

Will Gravely Collection

Mss.0299

Willie Earle Investigation

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SUMMARY INFORMATION

Repository

Clemson University Libraries Special Collections

Title

Will Gravely Collection - Willie Earle Investigation

ID

Mss.0299

Date [inclusive]

1947-2001

Extent

0.3 cubic feet

Language

English

Mixed materials [Box]

1

Audio [Item]

1

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HISTORICAL NOTE

On February 16, 1947, 24 year-old Willie Earle, a black man, was arrested for the February 15 murder of taxi driver Thomas Watson Brown. On the morning of February 17, 1947, a group of men seized Earle from the Pickens County, South Carolina jail and lynched him. Immediate investigation resulted in the arrest of 31 white men who were tried in May 1947 and found not guilty.

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS

The collection consists of photocopies of correspondence, memoranda, clippings, teletypes/telegrams, excerpts from lab reports, an oral history interview with transcripts, and an investigative report concerning the February 17, 1947 lynching of Willie Earle. The files document the Federal Bureau of Investigation's involvement in the case and documentation of its coverage in the media. Professor Will Gravely obtained the bulk of this material under the Freedom of Information Act in 2001. Prior to obtaining these files, Gravely conducted an interview with Senator Strom Thurmond concerning the incident. Thurmond was Governor of South Carolina in 1947 when Mr. Earle was killed. The interview took place in Washington, DC on August 21, 1989. The investigative report includes a synopsis of the case; report on the crime scene investigation, preliminary investigation and interviews; copies of statements by suspects, divided into those and those who did not confess to the lynching; copies of corroborating interviews. These files include documents that have redactions and can be compared with similar files found in Mss 165, the Alan Schaffer Collection of FBI files of the Willie Earle case that he obtained in the 1980s. There is material related to the defense lawyers John Bolt Culbertson and Thomas Wofford, as well as J. Edgar Hoover's interest in the case.

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ARRANGEMENT

Gravely created an item level log for this material and divided it in three sections with the first section being divided into two parts.

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Publication Information

Clemson University Libraries Special Collections

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Will Gravely donated the FBI files in 2008. The interview of Senator Thurmond was donated by Mr. Gravely via Strom Thurmond, Jr. in 2005. Accession numbers: 05-15 and 08-

31.

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CONTROLLED ACCESS HEADINGS

Corporate Name(s)

- United States. Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Personal Name(s)

- Culbertson, John Bolt
- Earle, Willie, d. 1947
- Gravely, William, 1939-
- Hoover, J. Edgar, (John Edgar), 1895-1972
- Thurmond, Strom, 1902-2003
- Wofford, Thomas Albert, 1908-1978

Subject(s)

- African Americans--Crimes against.
- Lynching--South Carolina.

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