

1121-107-GSM-gau (USMARC) [GSG (OCLC/LYRASIS)]
City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia

Record Series #: 1121-107

Name: W. W. Law Book collection

Dates: 1810, 1830-2002, 2004, no date

Extent/Size: 367 records cartons; 144 items (366 cubic feet; 13 linear feet)

Language: English

Name of Creator(s):

Westley Wallace Law (W. W. Law)

Biographical History:

W. W. Law (1923-2002) was a prominent Civil Rights leader, local historian, historic preservationist and community leader in Savannah, Georgia. Westley Wallace Law was born on January 1, 1923 in Savannah, Georgia, the oldest of three children of Geneva Wallace and Westley Law. He had two younger sisters, Dorothy Law, 1924-1975, and Tessie (Tessye) Law Sanders (1927-). Law was greatly influenced by his mother, Geneva W. Law, grandmother, Lillie Belle Wallace, mentor, Reverend Ralph Mark Gilbert, and scoutmaster, John S. Delaware. Both Reverend Gilbert and John Delaware were officials in the Savannah chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Law joined the NAACP Youth Council in high school and later served as its president. He attended Georgia State Industrial College (now Savannah State University) before being drafted into the U. S. Army during World War II. After he completed his military service, he finished his bachelor's degree in biology. Law was a long-time boy scoutmaster for Troop 49 which was made up of boys from First Bryan Baptist Church, of which he was a member and Sunday school teacher. He was a mail carrier for the United States Postal Service for over forty years.

From 1950-1976 Law served as President of the Savannah chapter of the NAACP. During the 1960s, he led weekly mass meetings at Bolton Street Baptist Church and St. Philip A.M.E. Church during which he urged "passive resistance to segregation" and nonviolent protests. He was involved in efforts to desegregate Grayson Municipal Stadium, department store lunch counters on Broughton Street, and the beaches at Tybee Island. He led an eighteen-month boycott of Broughton Street merchants. Law is largely credited for helping to keep Savannah's Civil Rights movement more peaceful than those in other southern cities. In 1961, he was fired from his postal job because of his Civil Rights activities, but reinstated after national NAACP leaders and President John F. Kennedy came to his defense.

After finishing his run as NAACP president, he focused his efforts on preserving Savannah African American History. He established the Savannah-Yamacraw Branch of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH), the King-Tisdell Cottage Museum, Beach Institute African American Cultural Center, the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum, and the Negro Heritage Trail Tour. He also helped bring attention to and preserve Laurel Grove South Cemetery, the City's historically African American municipal cemetery.

Law received honorary doctorates from the Savannah College of Art & Design and Savannah State University. He was honored by the National Trust for Historic

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Preservation and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation for his preservation efforts in the community. W. W. Law died on July 28, 2002 at his home in Savannah. He willed his home and belongings to Remer K. Pendergraph who formed the W. W. Law Foundation to celebrate and continue the work of W. W. Law.

For more information on W. W. Law see:

Elmore, Charles J. "W. W. Law (1923-2002)." New Georgia Encyclopedia last updated 24 August 2020 (available on the web at <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/w-w-law-1923-2002>).

Scope & Content:

The W. W. Law Book Collection contains over 6,000 books in various genres, formats and lengths. The subject matter and genres are various including: history, biographies, memoirs, poetry, cookbooks, textbooks, children's picture books, photography, and music. The largest genre represented in the collection is history, it makes up over 1,346 books in the collection, with most of those being about African American history. Also included in this collection are several Savannah books on fiction, history, food, and people. There are rare, fragile, autographed, and inscribed books as well. Inscriptions come from Law's friends as gifts or from the authors of the books. One such notable author and friend to Law was Langston Hughes, who inscribed his book, "Simple Speaks the Mind," to Law after visiting Savannah in 1951.

System of Arrangement & Ordering:

Books in relation to Savannah, Georgia are available to read in the Municipal Archives Research Room, upon request at a research appointment. The books are shelved by call number according to Library of Congress standards, unless indicated in the catalog that the book is fragile, separately shelved for its preservation, or it has been assigned a local call number by the archives.

Books not related to Savannah, Georgia are boxed offsite. The books are boxed together by subject matter.

The following inventories are available and keyword searchable:

[Inventory by author's last name](#)

[Inventory by call number](#)

[Inventory by date](#)

[Inventory by title](#)

[Inventory by subject](#)

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Related Collections:

Record Series 1121-106, W. W. Law Reference files, City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

Record Series 1121-111, W. W. Law Pamphlet collection, City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

Record Series, 1121-112, W. W. Law Personal papers, City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

Access Points:

African American musicians.
African Americans--Georgia--Savannah
African Americans-Books and Reading--History
Archeology
Architecture
Autobiography
Bell, Malcolm, 1913-2001
Biography
Colonial Cemetery (Savannah, Ga.)
Cookbooks
Debolt, Margaret Wayt, 1930-
Education--Georgia

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Ellis, Ray, 1921-2013
Elmore, Charles J.
First African Baptist Church (Savannah, Ga.)
First Bryan Baptist Church (Savannah, Ga.)
Gamble, Thomas, 1868-1945
Garden City (Ga.)
Georgia Historical Society
Georgia Historical Society. Genealogical Committee
Hilton Head Island, (S.C.)
Historic buildings--Georgia--Savannah
Historic gardens--Georgia
Historic Savannah Foundation
Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967
Jewish cemeteries
Lane, Mills, 1937-
Laurel Grove Cemetery (Savannah, Ga.)
Lawrence, Alexander A., 1906-1979
Photography
Price, Eugenia
Savannah (Ga.)--Fiction
Savannah (Ga.)--History
Savannah (Ga.)--Race relations
Savannah College of Art and Design
Savannah River (Ga. and S. C.)
Savannah State University (Ga.)
Ships
Simms, James M. (James Meriles)
Travel--Guidebooks

Sponsors/Funding:

Chatham County, Georgia, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funding.

Preferred Citation:

1121-107, W. W. Law Book collection. City of Savannah Municipal Archives,
Savannah, Georgia.

Processed by:

Inventoried by B. Pye, 2017; C. Leite, 2018-2019; E. Rountree, 2020; final inventories
and finding aid by M. Kerkhoff, 2023; revised August 2025.