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Jennings, Oscar Ben, 1907-1996 (MSS 366)

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Oscar Ben Jennings spent most of his life in Henderson, Kentucky. He graduated in 1925 from the Barret Manual Training High School (BMTHS) in Henderson. After graduation he directed, produced and designed costumes for a series of local minstrel shows, several of which were sponsored by the Henderson Elks Lodge and the Henderson American Legion post. He loved music and was the drum major for the American Legion Band.

Jennings began his professional career an administrative deputy sheriff in Henderson. After an election in which he backed the losing candidate, he took an accounting position with Tapp Motor Company. He became the first Henderson Housing Authority executive director in 1949. He remained in that position until 1954 when he took a field agent position with the Internal Revenue Service. He later worked as an IRS accountant and retired from that position.

Jennings owned two historic homes in Henderson, one on North Main burned in 1967. Starting over, Jennings purchased the 1868 William Barret House one of Henderson’s finest Italianate houses at 204 South Elm Street. He decorated the 24-room house and landscaped the grounds to his taste, and it was often included on tours of the community by visiting groups and dignitaries. In 1978 the house was the first Henderson residence to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. When the home was auctioned by Herron Auction & Realty after Jennings death in 1996, over 1,000 people attended the open house.

Jennings was involved in a number of civic organizations, including the Henderson Rotary Club, the Henderson Masonic Lodge, the Community Boys Band, the Henderson Chamber of Commerce, as well as Henderson’s First Christian Church. He also served on the Henderson City Commission. Jennings organized the 50th, 60th, and 70th reunions for the BMTHS’s class of 1925.

Jennings died on 13 May 1996 and was interred in Henderson’s Fernwood Cemetery.
COLLECTION NOTE

This collection contains some personal correspondence (Folder 2), but the bulk of the collection relates to the 50th reunion of the Barret Manual Training High School class of 1925—including correspondence, questionnaires, photographs, mementos—and materials about the Henderson Rotary Club. The collection also contains news clippings collected by Jennings about historic places in Henderson and about the making of the movie “A League of Their Own,” which was filmed in Henderson in 1991; these articles found in Folder 15 are arranged chronologically. In the 1980s and 1990s, Jennings also clipped obituaries of people he knew, particularly fellow members of the BMTHS class of 1925; these obituaries found in Folder 14 are arranged alphabetically. News clippings and photos of Jennings’s home are found in Folder 5 and a video of the home and his belongings filmed for his estate is included in Folder 7.

Box 2 contains information about the Henderson Rotary Club, including copies of the By-Laws, a few sets of minutes from the late 1970s, correspondence, some financial statements and budgets from 1969 to 1985, news clippings and historical data, newsletters from 1977 to 1979 when Jennings was newsletter editor, and directories from 1977 to 1992.

SHELF LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX 1</th>
<th>Oscar Ben Jennings</th>
<th>1912-1996</th>
<th>331 items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Inventory, separation sheets and biographical data</td>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>9 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>1947-1996</td>
<td>75 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Event programs</td>
<td>1922-1993</td>
<td>12 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 4</td>
<td>Pictures (miscellaneous)</td>
<td>1920s-1975</td>
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<td>Folder 5</td>
<td>Historic house information</td>
<td>1990-1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 6</td>
<td>Miscellaneous – Membership cards, publications, drawing, etc.</td>
<td>1912-1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 7</td>
<td>Estate video</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1 item</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 8</td>
<td>BMTHS Reunion – Correspondence</td>
<td>1974-1995</td>
<td>51 items</td>
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<td>Folder 9</td>
<td>BMTHS Reunion – Questionnaires</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>41 items</td>
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<td>Folder 10</td>
<td>BMTHS Reunion – Mementos</td>
<td>1925-1980</td>
<td>21 items</td>
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<td>Folder 11</td>
<td>BMTHS Reunion – Photographs</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>2 items</td>
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</tbody>
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Folder 12  Notes about the Henderson Junior Chamber of Commerce  1936  1 item

Folder 13  Rudolph Friedrich – Relating to  1922-1949  7 items

Folder 14  News clippings – People  1957-1994  43 items

Folder 15  News clippings – Places and events  1985-1991  31 items

BOX 2  Henderson Rotary Club  1917-1992  130 items

Folder 1  Henderson Rotary Club – By-laws  1976-1982  3 items

Folder 2  Henderson Rotary Club – Minutes  1977-1979  7 items

Folder 3  Henderson Rotary Club – Correspondence  1977-1986  17 items

Folder 4  Henderson Rotary Club – Financial papers  1969-1985  18 items

Folder 5  Miscellaneous – News clippings, programs, notes on history, list of presidents, etc.  1917-1985  22 items

Folder 6  Henderson Rotary Club – Action (newsletter)  1977-1979  54 items

Folder 7  Henderson Rotary Club – Directories  1977-1992  9 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS 366 JENNINGS, Oscar B., 1907-1996  1912-1996

Personal correspondence, news clippings, estate video, event programs, and sundry materials collected by Oscar Ben Jennings of Henderson, Kentucky. Several folders of material relate to the 50th reunion of the Barret Manual Training High School class of 1925. Also includes information about the Henderson Rotary Club. 1 ½ boxes. 22 folders. 461 items. Originals, photocopies, photographs and video cassette.

1996.111.1
SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Abell, Albert M., d. 1982     B1,F2,8
Acree, Margaret     B1,F2
American Legion – Henderson – Relating to, 1930     B1,F3
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Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks – Henderson – Relating to, 1922     B1,F3
Berndt, Jessie J., d. 1993     B1,F2,3
First United Methodist Church – Henderson – Relating to, 1993     B1,F3
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Rue, Dorothy     B1,F2
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Squires, Bill – Correspondence     B1,F2
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Warren, George H. – Letters to     B2,F3
Williams, Louis P., 1920-1993     B1,F2,3
Williams, Martha H.     B1,F2
Wilson, C. Russell     B1,F2

**SEE and SEE ALSO**

Elks
   See:
       Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

Henderson Junior Chamber of Commerce
   See:
       Jaycees - Henderson

Jeffrey  04/26/2011