

Collection #
M 0692
OM 0370
R1823-1827

**HARRIETTE BAILEY CONN
PAPERS, 1909–1990 (BULK 1970–1979)**

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September 2008

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 9 manuscript boxes; 3 oversize folders, 5 photograph folders, 2 OVA color photograph folders, 1 OVA photograph folder, 1 OVB photograph folder, 1 OVA graphics box, 4 artifacts

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive 1909–1990, Bulk 1970s

PROVENANCE: James Sidney Conn, Alpharetta, GA

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: None

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1997.0061; 1997.0146

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Harriette Vesta Bailey Conn (22 September 1922 to 21 August 1981) was the daughter of Robert Lieutenant and Nelle Vesta Bailey. Born in Indianapolis, she completed her early education in the city's school system, graduating from Crispus Attucks High School at the age of 14 years. As a child, she attended Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church; in her adult life she affiliated with the Unitarian denomination. Following in her father's footsteps, in 1941, she became a second generation alumnus of Talladega College, and she later became an attorney. Her father, Robert L. Bailey, served as deputy attorney general to James Ogden from 1930 to 1932. He later joined the law firm of Robert L. Brokenburr, the first African American to serve in the Indiana State Senate.

Harriette Bailey was an English and Speech major at Talladega College in Alabama. She wrote poetry and plays. She was the first woman president of the college's Little Theatre. Her extra curricular college activities also included a membership in the Young Women's Christian Association and the Alpha Zeta chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority. After graduation from college, Bailey married Clifton Foulks Conn. Seven children: Matinel, Clifton Foulks, Jr., Robert Bailey, Harriette, James Sidney, Cecil Richardson, and Eric Hayes were born to this union. Harriette B. Conn returned to school and earned a law degree from the Indiana University Law School at Indianapolis in 1955. She and Conn divorced in 1960.

From 1955 to 1965, Harriette Bailey Conn served as deputy attorney general of Indiana under Edwin K. Steers. She was a corresponding and research deputy. She worked on cases that involved criminal appeals, extraditions, and declaratory judgments. Her departmental assignments included the Civil Rights Commission, Teachers' Retirement Fund, and the Public Employees Retirement Fund. For a short period in 1965, she worked as a staff abstractor for the Indiana State Highway Department. Along with Marie T. Lauck and Jane Hunt Davis, Conn opened a private law practice in Indianapolis in February 1965. From 1965 to 1967, she served as a deputy prosecuting attorney with the 19th Judicial Circuit. A Republican, she was elected an Indiana state representative from Marion County in 1966, and again in 1968. She served as a member of the Constitutional Revision Committee, a ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, and as chairperson of the Welfare and Social Security Committee during her legislative career. She sponsored bills pertaining to civil rights, aid to dependent children, property rights for married women, private slum clearance, and abortion. As assistant city attorney from 1968 to 1970 during Richard Lugar's administration, Conn served as counsel to the City Council. She helped write the Unigov Council rules, drafted ordinances, and advised the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission.

On 1 May 1970, Harriette B. Conn was appointed State Public Defender by the Supreme Court of Indiana, a position she held until her death. Succeeding Mel Thornberg of Anderson, Conn was the first woman and the first African American to hold the position.

Under Conn's direction, the office that provided legal services for Indiana inmates who could not afford to appeal their convictions or sentences, grew from a staff of three in 1970 to twenty-seven in 1981.

Conn was a member of several legal organizations including the American Bar Association, the Marion County Bar Association, the Indianapolis Bar Association, Indianapolis Lawyers Commission, and the Indiana Women Lawyers Association. She was admitted to the Indiana Bar (1955) and the Bar of the Supreme Court of the United States (1971). In 1974, Conn made an unsuccessful bid for municipal court judge of Marion County, being defeated in the May primary. Conn was a member of the Republican National Committee, Indiana Republicans, and the Fall Creek Valley Republican Club. She was also a member and officer of the non partisan, Greater Indianapolis Women's Political Caucus.

Conn was active in various civic, social, and fraternal organizations, many in which she held a leadership role. A very active mother, some of her early activities and affiliations included Cub Scout Den Mother, Girl Scouts Cookie Chairman, Flanner House Nursery Parents Club, block representative for the Marion County Heart Association and the March of Dimes, and the speaker bureau of the Maternal Health Fund (later Planned Parenthood Association). After college she continued her affiliation with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority by joining Chi Chapter in Indianapolis. She held several offices in the organization and, in 1963; she served as president of the chapter. She was a life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and a member of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. She was also a member of the Talladega Alumni Association, Community Service Council of Metropolitan Indianapolis, Inc., Indianapolis Urban League, Social Action Committee of Family Services, Citizens Forum, and the Happy Gardeners Club. She was on the board of directors of the Indianapolis Senior Citizens Center. She served on an advisory board at Vincennes University.

The recipient of numerous awards, Harriette Bailey Conn was inducted into the Crispus Attucks High School Hall of Fame in 1970. She received an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree from Franklin College in 1971. Twice honored with the state's distinguished service award, she was named Sagamore of the Wabash by Governor Matthew Welsh in 1962, and again by Governor Otis Bowen in 1979.

Sources: Materials in the collection.

Justin E. Walsh, general editor, *A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly*. Volume 2, (Indianapolis: The Select Committee on the Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly in cooperation with the Indiana Historical Bureau).

Stanley Warren, "Robert Bailey: Great Man with a Thirst for Justice," *Black History News & Notes*, February, 1994 Selected issues of the *Indianapolis Recorder*, 1974 and 1978.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Harriette Bailey Conn collection is comprised of 8.5 manuscript boxes and 3 oversize folders. Most of the material relate to Conn, her family, her organizational affiliations, and her legal career. (The collection has been arranged roughly in this order.) Boxes 1 and 2 contain biographical information, personal and general correspondence, and materials that pertain to Conn's political activities and her work as Public Defender of Indiana. Conn participated in a workshop, "Short Course for Defense Lawyers in Criminal Cases." at Northwestern University Law School in 1970. A group photograph of the participants is in box 1, folder 16. There are several photographs of Conn in box 2. Photographs of other individuals (including William H. Hudnut, III, mayor of Indianapolis from 1976-1992) and groups are also in box 2. Materials that pertain to Conn's work as state public defender are in box 2, folders 7 and 8. There is correspondence and an evidence manual. In 1974, Conn ran for Marion County (Indiana) municipal court judge. Though it does not appear she actively sought the office, her name surfaced again as a possible candidate in 1978. A broadside (Harriette Bailey Conn for Judge) and a political office badge pertaining to her 1974 campaign are in box 2. Materials pertaining to both the 1974 and 1978 campaign years are in box 2, folder 7. Membership cards and several program booklets dated from 1953 to 1980 (box 2, folders 10 and 11) attest to Conn's affiliation with various organizations and social groups. Several certificates of accomplishment are in box 1, folders 12. Conn was frequently the subject of or quoted in Indianapolis newspaper articles. There are numerous news clippings in box 1, folders 13–15. They mostly relate to Conn and pertain to Indianapolis news events. Records and papers related to Conn's death are in box 2, folders 4 and 5. Along with newspaper obituaries and a funeral program, there is a copy of a condolence note on White House stationery and signed by President Ronald Reagan. The expression of sympathy is addressed to Matinel Brandon, daughter of Harriette B. Conn. There is also an Indiana Senate Concurrent Resolution memorializing Conn. It is dated 5 January 1982 and is signed by several members of the Indiana General Assembly.

Personal materials pertaining to Conn's children, grandchildren, and father are in box 3. Several of Matinel Conn's high school composition papers are in folder 1. Drawings on paper, cardboard, and wood by Clifton F. Conn, Jr. are in folder 2. Materials related to James Sidney Conn are in folder 3. Preschool papers of his daughter, Kira, are in folder 4. There is a wood drawing of Woody the Woodpecker by Cecil Conn. There are materials pertaining to Robert L. Bailey, Harriette Bailey Conn's father in folders 5 and 6. Of particular note are graded examination papers from the American Correspondence School of Law, a course that Bailey took before his graduation from the Indiana Law School in Indianapolis in 1912. *The National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1913-1955* (folder 7) written in 1955 contains a biographical sketch of Bailey who served as an attorney for the organization during its formative years. The balance of box 3 and most of box 4 contain materials related to Talladega College. Conn was a very active coed. Her college scrapbooks attest to and suggest her membership in several clubs and her personal popularity). The first scrapbook (OM 0370, folder 3), dated 1937-1938, contain invitations to a freshman social, a knitting group, and sorority affairs (Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha

Kappa Alpha). There are programs for the Little Theatre and Chapel services. There are also football tickets, Valentine favors, and cards and napkins from special occasions. The scrapbook ends with several news clippings of hometown people from the *Indianapolis Recorder*. The second scrapbook (folder 8), dated 1938-1939 contains programs from various recitals at the college, pasted pictures of campus buildings including DeForest Chapel, Swayne Hall, Seymour Hall, and Savery Library. Harriette Bailey Conn celebrated her 16th birthday while a college sophomore; there are several birthday cards, as well as Christmas cards in her scrapbook. There is a 1939 program for Delta Sigma Theta's annual May Week. Many items in the scrapbook pertain to Conn's affiliation with the college's Little Theatre. A signed note (dated 7 December 1938) to Conn from Lillian W. Vorhees, Director of Dramatics at Talladega College, apprised her that as the result of her audition, she had been admitted to Little Theatre. During her college career, Conn wrote a play that was performed. It was entitled "Mother of a King." Copies of the play that include colorful costume sketches are in box 3, folders 11 and 12.

The Talladegan materials in box 4 were collected after Conn became a college alumnus. There are several copies of the *Talladegan*, the school's newsletter, in folders 1-4. Published 6 times annually, the copies are dated from 1946 to 1978. There is a student handbook in folder 6 and a 1965 booklet detailing the inauguration of Herman Hodge Long as the 9th president of the college in folder 7. A program from the 1967 celebration of the college's centennial is in folder 8.

Harriette Bailey Conn was associated with numerous organizations and institutions. Beginning with All Souls Unitarian Church in box 4, folder 10 and ending with Vincennes University in box 5, folder 19, collection materials related to these groups are arranged alphabetically. Box 4, folders 21 to 26 pertain to the Delta Sigma Theta sorority, at least three of the folders are 1957-1959 meeting minutes for Chi chapter in Indianapolis. Box 5, folder 8 (Marion County Bar Association) is of particular note. It contains a 1970-71 legal directory and a testimony banquet booklet that includes a tribute to Robert Lee Brokenburr and a program listing for a recognition breakfast held on 21 November 1970. The booklet also lists several Marion County African American attorneys and includes photographs and short biographical descriptions.

Boxes 6 and 7, and most of box 8 contain legal appeals, articles, briefs, notes, papers, petitions, and summaries. As State Public Defender, Conn represented inmates who questioned the legality of their convictions and sentences. In many of the 70-plus legal summaries, articles, and petitions within the collection, the State of Indiana is the defendant. Conn's name appears on many of the briefs. The legal papers address several interesting topics including the right to legal counsel in Indiana, state and federal post conviction remedies, Indiana's rules for post conviction remedies, and procedural due process in prison disciplinary proceedings. Of particular note is a paper, "State Courts and the Federal System," by former United States attorney general Griffin Bell.

The remaining folders in box 8 contain materials on politics, obituary programs, and news clippings dated from 1938 to 1968. Most of the news clippings pertain to events and issues related to Indianapolis. News clippings dated from 1969 to 1987 are in box 9, along with

newsletters dated from 1955 to 1980. A 1955 issue of the National Alliance of Postal Employees newsletter has a cover photograph and a story (page 31) about Harriette Bailey Conn completing her law degree.

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