

The Emerson Street YMCA collection
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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Shorefront Legacy Center
Title	The Emerson Street YMCA Collection
Date [inclusive]	1900-2010
Extent	1.0 Linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Between 1909 and 1969, the Emerson Street YMCA served Evanston's African-American community. The Emerson Street YMCA Collection was intentionally assembled by Shorefront Legacy Center in an effort to represent the history of the YMCA. Some original photos and documents exist, but the collection primarily contains photocopied items that detail the YMCA's history. The collection spans from 1900 to 2010, with the bulk of the collection from 1909 to 1969.</p>

Historical Note

The Emerson Street YMCA was the segregated branch of the Evanston YMCA that served the African-American community from 1909 to 1969. During its existence, the Emerson Street YMCA was a hub for the African American community in Evanston, providing a physical place for local organizations to meet. The YMCA served as a recreational center for Evanston's African American youth and facilitated athletics, organized social events, and provided entertainment. Until the 1960s, the YMCA also served as a dormitory for African American students who attended Northwestern University. The YMCA served Evanston's African American adult community by providing a meeting place for local organizations. In 1969, the Emerson Street YMCA was shut down following the integration of Evanston's Grove Street YMCA in 1963. The building was demolished in 1980.

Scope and Contents note

The Emerson Street YMCA collection spans from 1900 to 2010, with the bulk of the collection from 1909 to 1969. The collection was put together using original and photocopied materials. Box One contains original documents concerning the Emerson Street YMCA, including photographs, newsletters, annual reports, invitations, programs, and membership cards. Box Two primarily contains photocopied and original newspaper clippings and documents from the 2010 Emerson YMCA Celebration.

Also included in the collection are photocopies of Evanston YMCA minutes that refer to the Emerson Street Branch, spanning from 1954 to 1969, documents relating to James R. Talley, the first executive secretary of the branch, letters from the YMCA Director relating to the Emerson branch, programs from the Emerson YMCA Celebration from 2010, a book, *Gatherings: The History and Activities of the Emerson Street Branch YMCA*, and audiovisual materials.

This collection is unique in that it provides insight into the social lives of African Americans in Evanston. It is also significant in the fact that it is compiled from different archives and uses original documents that cannot be found elsewhere. Researchers interested in African American history in Chicago and Evanston or the YMCA as an organization will find this collection valuable to use.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Shorefront Legacy Center

Processing Information note

CLIR funded Black Metropolis Research Consortium “Color Curtain Processing Project.”

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Talley, James R., 1912-1916	1	1
General YMCA History "Colored Work," undated	1	2
Original Documents- newsletters, annual reports, Evanston YMCA history, 1927-1956	1	3
Photo Prints, undated	1	4
Original Documents- Invitation, Programs, Membership Cards, undated	1	5
Photocopies of Emerson Street Y Images, undated	1	6
General History of Emerson Street YMCA, undated	1	7
Evanston YMCA Minutes, Relating to Emerson Branch, 1954	1	8
Evanston YMCA Minutes, Relating to Emerson Branch, 1956-1957	1	9
Evanston YMCA Minutes, Relating to Emerson Branch, 1958-1959	1	10
Evanston YMCA Minutes, Relating to Emerson Branch, 1960-1961	1	11

Evanston YMCA Minutes, Relating to Emerson Branch, 1968-1969	1	12
Letters from Evanston YMCA Director Relating to Emerson, 1969	1	13
Clippings, 1900-1919	2	14
Clippings, 1920-1929	2	15
Clippings, 1930-1939	2	16
Copies of "Live Y'ER," 1943-1963	2	17
Clippings, 1940-1949	2	18
Clippings, 1950-1959	2	19
Clippings, 1960-1969	2	20
Clippings, 1970	2	21
Emerson YMCA Celebration, 2010	2	22
Gatherings, undated	2	23