



THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI RESEARCH CENTER-KANSAS CITY

K1219

Thomas A. Webster (1907-1988) Papers

1921-1988

9 cubic feet, 5 oversize volumes

Webster was executive director of the Urban League of Kansas City, community activist, and chairman of the Social Science Department of Avila College. Includes files related to his research and writing: notes, clippings, preliminary and final drafts of articles, correspondence, and printed material. Also his personal and professional correspondence and scrapbooks and files of his wife, Fern Beck Webster (1911-2002), an early childhood educator and advocate.

BIOGRAPHY:

Thomas A. Webster was born to Charles and Annie Webster in Wilmington, Delaware on March 2, 1907. He received his A.B. in Sociology from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1931 and came to Kansas City in 1932 to become Industrial Relations Secretary for the Urban League. He was named Executive Director of the League in 1935 and served in that capacity for 23 years, retiring in 1958. In 1949, he earned a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Kansas. From 1959 to 1960, he was an instructor in Sociology at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, after which he joined the faculty of Avila College and served as Chairman of the Social Science Department until 1975.

Throughout his life, Webster was a community activist, receiving numerous awards and serving on many committees, commissions, and boards, including: The Kansas City Housing Authority, the Jackson County Charter Commission, the Jackson County Advisory Commission on Human Relations, the Missouri Housing Development Commission, the Jackson County Charter Review Commission, the Governor's Advisory Council for Housing and Neighborhood Investment Study, the Santa Fe Outreach Project. He was a life member of the Urban League and received awards from the Ivanhoe Club, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, the Kansas City Regional Council, and the NAACP Harold L. Holliday, Sr. Civil Rights Award. Webster was an active member of St. Augustine's Episcopal Church.

Webster's personal research interests included the culture of the Cuna Indians of San Blas, Panama, as well as other, Pre-Columbian societies, and he made several study trips in the 1960s and 1970s. He was also a prolific writer of articles and book reviews which appeared frequently in the *Kansas City Star*, the *Kansas City Call*, and other publications throughout the country.

Webster married Fern Araminta Beck on March 2, 1935, and they had one daughter, Carolyn. Fern Webster was an early childhood educator herself, receiving an award from the Missouri State Board of Education in 1982. Thomas Webster died on October 7, 1988.

PROVENANCE:

This gift was received from Fern Beck Webster as accession KA1019 on January 5, 1999.

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Specific item; folder number; *Thomas A. Webster (1907-1988) Papers* (K1219); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-KC].

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DESCRIPTION:

The collection chiefly consists of Webster's files related to his research and writing. Folders may include notes, clippings, preliminary and final drafts of articles, correspondence, and printed material. The collection also contains his personal and professional correspondence from 1976-86. Boxes 7 and 8 contain materials related to Fern Webster's profession as an educator.

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- Folder 1.28 *Abolitionism* by Joaquim Nabuco- review, 1970s
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- Folder 1.31 Urban League Research Council, August 12, 1982
- Folder 1.32 *The Riddle of Violence* by Kenneth Kaunda- review
- Folder 1.33 *This Was Harlem, 1900-1950* by Jervis Anderson, 1982
- Folder 1.34 Critiques – Fell and Sertima books, 1986
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- Folder 2.21 Glossalia, 1970s
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- Folder 4.25 *Groundwork: Charles H. Houston* by Genna Rae McNeil, 1984
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Community Survey of Social and Health Work in KCMO, 1939

FERN BECK WEBSTER

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- Folder 8.21 Anthropology/Medical articles and journals, 1943-1981
- Folder 8.22 Lincoln High School yearbooks, 1921, 1922, 1925, 1926, 1935, 1938

The Crisis Magazine, June/July 1988

Bryant, Girard Thompson. *The Colored Brother: A History of the Negro and the Populist Movement*. Kansas City, MO: The Maple Woods Community College Press, 1981

Our City in Racial Ferment – KC Star/Times series, 1968

National Urban League – 70th anniversary, 1980

State Board of Education award and photograph, 1982

BOX 009

Folder 9.1 Illustrations and photographs of influential Blacks (moved to Flatbox)

The State of Black America (National Urban League), 1980, 1982

Kansas City's Santa Fe Neighborhood: Analysis and Report, 1982

Pasteur, Alfred, Ivory Toldson. *Roots of Soul: The Psychology of Black Expressiveness*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1982

National Urban League- Quarter Century Club Silver Anniversary Dinner, Chicago, July 23, 1979 desk stand

Scroll (Urban League?)

FLAT BOXES 001 AND 002

Framed photograph – Beau Brummel Club 15th Anniversary, Elks Rest, February 9, 1934

Green scrapbook – Fern, c.1975-1980

Brown scrapbook – clippings, 1951-1957

2 large black scrapbooks – clippings and articles on various black and civic issues, 1932-1988

1 large black scrapbook – correspondence, photographs, printed material, clippings, awards, certificates, 1930-1988

Folder 1. Illustrations and photographs of influential Blacks