

Record Series #: 1121-123**Name: Atlanta Life Insurance Company Savannah branch records****Dates: 1943, 1958, 1985-1991, no date****Extent/Size: 17 legal size folders (0.5 cubic feet)****Language: English****Name of Creator(s):**

Atlanta Life Insurance Company

Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company

Administrative History:

The Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company was established in Augusta, Georgia, on May 2, 1898 as the first Black-owned insurance provider in Georgia. Solomon W. Walker worked with his friends and family, Walter S. Hornsby, Thomas J. Walker, J. C. Collier, and Reverend Thomas Jefferson Hornsby, to set up a benevolent association known then as Pilgrim Benevolent Aid Association. In 1905, Georgia passed a law requiring all associations to deposit \$5,000 for the protection of policy holders. Thus, several organizations decided to combine under one association to afford this deposit. The Cooperative Industrial Society, Benevolent Relief and Benefit Association, Southern Mutual Aid Society and Pilgrim merged to become the Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company. By 1930, the organization expanded in Alabama and South Carolina and in 1931 the company acquired Georgia Mutual Life Insurance Company of Augusta. The company was a major employer in Augusta, Georgia, employing over 700 people by 1948. In the 1950s, the company's business started to decline when the Civil Rights Movement encouraged white owned companies to hire Black workers and sell them policies. The Atlanta Life Insurance Company bought Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company in 1990 and the headquarters were moved to Atlanta, Georgia.

The Atlanta Life Insurance Company was founded by Alonzo Franklin Herndon, a successful businessman, in 1905 as small mutual benefit association. In 1916, after the acquirement of other benefit associations, the company was incorporated. With incorporation, Herndon purchased 90% of the company's stock. By 1922, the company became a legal reserve company and increased its stock and the company expanded into other states (becoming equal in sales to the other eight large Black-owned insurance companies at the time). Norris Herndon succeeded his father as President of the company in 1927. Under Norris' leadership the company expanded from sales in nine states to eleven states by 1960.

In 1950, Norris established the Herndon Foundation, a nonprofit corporation in memory of his parents. The foundation helped during the Civil Rights Movement by funding bails, giving fired teachers positions within the company, and providing meeting spaces for organizations. Norris retired in 1973, and Jesse Hill assumed the Presidency and a new executive team was established. This was the first time the company was not run by a family member of the company's founder. The company continued to have financial growth and Hill retired in 1992. The company rebranded as a financial services organization and became the Atlanta Life Financial Group in 2001. As of 2021, the chairman of the board was Roosevelt Giles, appointed in 2014, and the Atlanta Life Financial Group continues as a successful company advocating for Georgia's Black communities.

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For More Information on the Atlanta Life Insurance Company and Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company:

New Georgia Encyclopedia, "Atlanta Life Insurance Company," by Alexa Benson Henderson, last updated 2018 July 19. (Available on the web at

<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/business-economy/atlanta-life-insurance-company#:~:text=Founded%20by%20Alonzo%20Herndon%2C%20a,insurance%20company%20in%20the%20nation>)

New Georgia Encyclopedia, "Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company," by Joseph D. Greene, last updated 2021 April 14. (Available on the web at

<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/business-economy/pilgrim-health-and-life-insurance-company>)

Scope & Content:

The Atlanta Life Insurance Company Savannah branch records includes employee and business records for the company operating out of the Savannah branch offices, including employee reports, surveys, invoices, job applications and event programs. Of particular interest is an event program from the company's Heritage Month Sales Program held in Atlanta, Georgia, in June 1990, which includes a detailed history of both insurance companies.

System of Arrangement & Ordering:

The Atlanta Life Insurance Company Savannah branch records are kept in original order and alphabetized by subject.

Conditions Governing Access:

Certain records have been restricted due to legal restrictions regarding the release of Social Security numbers, and confidential insurance information [O.C.G.A. 50-18-72(a)(20)(A)]. These records have been closed for 75 years to protect the privacy of living individuals.

Collection is stored offsite and researchers must request desired records at least one (1) full business day before scheduled research appointment for access.

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Access Points:

African American business enterprises
Atlanta Life Insurance Company
Augusta (Ga.)--History
Employees
Health insurance
Insurance agents
Insurance policies
Life insurance
Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company

Sponsors/Funding:

Chatham County, Georgia, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funding.

Preferred Citation:

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Processed by:

M. Kerkhoff, July 2021.

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Inventory:

Box

Folder Number *Folder Title, Date (s)*

Box 1121-000-0005

Folder	Description, Date (s)
Folder 1121-123-001	Agent career profile questionnaire brochures, no date
Folder 1121-123-002	Application forms for employment, 1985, no date
Folder 1121-123-003	Employee contests, 1991, no date
Folder 1121-123-004	Sales Agent records-Bradley, Lawrence, 1991
Folder 1121-123-005	Sales Agent records-Brower, Odis J., 1991, no date
Folder 1121-123-006	Sales Agent records-Jones, Gloria, 1991
Folder 1121-123-007	Sales Agent records-Rogers, Linda H., 1991
Folder 1121-123-008	Sales Agent records-Taylor, Reginald, 1991
Folder 1121-123-009	Event programs, 1990-1991
Folder 1121-123-010	Invoice for copier, 1991
Folder 1121-123-011	Staff manager questionnaire, 1991
Folder 1121-123-012	Staff Manager weekly reviews, 1991
Folder 1121-123-013	WDO/MDO, DLP collections, 1991

RESTRICTED**

****Records contain personal information and Social Security numbers**

Folder 1121-123-014	Customer policies, 1943, 1958, 1991 [RESTRICTED until 2066]
Folder 1121-123-015	Sales Agent records-Maxwell, Robert, 1986-1987 [RESTRICTED until 2062]
Folder 1121-123-016	Sales Agent records-Rice, Doretha, 1991, no date [RESTRICTED until 2096]
Folder 1121-123-017	Sales Agent records-Smith, Marcus, 1991 [RESTRICTED until 2066]