

Clarence Farmer papers

07

**Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Sarah
Leu through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden
Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.**

Last updated on April 28, 2014.

African American Museum in Philadelphia

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	5
Administrative Information.....	5
Controlled Access Headings.....	6

Summary Information

Repository	African American Museum in Philadelphia
Creator	Farmer, Clarence
Title	Clarence Farmer papers
Call number	07
Date [inclusive]	1942-1983
Extent	1.5 linear feet
General Physical Description note	1 box, 2 photo albums
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Clarence Farmer (1915-2014) was a prominent African American in Philadelphia in the 1960s and 1970s, serving key bureaucratic posts in city government and active in supporting minority entrepreneurship and culture in the area. The Clarence Farmer papers, 1942-1983, include photographs, clippings, and ephemera from the early years of the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum (later renamed the African American Museum in Philadelphia); Police Advisory Board materials, 1960s; and clippings, photographs, and property documents relating to Farmer himself.</p>

Biography/History

Clarence Farmer (1915-2014) was a prominent African American in Philadelphia in the 1960s and 1970s, serving in key bureaucratic posts in city government, and active in supporting minority entrepreneurship and culture in the area.

From 1965 to 1967 he worked as executive secretary to the Police Advisory Board, a civilian group that investigates citizens' complaints against the police where the charge involved brutality, false arrest, discrimination, and other wrongful conduct. Next, he was appointed executive director of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, a quasi-judicial agency empowered to enforce Philadelphia's civil rights laws and to deal with all matters of intergroup conflicts within the City. He was sworn in as the salaried chairman of the Human Relations Commission soon after, expanding the focus and power of the commission over the next 15 years. He mediated several conflicts with the black liberation group, MOVE, although he retired shortly before the 1985 confrontation and police bombing that resulted in the destruction of about 60 nearby houses and the deaths of 11 people. The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations named its highest award the Clarence Farmer Award.

Farmer held key positions in several organizations that supported minority entrepreneurship. He was founder and president of the Greater Philadelphia Enterprises Development Corporation, a nonprofit organization that provided aid to minority entrepreneurs; chairman of the board of directors of the Job Loan and Venture Capital Corporation, a non-profit agency that disbursed money from Philadelphia banks to minority businessmen; and board chairman and president of Urban Community Bank, the first minority-owned commercial bank in Philadelphia in 15 years at the time of its founding in 1972.

Clarence Farmer was instrumental in the founding of the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum in 1976, later renamed the African American Museum in Philadelphia, serving as board chairman for 20 years. Additionally, Farmer served on boards for the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, Philadelphia Tribune, the Center for Urban Theological Studies, Wissahickon Boys Club, Mercy Douglass Hospital, and other organizations.

Farmer was born in Rochester, N.Y., attended Geneva College, and moved to Philadelphia in the late 1930s with his mother. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. Farmer married Marjorie Louise Nichols in 1943, and had two sons together: Clarence Jr. and Franklin. Clarence Farmer died in January 2014 at the age of 98.

Bibliography:

"Clarence Farmer Sworn in as Chairman of Commission." *Washington Afro-American*, August 5, 1969: page 17. http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=YbYIAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=8_QFAAAAIIBAJ&pg=2538%2C4181338. Accessed December 26, 2013.

Cook, Bonnie L. "Clarence Farmer Sr., 98; Chaired Human Relations Panel." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 2, 2014. Accessed February 19, 2014. http://articles.philly.com/2014-02-02/news/46901241_1_human-relations-commission-move-members-west-philadelphia.

Scope and Contents

A large portion of this collection relates to the establishment and early years of the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum (later renamed the African American Museum in Philadelphia), circa 1975-1985: black and white photographs, clippings, and ephemera from its construction, exhibitions, and events. There are also Police Advisory Board materials including reports of the board, correspondence, and publications used as reference, 1960s. Additionally, the collection contains clippings about Farmer, a large number of photographs of him at events he attended, and several property documents (1942-1951).

Administrative Information

African American Museum in Philadelphia

Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Sarah Leu through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.

Sponsor

This preliminary finding aid was created as part of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories. The HCI-PSAR project was made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Access Restrictions

Contact African American Museum in Philadelphia for information about accessing this collection.

Processing Information Note

Summary descriptive information on this collection was compiled in 2012-2014 as part of a project conducted by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to make better known and more accessible the largely hidden collections of small, primarily volunteer run repositories in the Philadelphia area. The Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) was funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This is a preliminary finding aid. No physical processing, rehousing, reorganizing, or folder listing was accomplished during the HCI-PSAR project.

In some cases, more detailed inventories or finding aids may be available on-site at the repository where this collection is held; please contact African American Museum in Philadelphia directly for more information.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- African American Museum in Philadelphia
- Philadelphia (Pa.). Commission on Human Relations
- Philadelphia (Pa.). Police Advisory Board

Geographic Name(s)

- Philadelphia (Pa.)

Personal Name(s)

- Farmer, Clarence

Subject(s)

- African Americans
- Discrimination
- Museums
- Police misconduct
- Police--Complaints against