MSS0541. Jerry Thornbery collection finding aid

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## Jerry Thornbery collection finding aid

| **Title:** | Jerry Thornbery collection |
| **Collection No:** | MSS.0541 |
| **Extent:** | 5.25 cubic feet |
| **Inclusive Dates:** | 1950s-1980s, 2000s |

**Abstract:**
This collection contains photocopied materials that document Civil Rights history in Tennessee and Mississippi during the height of the movement. In particular, it covers the history of Operation Freedom, Fayette and Haywood County Workcamps, and other humanitarian organizations along with the civil rights leaders who were involved including Virgie Hortenstine, Amzie Moore, and Maurice F. McCrackin.

**Processed by:** Grace Neeley, 2024  
**Access:** Open to all researchers.  
**Language:** English  
**Preferred Citation:** Jerry Thornbery collection, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis

**Publication date:** 2024 April
Background Information

Maurice McCrackin (1905-1997) was a Presbyterian minister, pacifist, and human and civil rights activist. In 1961, John McFerren (Fayette County) and Odell Saunders (Haywood County) meet with McCrackin and other peacemakers to discuss how the outside activists might effectively help Blacks in Fayette and Haywood County, Tennessee, struggling for civil rights. The group agrees to call McCrackin's and the peacemakers' aid "Operation Freedom." Students who signed on to aid the program would live with Black sharecropper families, do some teaching, voter registration, and anything they could help with over a short period of time.

Virgie Bernhardt Hortenstine (1912-1985) was a Quaker peace activist from Cincinnati, Ohio. She assisted in the administration of Operation Freedom. Hortenstine led the Fayette-Haywood Workcamps, which provided educational and employment training to poor Blacks. The Fayette Haywood Workcamp organization was chartered in February of 1968, but began working, through Operation Freedom, in Fayette and Haywood Counties nearly a decade before being chartered. The organization is now considered inactive, but the exact date of the organization's end is unknown. Hortenstine, the leader of the organization, worked in Fayette and Haywood counties until her death.

Amzie Moore (1911–1982) was an African American civil rights leader and entrepreneur in the Mississippi Delta. He helped lead voter registration efforts and was extremely influential in advocating and registering African Americans in Mississippi to exercise their right to vote as American citizens. Moore became a major adviser to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Mississippi. His grassroots strategies helped the organization to launch a major voter registration drive during Freedom Summer in 1964. After the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, Moore continued his social and economic activism. He retired from the post office in 1968 and proceeded to organize programs for Head Start, the Child Development Group of Mississippi, and the National Council of Negro Women.

Scope and contents

This collection is comprised of research materials collected by Jerry Thornbery. The materials were assembled by Thornbery from various archives and universities in the United States, such as the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Cincinnati Historical Society, American Friends Service Committee, Wilmington College, and Swarthmore College. It contains three boxes of photocopied correspondence that deal with the work of Operation Freedom and later by Virgie Hortenstine in aiding families and with the establishment of workcamps in West Tennessee. A fourth box of photocopies deals with civil rights in general and Amzie Moore’s work in Mississippi in particular. A fifth and sixth box contains photocopies concerning the origins and activities of Operation Freedom, focusing primarily on the activities of Reverend Maurice F. McCrackin and his pacifist associates in West Tennessee and in Mississippi.

Related collection
Subject terms

Civil rights--Mississippi.
Civil rights--Tennessee.
Hortonstine, Virgie
McCrankin, Maurice
Moore, Amzie
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Operation Freedom (Organization)
Workcamps

Inventory

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Square Mormon

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Voting Project, Jackson, Tennessee, 1962

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2 Hortenstine family

3 Virgie Hortenstine papers

4 Notes on newsletters checklist

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6 Hortenstine Operation Freedom Work, 1961-1962

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