

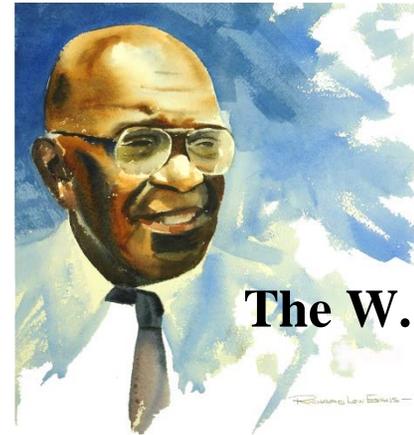
W. W. Law (1923-2002) was a prominent Civil Rights leader, local historian, historic preservationist and community leader in Savannah, Georgia.

Westley Wallace Law was born on January 1, 1923 in Savannah, Georgia, the oldest of three children of Geneva Wallace and Westley Law. He was greatly influenced by his mother, Geneva W. Law, grandmother, Lillie Belle Wallace, mentor, Reverend Ralph Mark Gilbert, and scoutmaster, John S. Delaware. Both Reverend Gilbert and Delaware were officials in the Savannah chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Law joined the NAACP Youth Council in high school and later served as its president. He attended Georgia State Industrial College (now Savannah State University) before being drafted into the U. S. Army during World War II. After he completed his military service, he finished his bachelor's degree in biology. Law was a long-time boy scoutmaster for Troop 49 which was made up of boys from First Bryan Baptist Church, of which he was a member and Sunday school teacher. He was a mail carrier for the United States Postal Service for over forty years.

From 1950-1976 Law served as President of the Savannah chapter of the NAACP. During the 1960s, he led weekly mass meetings at Bolton Street Baptist Church and St. Philip A.M.E. Church during which he urged "passive resistance to segregation" and nonviolent protests. He was involved in efforts to desegregate Grayson Municipal Stadium, department store lunch counters on Broughton Street, and the beaches at Tybee Island. He led an eighteen-month boycott of Broughton Street merchants. Law is largely credited for helping to keep Savannah's Civil Rights Movement more peaceful than those in other southern cities. In 1961, he was fired from his postal job because of his Civil Rights activities, but reinstated after national NAACP leaders and President John F. Kennedy came to his defense.

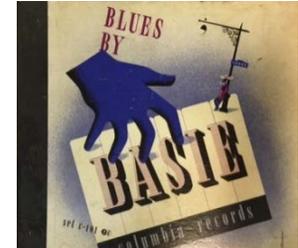
After finishing his run as NAACP president, he focused his efforts on preserving Savannah's African American History. He established the Savannah-Yamacraw Branch of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH), the King-Tisdell Cottage Museum, Beach Institute African American Cultural Center, the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum, and the Negro Heritage Trail Tour. He also helped bring attention to and preserve Laurel Grove South Cemetery, the City's historically African American municipal cemetery.

Law received honorary doctorates from the Savannah College of Art & Design and Savannah State University. He was honored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation for his preservation efforts in the community. W. W. Law died on July 28, 2002 at his home in Savannah.



The W. W. Law Collection

Collections Guide



Clockwise from upper left: Myrtle Jones (1913-2007), *unknown* [King-Tisdell Cottage], watercolor, no date; "Blues by Basie," Count Basie and his All American Rhythm Section, no date; Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000), *Brotherhood for Peace*, lithograph, 1967; Massie Elementary School 1st graders, September 1967

Upper corner: "W. W." by Richard Low Evans, watercolor, no date

Conducting research at the City Library & Archives:

The public can access the W. W. Law collections through the Research Library & Municipal Archives at City Hall. Research appointments are recommended. Visit www.savannahga.gov/MunicipalArchives or call (912) 651-6412 for more information or to schedule. All collection finding aids, inventories, and digitized content are available online at www.savannahga.gov/wwlaw.

Record Series #: 1121-100
Name: W. W. Law Photograph Collection*
Dates: 1868-2002, no date
Extent/Size: 10 document cases, 1 oversized box (5.5 cubic feet)

The W. W. Law Photograph Collection includes over 2,400 catalogued images taken and collected by W. W. Law and Geneva W. Law during their lifetimes. Highlights include images of local NAACP meetings and events during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in Savannah.

Record Series #: 1121-101
Name: W. W. Law Art Collection*
Dates: 1849, 1895, 1964-1998, no date
Extent/Size: 158 items

The W. W. Law Art Collection includes original, print and reproduction artwork collected by W. W. Law. The works represent a wide range of artistic styles, media and time periods, and include both Savannah, regional and national artists.

Record Series #: 1121-102
Name: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) – Savannah Branch Records*
Dates: 1941-2000, no date
Extent/Size: 20 document cases, 1 oversized folder (8.6 cubic feet)

The NAACP Savannah Branch records consist of correspondence documenting the activities of the Savannah Branch office. Items of note include correspondence between W. W. Law and national leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, including Langston Hughes, Roy Wilkins, Thurgood Marshall, and Medgar Evers.

Record Series #: 1121-104
Name: W. W. Law Awards Collection
Dates: 1995-2002, no date
Extent/Size: 14 records cartons, 6 oversized boxes, 1 oversized folder (17.5 cubic feet)

The W. W. Law Awards Collection includes 135 awards and honors presented to W. W. Law for his activities and contributions in the areas of Civil Rights, community leadership, education, historic preservation, and history.

**Processing ongoing and collection expected to grow; check website for updates.*

Record Series #: 1121-105
Name: W. W. Law Music Collection*
Dates: circa 1918-2000, no date
Extent/Size: 237 boxes (146.49 cubic feet)

The W. W. Law Music collection contains a variety of audio formats, including commercially pressed shellac and vinyl records, as well as commercial and original audio cassette tapes, representing a wide variety of musical genres, including: jazz; classical; sacred; popular; music for the stage; blues; folk; and narrative recordings.

Record Series #: 1121-106
Name: W. W. Law Reference Files*
Dates: not determined
Extent/Size: 367 files

The W. W. Law Reference Files include newspaper clippings and print materials collected by W. W. Law on a range of topics, including the arts and culture, crime, education, housing, international issues, labor, local history, prominent people, race relations, and sports.

Record Series #: 1121-107
Name: W. W. Law Book Collection*
Dates: 1873-2002, no date
Extent/Size: 165 items (13.4 linear feet)

The W. W. Law Book Collection contains 165 publications collected by W. W. Law specifically on the subject of music, including those about musicians, compilations of sheet music, music genres, music groups, hymns, and more.

Record Series #: 1121-108
Name: W. W. Law Periodical Collection*
Dates: 1831, 1861, 1916-2009, no date
Extent/Size: 123 records cartons, 1 oversized box, 1 oversized folder (123.3 cubic feet)

The W. W. Law Periodical Collection includes three issues of *The Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper edited by William Lloyd Garrison, as well as various periodicals related to music, history, preservation, African American life, and more.

Record Series #: 1121-110
Name: W. W. Law Working Files
Dates: circa 1970s-1990s, no date
Extent/Size: 39 records cartons (39.0 cubic feet)

The W. W. Law Working Files include files sorted into general subject categories during archival pre-processing. These files relate to the life and work of W. W. Law, including his personal papers and organizational records of the King-Tisdell Cottage Foundation and the Savannah-Yamacraw Branch of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH). This is a working record series that has been temporarily created and opened to facilitate public access.