Inventory of the
Lonnie Hamilton, III Papers, 1950 - 2001
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Lonnie Hamilton, III Papers,
Dates: 1950 - 2001
Creator: Hamilton, Lonnie, III.
Abstract: Lonnie Hamilton, III was a musician, educator, and community leader. Notably, Hamilton was the first African American to serve on the Charleston County Council.

The collection includes material related to Hamilton's personal life and professional career as an educator, musician, and Charleston County Councilman. The material in the personal series includes feature articles on his life, his involvement with community organizations including Spoleto Festival, U.S.A., and political groups such as the Charleston County Democratic Party. The professional material includes programs and newspaper articles about Hamilton's career as the Band Director for Bonds-Wilson High School and his position as the Director of Adult Education. Programs, newspaper articles, and correspondence reflect his career as a Charleston County Councilman. His musical career is documented with invitations and programs from various performances by Lonnie Hamilton and the Diplomats, Lonnie Hamilton and the Ambassadors, and the Lonnie Hamilton Quintet. Materials also relate to other professional ventures, such as Lonnie's, a nightclub in Charleston, South Carolina.

Extent: 5.0 linear feet (10 archival boxes)
Repository: Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston
Call Number: AMN 1096
Language of Material: Material in English

Biographical Note

Lonnie Hamilton (born 1927) was a musician, educator, and community leader. Notably, Hamilton was the first African American to serve on the Charleston County Council.

Lonnie Hamilton, III was born to Anna Hall Hamilton and Lonnie Hamilton, Jr. in Charleston, South Carolina. His musical career began in the 1940s as a student at Burke High School. During this time, he began playing the saxophone and was eventually invited to play with the Jenkins' Orphanage Band. Before graduating high school, Hamilton traveled for two summers with this influential band.

Hamilton received a music scholarship to attend South Carolina State College in Orangeburg and continued to play the saxophone throughout his college career; after which he held the position of Band Instructor in Union, South Carolina, and then at Bonds-Wilson High School. He taught over 3,000 students during his 20 years as an educator. As a musician, Hamilton was a member of various bands, including Lonnie Hamilton the Diplomats, and appeared for performances on numerous occasion during the Lonnie Hamilton Show, at his nightclub Lonnie's, and elsewhere.
In 1970, Hamilton became the first elected African American to serve on the Charleston County Council. He continued to serve in this position until his loss in 1994. He was twice elected to serve as Chairman of Charleston County Council, also making him the first African American to occupy the position.

In 1978, Hamilton was inducted to the Burke Hall of Fame. Other recognition includes the naming of the interchange of Interstate 26 and Interstate 526 in his honor. In 2003, former students of Bonds-Wilson High School joined together to form the charitable Lonnie Hamilton, III Foundation, which focuses on educational achievement.

Hamilton served on various committees and organizations, including Spoleto Festival, U.S.A, the American Cancer Association and the United Negro College Fund. Hamilton was also a member of the South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC). In 1982 he became the first African American president of SCAC. He is a member of Cavalry Episcopal Church.

Hamilton has been married to Clarissa Hill Hamilton since 1956. They have one daughter, Kendra.

**Chronology List**

1927  
Lonnie Hamilton, III is born

1951  
Graduates from South Carolina State College

1953-1954  
Begins as Band Director for Bonds-Wilson High School

1956  
Marries Clarissa Hill

1960s  
Forms Lonnie and the Diplomats

1963  
Appears on the Lonnie Hamilton Show

1970  
Becomes the first African American elected to serve on the Charleston County Council

1974  
Re-elected to Charleston County Council

1976  
Elected Chairman of Charleston County Council

1977  
Installed as Chairman of Charleston County Council

1978  
Inducted into the Burke High School Hall of Fame.

1978  
Re-Elected to Charleston County Council

1982  
Re-elected to Charleston County Council

1982  
Elected president of the South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC), becoming the first African American president of SCAC

1982  
Opens Lonnie’s

1986  
Re-elected to Charleston County Council

1986  
Re-elected as Chairman of Charleston County Council

1990  
Re-elected to Charleston County Council

1994  
Loses election for Charleston County Council

1995  
Interchange named in honor of Lonnie Hamilton, III

**Collection Overview**

The collection includes material related to Hamilton's personal life and professional career as an educator, musician, and Charleston County Councilman. The material in the personal series includes feature articles on his life, his involvement with community organizations including Spoleto Festival, U.S.A., and political groups such as the Charleston County Democratic Party. The professional material includes programs and newspaper articles about Hamilton’s career as the Band Director for Bonds-Wilson High School and his position as the Director of Adult Education. Programs, newspaper articles, and correspondence reflect his career as a Charleston County Councilman. His musical career is documented with invitations and programs from various performances by Lonnie Hamilton and the Diplomats, Lonnie Hamilton and the Ambassadors, and the Lonnie Hamilton Quintet. Materials also relate to other professional ventures, such as Lonnie’s, a nightclub in Charleston, South Carolina.
Collection Arrangement

1. Personal, 1950-1995

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

No restrictions.

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Subject Headings

African American band directors -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

African American jazz musicians -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

African American musicians -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

African American politicians -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

African American teachers -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

African Americans -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

Band directors -- South Carolina -- Charleston.


Charleston County Council -- History -- 20th century.

Charleston (S.C.) -- Politics and government -- 20th century.

County council members -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

Hamilton, Lonnie, III.

Jazz musicians -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

Lonnie Hamilton and the Ambassadors (Musical group).

Lonnie Hamilton and the Diplomats (Musical group).

Lonnie Hamilton Quintet (Musical group).
Musicians -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

Saxophonists -- South Carolina -- Charleston.

Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

Teachers -- South Carolina -- Charleston -- 20th century.

**Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Lonnie Hamilton, III, Avery Research Center, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, USA.

**Processing Information**

Processed by Melissa Bronheim, June 2010

Encoded by Melissa Bronheim, June 2010

Funding from the Council on Library and Information Resources supported the collection processing and encoding of this finding aid.
Detailed Description of the Collection

1. Personal, 1950-1995

Arranged alphabetically

Education

Box 1 Folder 1
South Carolina State College: Photograph, circa 1950

Box 1 Folder 2
Burke High School: Program, 1987

Box 1 Folder 3
Calvary Episcopal Church: Programs, 1955-1991

Box 1 Folder 4
Correspondence, 1966-1990

Box 1 Folder 5
Immaculate Conception School: Parent Teacher Organization Programs, 1968-1969

Box 1 Folder 6
Feature Articles, 1969-1995

Civic Involvement

Community Organizations

Box 1 Folder 7
American Cancer Society, 1990-1995

Box 1 Folder 8
National Community Education Association, undated

Box 1 Folder 9
National Education Association, 1969

Box 1 Folder 10

Box 1 Folder 11
United Negro College Fund, 1975-1995

Box 1 Folder 12

Fraternal Organizations

Box 1 Folder 13
Omega Psi Phi: Mu Alpha Chapter, 1970-1989

Governmental Agencies

Box 1 Folder 14-15
National Association of Counties: Correspondence, 1976-1994

Box 1 Folder 16-20
South Carolina Association of Counties: Correspondence, 1977-2001

Political Groups

Box 1 Folder 21
The Charleston County Democratic Party, 1970

Box 1 Folder 22
Democratic Party of South Carolina, 1969-1974


Arranged chronologically

2.1. Educator, 1954-1990
Bonds-Wilson High School Band Director

Box 2 Folder 23  Photographs, 1954-1976 and undated
Box 2 Folder 24  Article, 1959-1971 and undated
Box 2 Folder 25  Programs, 1959-1972 and undated
Box 2 Folder 26  Correspondence, 1970-1978
Box 2 Folder 27  Certificate, 1990

Director of Adult Education

Box 2 Folder 28  Articles, 1976-1987
Box Folder 29  Programs, 1976-1987

2.2. Musician, 1957-2000

Box 2 Folder 30-31  Solo Performances, 1957-2000

Box 2 Folder 32  The Lonnie Hamilton Show, 1963
Box 2 Folder 33  Jenkins Orphanage Band, 1977-1990
Box 2 Folder 34  Lonnie Hamilton and the Diplomats, 1979-1999 and undated
Box 2 Folder 35  The Lonnie Hamilton Quintet, 1983 and 1993-1994
Box 2 Folder 36  Lonnie Hamilton and the Ambassadors, 1994
Box 2 Folder 37  Feature Articles, 1984-1991

2.3. Charleston County Councilman and Chairman of Charleston County Council, 1970-2001

Box 2-3 Folder 38-41  Campaigns, 1970-1994

Box 3-4 Folder 42-49  Campaign Correspondence, 1970-1994

Box 4 Folder 50  Campaign Ephemera, 1970
Box 4 Folder 51  Charleston County Council Member Certificate, 1970
Box 4-8 Folder 52-87  Business Correspondence, 1970-2001

Box 9 Folder 88-110  Newspaper Articles, 1970-1994
Box 9-10 Folder 111-121 Programs, 1970-2001
Box 10 Folder 122 Nametags and Badges, undated
Box 10 Folder 123 Letterhead, undated

2.4. Other

Box 10 Folder 124 Calendar: Professional Engagements, 1970
Box 10 Folder 125 Lonnie's (Nightclub)
Box 10 Folder 126 Palmetto Travel Sales and Marketing Groups and Cruises, 1984
       Newspaper Articles
       Certificate
       Nametags and Badges