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Finding aid for the William M. Glenn papers Collection 049

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Grand Rapids History Center

111 Library Street NE

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

localhis@grpl.org

URL: <https://www.grpl.org/research/history/>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Grand Rapids History Center
Creator - col:	Glenn, William M
Title:	William M. Glenn papers
ID:	Collection 049
Date [inclusive]:	1903-1986
Physical Description:	8.13 Linear Feet 11 boxes
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	William Melbourne Glenn (1903-1986) was a local political activist. Glenn began his activism in 1941, becoming the first African American hired at Hayes Manufacturing Company in Grand Rapids. Glenn was active in a number of organizations, including the Grand Rapids chapter of the NAACP, the Grand Rapids Urban League, the Family Service Agency, Planned Parenthood, Young and Old United, Concerned Senior Citizens, XYZ Senior Citizens Center and Senior Neighbors, Inc. In 1971, the Western Michigan Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union chose Glenn as its "Man of the Year" for his dedication and efforts in the causes of Civil Liberties. The collection contains his writings, correspondence, papers and government files and letters to various editors. Over 1,400 slides and about 200 photographs illustrate Glenn's life, from family picnics to protest marches and senior citizen housing.

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Biographical / Historical

William Melbourne Glenn was born on June 22, 1903 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His father, William M. Glenn, was first a coachman, later a chauffeur for W.H. Anderson, President of Fourth National Bank. His mother was Emma Cole. William M. Glenn married Virginia Burnett in 1937.

Some of Glenn's ancestors were black, some white. As a result, Glenn learned of racial prejudice at an early age. Upon graduation from Central High School, the best job he could

get was that of bellhop at the Pantlind Hotel in 1920. He worked at the Pantlind until 1941, when he obtained a job at the Hayes Manufacturing Company. Glenn was the first African American to be hired by Hayes, after the NAACP had broken the color barrier at the firm. Within a year, he was elected Shop Steward, and then joined the UAW-CIO, becoming Plant Committee Chairman. He was also elected to the Kent County Industrial Council and given the responsibility of seeing that the fair employment practices laws were working in Grand Rapids. He revealed to the State Representative of the Fair Employment Practices Commission that Blacks were not being generally employed in local industries. Not long afterwards, Blacks were working at General Motors, American Seating, and several other local plants.

In 1951 William Glenn received a leave from Hayes to visit Europe with a group of union people. In Paris, several members of the group, including Glenn, decided to accept an invitation to visit the Soviet Union. When Glenn returned to New York, his passport was taken by the Immigration Department. As a result of the attention given to his unauthorized visit to the Soviet Union, he was discharged from Hayes. Glenn filed a grievance with the State, and his case went to arbitration. He won, and was re-instated by Hayes. A group of fellow employees, however, staged a sit-down strike, and refused to work with him, and he was again fired. More arbitration ensued but he was refused unemployment compensation. His lawyers finally decided that the hysteria caused at the time by Senator Joseph McCarthy and others prevented Glenn's case from having much hope for success.

As a result Glenn began a garage building business with a friend. This firm later developed into house repair/remodeling, as well as purchasing property, fixing it up, and reselling it. Once successful in business, Glenn also turned his attention to civic causes.

Glenn began agitating for senior housing in 1950, when he published a newspaper called the Civic Reminder, which lasted less than a year. He served on the Committee on Racial Equality and was president of the Grand Rapids chapter of the NAACP. He was chairman of the Housing Committee of the Grand Rapids Urban League under Paul Phillips, and was the first labor representative on the governing board of the Family Service Agency. He also was treasurer of Planned Parenthood.

In 1971, the Western Michigan Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union chose him as its "Man of the Year" for his dedication and efforts in the causes of Civil Liberties the citation reads. Upon retirement from business, Glenn turned his attention to helping senior citizens. He was instrumental in organizing the local Concerned Senior Citizens, the XYZ Senior Citizens Center and Senior Neighbors, Inc. During his later years, he acted as an ombudsman for senior citizens, both black and white. His assistance included housing, food, medical care, or even burial expenses.

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Scope and Contents

The bulk of the collection dates to the period, 1941 to 1986. It consists of Glenn's writings, correspondence, papers and government files, and letters to various editors, the thrust of Glenn's reform efforts are highlighted. Also included are records Glenn kept on the various organizations with which he worked. Over 1,400 slides and circa 200 photographs illustrate Glenn's life, from family picnics to protest marches and senior citizen housing. The series are: 1) Subject Files, 2) Michigan State Police: Security Investigation Squad. Glenn File, 3) Concerned Senior Citizens, 4) Community Relations Commission, 5) Urban League, 6) Young and Old United, 7) Publications, 8) Clippings, 9) Scrapbooks, 10) Photographs, 11) Slides, and Film Reels.

More recently, copies of FBI Documents on Glenn, ca. 1944-1966, have been added to the collection, obtained by Calvin College Professor Randal Jelks, under the Freedom of Information Act. The collection also includes images of national figures, such as George McGovern, probably during a 1972 President campaign visit, and the African American politician Shirley Chisholm.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Grand Rapids History Center

111 Library Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

localhis@grpl.org

URL: <https://www.grpl.org/research/history/>

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Virginia Glenn, 1986, 1987, 1990; accession numbers 1986.118; 1987.042; 2000.016

Processing Information

The four reels of films, three 16mm and one 8mm, that are part of this collection are physically housed with the GRPL Moving Image Collection, #175. The first is of the 1963 March on Washington, plus miscellaneous subjects, including the plane flight. The third reel is of Glenn's trip to Europe, 1951, while the fourth is a Glenn discussion about housing. The

March on Washington & the Trip to Europe, appear to have been reformatted to videotape. The collection was reprocessed with the donation of additional material in January 1990. This reprocessing consisted of rearranging a number of smaller series into a single larger Subject File series, organization of the photographs by subject heading and extensive revision of the finding aid.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Moving images associated with this collection are housed in Coll. 175, the GRPL Moving Images Collection.

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Controlled Access Headings

- African Americans -- Civil Rights -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids -- History
- Older people -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Housing -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Grand Rapids Urban League
- United States. Congress. House. Committee on Un-American Activities
- Glenn, William M

Collection Inventory

Series I. Subject Files, 1914-1983.

Scope and Contents

Consists of articles, speeches, and letters to editors, 1949 to 1970s. Includes a brief auto-biographical sketch and address books maintained by William Glenn during the 1970s and 1980s. Also contains correspondence, 1947-1983, primarily related to Glenn's activities as an activist for senior citizens and housing, with a limited amount of personal correspondences from friends; Virginia Glenn's correspondence and membership lists related to the Michigan State Association of Colored Women's

Clubs; the fifth grade notebooks of Glenn, which contains poems, favorite quotes, and short essays. Also includes essays and papers from Glenn's English 102 class at Grand Rapids Junior College; awards, letterheads from various groups and organizations with which Glenn was associated, and election flyers of both William and Virginia Glenn. And has records of William and Virginia Glenn's rental properties on Prospect and Jefferson streets in Grand Rapids. Arranged alphabetically.

Title/Description	Instances	
Address book, 1978	Box 1	Folder 1
Articles and Speeches, c.1977	Box 1	Folder 2
Bergman, Francis and Walter, 1972-1979	Box 1	Folder 3
Correspondence, 1947, 1967-68, 1970-1974, 1975-81, c.1983	Box 1	Folder 4-5
Election Flyers, c.1970	Box 1	Folder 6

Glenn material

Title/Description	Instances	
Housing Committee, 1969-1975.	Box 1	Folder 7
Senior Citizens Sub-committee, 1966-1976.	Box 1	Folder 8
Cuba: Communism General information, c.1959, c.1970.	Box 1	Folder 9
Cuban Trip Government Photos, n.d.	Box 1	Folder 10
Demolition/Repair of housing, 1969,1971,1974.	Box 1	Folder 11
Election File, 1975.	Box 1	Folder 12
Biographical, 1959-1960,1961,1974,1951,c.1980.	Box 1	Folder 13-14
Appeals, 1952.	Box 1	Folder 15
Awards, Letterheads, Misc. 1935-1983.	Box 1	Folder 16
Notebook, Grade 5, and Papers from English 101 and 102 Grand Rapids Junior College, 1914-1965.	Box 1	Folder 17
Grand Rapids Politics, 1976.	Box 1	Folder 18
Housing - General, 1965-1975.	Box 2	Folder 1
Housing Maps, Misc. 1975.	Box 2	Folder 2
Housing - Clippings, 1963-1980.	Box 2	Folder 3
Ideals, 1964-1985.	Box 2	Folder 4
Letters to the Editor, 1973-1978.	Box 2	Folder 5
Mayor's Central Committee, 1974-1975.	Box 2	Folder 6
Miscellaneous, 1960-1970.	Box 2	Folder 7
Political Organization, 1947,1971-1983.	Box 2	Folder 8

Progressive Party, 1952.	Box 2	Folder 9
Project Seek, 1972.	Box 2	Folder 10
Ransom Avenue Development Corp. Financial Records, 1979-1982.	Box 2	Folder 11
Ransom Avenue Development Corp. Legal Papers, 1972-1979.	Box 2	Folder 12
Rental Property-Records, 1950, 1978-1979.	Box 2	Folder 13
Russian Trip, (1952-1951).	Box 2	Folder 14
Senior Citizens, 1967-1984.	Box 2	Folder 15
Senior Neighbors, Inc. 1974-1982.	Box 2	Folder 16
Vietnam War, 1965.	Box 2	Folder 17
XYZ Center, 1966-1977, 1972-1973.	Box 2	Folder 18-19

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Series II. Michigan State Police Security Investigation Squad, 1952-1962.

Scope and Contents

Copies from the State Police's "Red Squad" files on Glenn and his wife. This squad collected data on real or suspected Communist Party members, subversives and individuals considered a threat against society. Includes membership lists and copies of House Un-American Activities Committee testimony. Arranged alphabetically.

Title/Description	Instances	
Glenn File, 1955-62.	Box 3	Folder 1
House Un-American Activities Testimony from Congressional Record, 1952.	Box 3	Folder 2
Virginia Glenn, 1955-62.	Box 3	Folder 3
William and Virginia Glenn, 1952.	Box 3	Folder 4
Clippings from Detroit Times, 1952.	Box 3	Folder 5

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Series III. Concerned Senior Citizens, 1970-82, n.d.

Scope and Contents

By-laws, correspondence, media releases and notes of this agency, of which Glenn was a member. The agency, as its name implies, was an advocacy group for senior citizens. Arranged alphabetically.

Title/Description	Instances	
By-Laws, n.d.	Box 3	Folder 6
Correspondence, 1975-79.	Box 3	Folder 7
Legislation, 1970-75.	Box 3	Folder 8
Miscellaneous, 1976-82.	Box 3	Folder 9
National CSC Correspondence, 1976-79.	Box 3	Folder 10
Media, 1975-79.	Box 3	Folder 11
Notebook, 1976.	Box 3	Folder 12

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Series IV. Urban League, 1962-79.**Scope and Contents**

Consists of various records of the Urban League, and its pursuit of low-cost housing during the 1970s. Included is information on the Community Development Block Grant, miscellaneous reports, petitions, correspondence, resolutions, the Grand Rapids Model Village, and Glenn's notebook. The series reveals Glenn's pursuit of housing for the economically needy classes, especially the old and/or Black. Arranged alphabetically.

Title/Description	Instances	
Community Development Block Grant, 1976-79.	Box 3	Folder 13
Reports, 1969-76.	Box 3	Folder 14
Model Village City or Grand Rapids, 1970-75.	Box 3	Folder 15
Model Village Proposal to the Grand Rapids Foundation 1969.	Box 3	Folder 16
Notebook, (1977).	Box 3	Folder 17
Petitions and Correspondence, 1972-77.	Box 3	Folder 18
Reports on Meetings, Resolutions, 1962-76.	Box 3	Folder 19

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Series V. Young and Old United, 1957-1978.

Scope and Contents

Consists of Glenn's records regarding YOU. The series includes by-laws, correspondence (1972-1975), newsletters, minutes 1973-74, housing project proposals, general correspondence, press releases, Senior citizens housing, and sidewalk repair. The series reflects Glenn's influence in and on the community through his pursuit of senior citizen rights and causes. Arranged chronologically.

Title/Description	Instances	
By-Laws c.1974.	Box 3	Folder 20
Correspondence, 1972-75.	Box 3	Folder 21
Members Correspondence/Newsletters,1973-75.	Box 3	Folder 22
Housing Project Proposal, 1977.	Box 3	Folder 23
Information, 1957-74.	Box 4	Folder 1
Jackson Correspondence Data, 1973.	Box 4	Folder 2
Minutes of the Executive Board, 1973-74.	Box 4	Folder 3
Newsletters, 1972-73.	Box 4	Folder 4
Press Releases, 1973.	Box 4	Folder 5
Senior Citizens Housing, 1975-78.	Box 4	Folder 6
Sidewalks, 1967-78.	Box 4	Folder 7

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Series VI. Publications, 1940-1978.**Scope and Contents**

Consists of various surveys and reports on Grand Rapids, especially in regard to housing and Blacks, and handbooks and other information for senior citizens. Arranged alphabetically.

Title/Description	Instances	
Crime Report Grand Rapids, 1960-62.	Box 4	Folder 8
Housing Issue, 1974.	Box 4	Folder 9
Comprehensive Senior Citizens Service Project Proposal, 1968.	Box 4	Folder 10
West Michigan Regional Planning Committee, Grand Rapids and Environs Transportation Study Annual Report, 1975.	Box 4	Folder 10
Michigan State Housing Development Authority; Annual Report, 1974	Box 4	Folder 10
A Manual for Grand Rapids Senior Citizens, 1968.	Box 4	Folder 11
Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Grand Rapids Annual Report, 1978.	Box 4	Folder 11

The Tenant Union Handbook, n.d.	Box 4	Folder 11
Negroes in Grand Rapids, 1959.	Box 4	Folder 12
Negro Population of Grand Rapids: A Social Study, 1940.	Box 4	Folder 13
A Survey of Senior Adults Services in Churches in Kent County, c. 1965.	Box 4	Folder 14
Campau Area Survey, Annual Report, [1965].	Box 4	Folder 14

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Series VII. Scrapbooks, c.1920-1983.

Scope and Contents

Consists of three scrapbooks. Volume 1, "William Glenn, This Is Your Life" was prepared by the Sub-Urban Club in 1983, and follows Glenn from the 1920s to the 1980s, containing many letters to the editor and other letters that reflect Glenn's position regarding the important issues of the day as he saw them. Volumes 2 and 3 contain Glenn clippings. Volume 2 deals with Senior Citizens, while volume 3 contains clippings on the Progressive Party and political issues. Arranged chronologically.

Title/Description	Instances	
William Glenn, This is Your Life.[12/4/2000] <u>Physical Description:</u> This is an oversize scrapbook, not housed in a box. It is located in Aisle 9, Bay J, Shelf 2.	Box Vol 1	
Senior Citizens.	Box 5	Folder vol. 2
Progressive Party/Politics.	Box 5	Folder vol. 3
Civic Reminder, Vol. 1 Nos. 2-4, 1950.	Box 5	Folder 1
[Also fnd. Misc. manuscript items and 2 oversized photos in the box.]	Box 5	

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Series VIII. Photographs, ca. 1970, n.d.

Scope and Contents

Pictorials depict members of the Glenn family, Glenn's Russian trip, political protests, senior citizens and Grand Rapids housing. Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Title/Description	Instances	
Campau Commons, ca.1970. (4)	Box 6	Folder 1
Commercial buildings, ca.1970. (1)	Box 6	Folder 2

Creston Commons, ca.1970. (1)	Box 6	Folder 3
Demonstrations, 1970s. (3)	Box 6	Folder 4
Glenn's Dog, n.d. (4)	Box 6	Folder 5
Farmsteads, including a barn and old house ca.1970. (6)	Box 6	Folder 6
Floods, n.d. (1)	Box 6	Folder 7
Houses. Unidentified, c.1970. (20)	Box 6	Folder 9
People. Chisholm, Shirley, ca.1970. (1)	Box 6	Folder 10
People. Glenn, Virginia, n.d. (2)	Box 6	Folder 11
People. Glenn, William, n.d. (5 b/w, 2 color)	Box 6	Folder 12
People. Glenn, Virginia, William, family, n.d. (7 12/2/2004)	Box 6	Folder 13
People. Groups, n.d. (1 color photo, 2 b/w photos, 1 photocopy). Includes Glenn with Gerald R. Ford.	Box 6	Folder 14
People. Hayes Body Co. employees, ca. 1950. (2)	Box 6	Folder 15
People. Lasha, Myrtle Craig, n.d. (1)	Box 6	Folder 16
People. Melder, Frank, n.d. (2)	Box 6	Folder 17
People. McGovern, George, ca. 1970-1972. (1) Note: McGovern was previous misidentified as Eugene McCarthy,	Box 6	Folder 18
People. Senior Citizens. (19 b/w, 3 color)	Box 6	Folder 19
People. Senior citizens, n.d. (30). Includes Esther Mojica, Clara Keeney.	Box 6	Folder 20
People. Unidentified, n.d. (19)	Box 6	Folder 21
Ransom Towers, n.d. (2 color, 1 b/w)	Box 6	Folder 22
Russia, 1951. (15) Mostly group photos with scenes of buildings in the background.	Box 6	Folder 23
Scenes. Unidentified, n.d. (5)	Box 6	Folder 24
Copy Negatives, n.d. (2), includes Glenn jazz band, Virginia Glenn's Native American grandfather and uncle.	Box 6	Folder 25

Houses. Identified, c.1970

Title/Description	Instances	
702 Bates, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
628 Cass, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
636 Cass, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
714 Cass, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
401 Coldbrook, NE (2)	Box 6	Folder 8

516 College, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
715, 719, 723, 727 Dykema Ct., SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
1220 Euclid, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
170 Grand, NE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
449-451 Jefferson, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
523 Jefferson, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
1057-1059 Jefferson, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
463-465 Lafayette, SE (3)	Box 6	Folder 8
563 Lafayette, SE (1) (burned, 2/12/1973)	Box 6	Folder 8
607 Lafayette, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
568 Morris, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
608 Paris SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
300 Prospect, SE (1)(block)	Box 6	Folder 8
328 Prospect, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
328/330 Prospect, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
330 Prospect, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
332 Prospect, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
336 Prospect, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
337 Prospect, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
611 Sheldon, SE (2)	Box 6	Folder 8
716 Thomas, SE (printed reversed)(1)	Box 6	Folder 8
742 Thomas, SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8
624 Union, SE (2)	Box 6	Folder 8
734-735 VanderVeen Ct., SE (1)	Box 6	Folder 8

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Series IX. Slides, 1961-1980.

Scope and Contents

Consists of slides made by Glenn from 1961 to 1983. Three special subject groupings head the series: 1962 Cuban Trip, 1963 March on Washington, and the 1965 Martin Luther King Parade, Grand Rapids. These are followed by the chronological arrangement of the slides from 1961 to 1983. These slides

portray Glenn's lifestyle, shots of family or friends interspersed among demonstrations, senior citizens, slides of housing conditions, and organizations in which he was active.

Title/Description	Instances	
Cuban Trip, n.d.	Box 7	Volume 4
1963 March on Washington.	Box 7	Volume 4
Martin Luther King Parade, Grand Rapids, 1965.	Box 7	Volume 4
Protests, Grand Rapids, 1961-64.	Box 7	Volume 5
Protests, Grand Rapids, 1965-70.	Box 8	Volume 6
Protests, Grand Rapids, 1970-72.	Box 8	Volume 7
1972-78.	Box 9	Folder 1-9
1972-80.	Box 10	Folder 7-8
Senior Citizens Party.	Box 10	Folder 9
Lumber Yard.	Box 10	Folder 9
Housing	Box 10	Folder 9
Housing	Box 10	Folder 10-12

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Series X. FBI Documents

Scope and Contents

Consists of Documents requested by Calvin College Professor Randal Jelks, under the Freedom of Information Act, including his correspondence. The documents are copies, most with some date, most with many blacked-out parts tracking Glenn's movements to Russia, and within the U.S. Includes documents on a passport obtained with the assistance of Gerald Ford, for a supposed trip to Europe, but actually to Russia.

Title/Description	Instances	
FBI Documents, 1944-1964.	Box 11	

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Series XI. Moving Images.

Scope and Contents

16 mm. Film, videotapes. A usage videotape of these old films is housed in GRPL Moving Images Collection at 175-UT5-71 (10/26/2006). Items 1-3 have been reformatted to videotape. The Sony

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Betacam version is marked 175-MT9 (10/26/2006). Old collection markings – films 33-1 through 33-4, Box 5, V85.

Title/Description	Instances	
1963 March on Washington, D.C.	Collection 175	Box FM025
1963 March on Washington, D.C.	Collection 175	Box FM025
Glenn's trip to Europe, 1951	Collection 175	Box FM025
Glenn debate in housing, n.d.	Collection 175	Box FM025

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