T.
Schricker, Henry F.
Steckler, William H.
Stevenson, Adlai
Stokes, Carl
VanNuys, Frederick
Weaver, Robert C.
Welsh, Matthew
Wilkins, Roy
Young, Whitney, Jr.

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0472).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.