

Collection #
M 0492
BV 2432-2434
OM 0223

**ROBERT LEE BROKENBURR
PAPERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS, CA. 1937–1973**

Collection Information	1
Biographical Sketch	2
Scope and Content Note	3
Series Contents	5

Processed by

Stephen F. Thompson
December 1987

Reprocessed by

Curtis R. Barsic
August 2010

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: 1 manuscript box, 3 bound volumes, 1 OM folder, 7 photograph folders

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1937–1973

PROVENANCE: Alice Brokenburr Ray

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Madame C.J. Walker Collection

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1985.0429, 1986.0547

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert Lee Brokenburr was born in Phoebus, Virginia on 16 November 1886. His father was Benjamin Brokenburr, emancipated from slavery as a child, and his mother was Mary Elizabeth Bakker Brokenburr. Brokenburr graduated from Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1906. He went on to Howard University Law School, graduating in 1909, and then moved to Indianapolis where he practiced law in the same office as F.B. Ransom. Brokenburr married fellow Hampton graduate Alice Glover in 1911, and they had two children, Alice and Nerissa.

Brokenburr had a very successful career as a lawyer, winning several civil rights cases in Indiana. His most notable cases were *Gaillard vs. Grant*, which tested the constitutionality of a segregation ordinance in Indianapolis ruling that the ordinance was unconstitutional, and *Baily vs. Washington Theatre Company*. Washington Theatre Company refused service to Mrs. Baily in Marion, Indiana. The court ruled against Mrs. Baily; however, Brokenburr appealed, and the ruling was overturned.

In 1914, Brokenburr became the President of the NAACP-Indianapolis Chapter, turning the organization into the most significant force for civil rights in the state. He also served as Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for Marion County from 1919–31. Brokenburr is also known for his efforts, along with F.B. Ransom, to bring Madame Walker Manufacturing Company to Indianapolis, co-writing the Articles of Incorporation and serving as General Manager.

Brokenburr's political career began after he was defeated in the Indiana House of Representatives in 1912, 1932, and 1934. Despite these setbacks, he became the first African American elected to the Indiana State Senate. He served in that capacity from 1941–47 and then again from 1953–63. He authored more than fifty bills during his time in the Senate, most dealing with civil rights. His first bill called for both African American and parochial schools to be admitted into the state basketball tournament. It passed the Senate, but was defeated in the House. However, the Indiana High School Athletic Association felt the pressure and rewrote the rule.

Brokenburr received national recognition when he was appointed as an alternate delegate to the United Nations by President Eisenhower in 1955. On behalf of the United States, he approved the German Federal Republic's application to The International Civil Aviation Organization.

Alice Glover Brokenburr passed away in 1945. Robert Brokenburr soon remarried. He was widowed again when his second wife, Nettie, passed away in 1969. Brokenburr practiced law for sixty-two years before retiring in 1971 and passed away 24 March 1974.

Sources:

Materials in this 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.

Thornbrough, Emma Lou. *Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The materials featured in the Robert Lee Brokenburr collection were compiled by both Alice Brokenburr Ray (daughter) and Mr. Brokenburr himself. The manuscripts and photographs span from 1937–73. The majority of materials directly coincide with Brokenburr’s career as an Indiana State Senator and his four years spent as a United Nations Representative.

The collection is divided into eleven series, comprised of fourteen manuscript folders, seven photograph folders, and three bound volumes. The eleven series titles are: Biography, Correspondence, Speeches, Indiana General Assembly, United Nations, Madame Walker Manufacturing Company, Banquet Programs, Membership Cards and Certificates, Campaign Literature, Alice Brokenburr Ray, and Newspaper Clippings and Scrapbooks. Some materials may overlap.

Series 1: Biography includes various biographical materials. Specifically, a short (five page) biography written by the Brokenburr family, along with a biographical sketch featured in *Profiles of Excellence*. The visual portion of this series includes several photographs of Robert Brokenburr with others. Other photographs feature his first and second wives, Alice Glover Brokenburr (d. 1945) and Nettie Brokenburr (d.1969). Alice Glover’s degree from Hampton Institute is also included.

Series 2: Correspondence is divided into two categories, Correspondence (1945–69) and Telegrams (1963). The majority of the correspondence features congratulatory letters written to Brokenburr. Some notable congratulatory letters were written by John Foster Dulles and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. Additional letters were written by Brokenburr’s constituents, urging him to not raise taxes or to support certain bills. The telegrams were all sent in 1963 and contain various subject matters.

Series 3: Speeches includes three speeches. The first speech was given in honor of Brokenburr, while the second two were given by Brokenburr himself. Brokenburr gave a speech at New York City College in 1955. He also gave a speech on Lincoln Day, 1963 to the Indiana General Assembly

Series 4: Indiana General Assembly includes materials pertaining to Brokenburr’s tenure as an Indiana state senator. The bulk of this series is contained in a chronological list of bills authored or co-authored by Brokenburr. There is a photograph of Brokenburr serving as Judge Pro Tem of the Senate and oversize maps of the Senate floor.

Series 5: United Nations contains materials from Brokenburr’s tenure as a representative to the United Nations. There is a United Nations bulletin from 1954 and a document admitting West Germany into the International Civil Aviation Organization. Five photographs of Brokenburr at the U.N., in various settings are also included.

Series 6: Madame Walker Manufacturing Company contains various legal documents dealing with the incorporation of Madame Walker Manufacturing Company in Indiana. Two photographs are also included.

Series 7: Banquet Programs features two banquet programs honoring Brokenburr and one church bulletin. The two banquet programs are entitled “Brokenburr-Kuykendall Testimonial Banquet” and “Testimonial Dinner: The Honorable Robert Lee Brokenburr” respectively. Also included are a summary of remarks at a dinner on 14 November 1964. A memorial service bulletin for Ms. Parthenia Rollins is also in the collection. This means that someone from the Brokenburr Family attended the service.

Series 8: Membership Cards and Certificates. Brokenburr belonged to many clubs and organizations throughout his life. This series features a number of membership cards and certificates that Brokenburr was awarded for his service

Series 9: Campaign Literature. The only campaign literature in the entire collection is a brochure for Charles M. Dawson about his campaign for Lieutenant Governor.

Series 10: Alice Brokenburr Ray includes various materials featuring Brokenburr’s daughter Alice Ray. Materials from the “Black Women in the Middle West” project and the Browser Book Club are prominent. There is also a photograph of Alice Ray with other unidentified people.

Series 11: Newspaper Clippings and Scrapbook features many newspaper clippings. These clippings are divided into two sections: 1941–54 and 1955–73. Also included in this series are three complete scrapbooks. Scrapbook #1 includes newspaper clippings from 1937–1940. Scrapbook #2 includes clippings from 1963. Scrapbook #3 includes newspaper clippings from 1955. Most of the newspaper clippings in the scrapbooks deal with political and judicial problems.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Biography

CONTENTS

Biography: Included is a short biography written by the Brokenburr family; a chapter in *Profiles of Excellence* written by Martin L. Mcauliffe, Jr.

Robert Brokenburr et. al: 4 Photographs 1) Brokenburr after receiving his Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree at Howard University. Dr. Mordecai Johnson in Center; 2) Brokenburr being congratulated by Mordecai Johnson after receiving Honorary Doctorate of Laws; 3) Brokenburr with Governor Hardley (autographed photo). 4) Governor Hardley, President Nixon, Unknown lady and gentleman with Brokenburr.

Alice Glover Brokenburr (d. 1945): Portrait, ca. 1936; Portrait of Alice for Phyllis Wheatley Branch Committee Role, ca. 1930s

Diploma from Hampton Institute (1909)

Nettie Brokenburr (d. 1969): Image of Robert Brokenburr's second wife with Mrs. Harold Handley.

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs,
Folder 1

Photographs,
Folder 2

OM 0223,
Folder 1

Photographs,
Folder 3

Series 2: Correspondence

CONTENTS

Correspondence (1945- 1963): Majority of correspondence congratulating Brokenburr on winning office; Official Indiana General Assembly papers; Letter congratulating Brokenburr for his appointment on the United States delegation to the United Nations from John Foster Dulles; Several letters from Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., discussing various topics; Some letters from supporters urging Brokenburr to support or oppose certain legislation as a member of the Indiana General Assembly.

Correspondence (1963- 1969): Majority of correspondence congratulating Brokenburr on winning office; Official Indiana General Assembly papers; Letter congratulating Brokenburr

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 3

for his appointment on the United States delegation to the United Nations from John Foster Dulles; Several letters from Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., discussing various topics; Some letters from supporters urging Brokenburr to support or oppose certain legislation as a member of the Indiana General Assembly.

Telegrams (1963): 9 Western Union Telegrams all addressed to Brokenburr: 1-2) telegrams congratulate Brokenburr; 3) thanking Brokenburr for passing Senate Bill 256; 4) from the Indiana Farm Bureau supporting an increase in state taxes; 5) urging tax cuts for small grocery stores and wholesalers; 6-9) from citizens asking for taxes to remain at present levels.

Box 1, Folder 4

Series 3: Speeches

CONTENTS

Speeches: 3 speeches given either by Brokenburr or introducing him: 1) Speech titled "Introduction of Robert Lee Brokenburr: Hampton Alumni Association" given by Val J. Washington on October 22, 1955; 2) Speech given by Brokenburr on November 12, 1955 at New York City College, discussing the intricacies of the U.N.; 3) Lincoln Day Address given by Brokenburr to the Indiana General Assembly in 1963.

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 5

Series 4: Indiana General Assembly

CONTENTS

Legislation: Chronological summary of Bills written or co-written by Brokenburr dating from 1941- 1961; A Senate Resolution written by Brokenburr to the President of the Senate proclaiming the week of February 7-13 as Boy Scout Week.

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 6

Judge Pro Tem: Brokenburr serving as Judge Pro Tem et. al.

Photographs,
Folder 4

Map of Senate Chamber: 2 Maps of the Indiana Senate Chamber: 1) Map of Senate Chamber with photographs ca. 1963. 2) Map of Senate Chamber without photographs

OM 0223,
Folder 1

Series 5: United Nations

CONTENTS

United Nations: Bulletin titled “Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly”, July 1955; Document summary outlining the admission of West Germany to the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Photographs: 5 Images. 1) Brokenburr addressing U.N. General Assembly; 2) Brokenburr and two petitioners from Togoland; 3) Chinese Reception at U.N.- Minister Yeh and Brokenburr; 4) Ceylon (Sri Lanka) Reception- Ambassador and Mrs. Gunervardene with Mr. and Mrs. Brokenburr; 5) Cuban Buffet Supper- Mr. Lord, Rep. Portuondo and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Brokenburr, and Ralph Bunche and Wife.

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 7

Photographs,
Folder 5

Series 6: Madame Walker Manufacturing Company

CONTENTS

Madame Walker Manufacturing Company: Corporate documents incorporating Madame Walker Manufacturing Company in Indiana including: Power of Attorney, Articles of Incorporation, and Articles of Acceptance.

Photographs: 2 Photos 1) New York City commemorating 50th? Anniversary of business. 1st row: A’Lelia Ransom Nelson; Robert L. Brokenburr, Mary Mcleod Bethune, ?. 2nd row: Mrs. Violet Reynolds, Mrs. Joyner, W.B. Ransom, F.E. Detrantz Sr; 2) Outside of Madame C.J. Walker’s College of Beauty Culture (Indianapolis?). William B. Ransom, Mrs. Joyner, Mrs. Violet Reynolds, and two unidentified gentlemen.

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 8

Photographs,
Folder 6

Series 7: Banquet Programs

CONTENTS

Banquet and Church Bulletins: 2 banquet programs: 1) Brokenburr-Kuykendall Testimonial Banquet, Sunday August 28, 1955; 2) The Honorable Robert Lee Brokenburr, November 14, 1964; Summary of Remarks at Dinner in Honor of Senator Robert Lee Brokenburr, November 14, 1964; Church bulletin from the memorial service for Mrs.

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 9

Parthenia Rollins, October 22, 1952.

Series 8: Certificates and Membership Cards

CONTENTS

Membership Cards: Indiana State Bar Association, Federation of Associated Clubs, American Bar Association, Boy Scouts of America, NAACP (Lifetime Membership), Indianapolis Legal Aid Society, Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and Southern Cross.

Certificates: Contribution to Senate Avenue Y.M.C.A.; Indiana Republican Editorial Association (Certificate of Appreciation); Indianapolis Bar Association (50 year membership)

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 10

Series 9: Campaign Literature

CONTENTS

Campaign Literature: Brochure for Charles M. Dawson-Republican Candidate for Lieutenant-Governor ca. 1941.

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 11

Series 10: Alice Brokenburr Ray

CONTENTS

Alice Brokenburr Ray: Black Women in the Middle West Donor Contact Form; Browser Book Club brochures, programs, and book lists.

Photograph: Mrs. William T. Ray (Alice Brokenburr Ray) being sworn in as Welfare Board Member ca. 1944.

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 12

Photographs,
Folder 7

Series 11: Newspaper Clippings and Scrapbooks

CONTENTS

Newspaper Clippings (1941-1954): Various newspaper clippings about Brokenburr's early career as an Indiana State Senator.

Newspaper Clippings (1955-1973): Various newspaper clippings about Brokenburr's time in the United Nations and

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 13

Box 1, Folder 14

other topics of interest to him.

Scrapbook #1 (1937-1940): Various political and judicial newspaper clippings from the *Indianapolis Star*, *Indianapolis Recorder*, *Indianapolis News*, and the *Indianapolis Times*. Many articles were anti-FDR. BV 2432

Scrapbook #2 (1963): Newspaper clippings more focused on party politics, included are many political cartoons. Newspapers included are *Indianapolis Times*, *Indianapolis News*, and the *Indianapolis Star*. BV 2433

Scrapbook #3 (1955): Newspaper clippings featuring mostly international news, coinciding with Brokenburr's appointment to the U.N. Mostly Soviet and Israeli news. All clippings are from the New York Times. BV 2434