K0642
William L. Fambrough, Sr. (1916-1983) Photograph Collection
1940s-1970s
100 photographs, 2100 negatives

Negatives and prints recording events and people taken by Fambrough, a Kansas City African-American professional photographer.

BIOGRAPHY:

William Fambrough’s experiences as a photographer date back to his childhood in Kansas City when he received a Brownie camera as a gift from his family. Born on September 22, 1916, in Little Rock, Arkansas, Fambrough spent most of his life in Kansas City, attending elementary school and earning his diploma from Lincoln High School in 1935. After graduation, he decided to pursue a career in photography by studying graphic arts at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. In 1942, World War II and Fambrough’s decision to join the 829th Aviation Engineers of the U.S. Army Air Force interrupted his studies. Three years in the military did not diminish his aspiration to be a professional photographer. Upon his return to Missouri, he finished his degree at Lincoln University under the GI Bill. He was married to Yvonne Wills for thirty years, and the couple had one son, William Fambrough Jr., born in 1954.

The elder Fambrough lived and worked as a photographer in Kansas City for most of his life. He worked on a freelance basis for many years but spent most of his career at the Kansas City Call as staff photographer and engraver. The Kansas City Star also printed Fambrough’s work but gave credit to the Call, not the photographer. From the 1950s through the 1970s, Fambrough took thousands of photographs of almost every aspect of African American life in Kansas City. During his career, Fambrough’s signature style of capturing the image he wanted with a single attempt earned him the nickname “One-Shot Fambrough.”

PROVENANCE:

This gift was received from Thomas A. Webster as accession KA0400 on January 29, 1987.
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PREFERRED CITATION:

Specific item; folder number; William L. Fambrough, Sr. (1916-1983) Photograph Collection (K0642); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-KC].

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DESCRIPTION:

Included in the more than two thousand negatives and prints are images of social club meetings, political rallies, sporting events, weddings, and historic sites. People captured on film by Fambrough include teachers, housing officials, dancers, mechanics, athletes, children, and even Kansas City Call newspaper carriers. The photographs are arranged by category and sub-categories, alphabetically.

INVENTORY:

PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION: (in office)

Folder 1: Index of Photographs
Folder 2: Businesses: Associations, Bars, Diners, Furniture, Real Estate, Rental Service, Detective, Soft Drink (32)
Folder 3: Church (1)
Folder 4: Civic/Fraternal Organizations: Antlers (IBPOE of W), Koran, United Fund, YMCA (32)
Folder 5: Civil Rights: Integration, NAACP, Racism, Urban League (16)
Folder 6: Dance: Show, Social, Studio (31)
Folder 7: Dinners: Unidentified Groups (12)
Folder 8: Fashion (11)
Folder 9: Funerary (1)
Folder 10: Government Offices, Activities (Non-political): Courthouse, Legislative, Post Office (4)
Folder 11: KC Call (3)
Folder 12: KCK Fire Department (1)
Folder 13: Medical/Dental (5)
Folder 14: Military/Veterans: American Legion, Personnel (Air Force, Army, Navy) (10)
Folder 15: Music: Individual with Instruments, Vocal Groups (5)
Folder 16: Office Negatives: Fambrough Exhibit
Folder 17: Political Activity: Eisenhower, Hearnes, Symington, Wheeler (8)
Folder 18: Portraits: Couples, Groups, Individuals (64)
Folder 19: Schools: Bands, Classroom Scenes, Drill Teams, First-Aid Classes, Graduation, Lincoln University, ROTC, Science Fair (22)
Folder 20: Scouts: Explorers (1)
Folder 21: Sports: Baseball (KC Monarchs), Basketball, Bowling, Boxing, Football, Tennis (14)
Folder 22: Street Scenes/Housing (4)
Folder 23: Transportation: Air, Train (4)
Folder 24: Unions: American Federation of Teachers (2)
Folder 25: Weddings/Anniversaries/Birthdays (19)
Folder 26: Miscellaneous (32)

NEGATIVES (in office)

ORGANIZATIONAL: (see also: Athletics, Sports, KC Call, and Dance.)

American Royal

Businesses:

- Attorneys
- Automotive
- Bankruptcy
- Barber/Beauty Shops
- Canvassing
- Clothiers
- Construction
- Detective Agency
- Finance
- Funeral Homes
- Furniture
Furriers  
Grocery Stores  
Hotels  
Liquor Stores  
Lumber  
Music  
Newspapers/Printers  
Pharmacies  
Radio  
Realty  
Restaurants/Taverns  
Route Sales  
Taxis  
Trash Collection  
Miscellaneous Businesses  

Church:  
Choirs  
Exteriors  
Interiors  
Salvation Army  
Tent Revival  

Civil Rights:  
AAHPER  
Freedom, Inc.  
NAACP  
National Urban League  
Miscellaneous Civil Rights  

Fraternal/Civic Organizations:  
Antlers (IBPOE of W)  
Boy’s Club  
Junior Achievement  
Koran  
Masonic/Shriner  
Nurses of the Purple Cross  
Phi Delta Kappa  
Philander Smith  
Sertoma Club  
United Way  
YMCA  
Miscellaneous Fraternal/Civic Organizations  

Government Offices, activities (non-political):  
Courthouse  
Job Corp  
U.S. Customs  
U.S. Post Office
KCK Fire Department:

Medical/Dental Services:
   Ambulance
   Clinics
   Conventions
   Dental
   Hospitals

Military/Veterans (see also “School, ROTC)
   Aircraft
   Air Force Personnel
   American Legion
   Am-Vets
   Army personnel, 40’s and 50’s
   Army personnel, post 1960
   Artillery
   Corp of Engineers
   National Guard
   Naval personnel
   Military/ Veterans, Miscellaneous

Music:
   Combos
   Individuals, various instruments
   Piano/organ
   Singer, w/ accompaniment
   Theatre
   Vocal groups

Police, Security, Law Enforcement:
   Burglary Scenes
   Car wrecks
   Motorcycle patrol
   Personnel
   Trial scenes

Political Activity:
   Campaigns
   Demonstrations
   Missouri Sesquicentennial
   Nixon

School: (see also athletics, sports, under non-organizational)
   Bands, drum major
   College level
   Drill teams, cheerleaders
   Elementary
   Faculty
   Graduation
ROTC
Science Fair
Secondary
Stage performances (see also “Dance” under non-organizational)
Vocational training

Scouts:
- Boy Scouts
- Cub Scouts
- Girl Scouts

Unions:
- American Federation of Teachers
- Firefighters
- Ladies Garment Workers

NON-ORGANIZATIONAL:

Advertising:
- Furniture
- Goetz Beer
- Hair refiner
- 100 Pipers
- several (in one negative)

Athletics, sports:
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Boxing
- Football (see also “School related; Drill team, Cheerleaders”)
- Fishing
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Track
- Miscellaneous sports

Dance: (see also, “School: Drill teams”)
- Ballet
- Baton
- Show

Disasters:
- Fire
- Wind

Fashion:
- Men
- Women
Funerary:

Holidays:

Christmas
Easter

K.C. Call:

Buildings
Carriers
Interior Views
Reporters

K.C. Call, photos taken there:

Adult females
Adult males
Children
Couples
Employees (?)

Parades: (see also “Fraternal/Civic organizations: for particular groups on parade and “Schools” for school parades)

Transportation:

Airlines
Airports
Cars (wrecked)
Trains

Street Scenes/Housing

Apartments
Derelicts
Interiors
Single-family dwellings
Streets

Weddings/Anniversaries:

Anniversaries
Weddings

Miscellaneous:

Awards
Children
Dinners
Meetings
Picnics
Uncategorized

Miscellaneous Portraits:

Couples
Group
Individuals