

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Lottie Watkins

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Watkins, Lottie, 1919-2017
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lottie Watkins,
Dates:	April 12, 2006 and March 16, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:17:54).
Abstract:	Community activist and state representative The Honorable Lottie Watkins (1919 - 2017) was the first African American female real estate broker in the Atlanta market, and is the founder of Lottie Watkins Enterprises, Inc. Watkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 12, 2006 and March 16, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_037
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lottie Heywood Watkins is the retired CEO of Lottie Watkins Enterprises, Inc., a full-service real estate company specializing in property management. Watkins entered the real estate industry in the early 1960s and became the first African American female real estate broker in the Atlanta market. Watkins is known throughout the Atlanta business community as a shrewd businesswoman and is highly respected for the contributions she has made to civic and social affairs.

Watkins is the daughter of Susie Wilson and Eddie Heywood, a 1920s jazz pianist.

Her brother, the second eldest of five children, gained critical fame with the Eddie Heywood, Jr. Trio throughout the 1940s as a songwriter, composer and pianist. Watkins was educated in the Atlanta Public School system and graduated from Booker T. Washington High School's accelerated class in 1935. She graduated from Reid's School of Business and became a secretary for Alexander—Calloway Realty Company. She worked as a teller/clerk at the Mutual Federal Savings and Loan Association until she started Lottie Watkins Enterprises, Inc.

Watkins became active with the voter's rights campaign, the Civil Rights Movement and community-based organizations. In 1977, she was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives. She served as Co-Chair of the YMCA Membership Campaign, the American Cancer Society, and the NAACP Membership Drive and Freedom Fund Banquet. She was Chair of the Christmas Cheer Fund for the *Atlanta Inquirer*. Watkins has received numerous awards and citations; the Pioneer in Real Estate Award (Providence Missionary Baptist Church), Appeal of Human Rights Award (30th Anniversary Celebration of the Civil Rights Movement), Pioneer Award for Community Leadership (Empire Real Estate Board) and Outstanding Achievement in Real Estate and Business Award (Empire Real Estate Board 50th Anniversary). She was listed in *Who's Who of American Women*, in *Finance and Industry*, *Black World* and *International Who's Who in Community Service* and *World Who's Who of Women*.

Watkins resided in her native Atlanta with her daughters and their families, Joyce and Judy, who actively operated Lottie Watkins Enterprises, Inc.

Watkins passed away on February 20, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Lottie Watkins was conducted by Evelyn Pounds and Scott Stearns on April 12, 2006 and March 16, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community activist and state representative The Honorable Lottie Watkins (1919 - 2017) was the first African American female real estate broker in the Atlanta market, and is the founder of Lottie Watkins Enterprises, Inc.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Watkins, Lottie, 1919-2017

Pounds, Evelyn (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Interviewer)

Ball, Corey (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Georgia. General Assembly. House of Representatives.

Occupations:

Community Activist

State Representative

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|PoliticalMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lottie Watkins, April 12, 2006 and March 16, 2006. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lottie Watkins,
Section A2006_037_001_001, TRT: 0:27:08 2006/03/16

The Honorable Lottie Watkins was born on June 4, 1919 to Susie Wilson Heywood and Eddie Heywood, Sr. in Atlanta, Georgia. Her mother grew up with four sisters in Atlanta. Watkins' father was born in Sumter, South Carolina, where his father was a minister. A jazz pianist, Watkins' father traveled frequently to perform, including with vaudeville duo Butterbeans and Susie, while her mother reared Watkins and her four siblings at home. Her father also taught her brother, Eddie Heywood, Jr., to play the piano. When their father passed away, Eddie Heywood, Jr. took on his role as pianist at the Eighty One Theater. Watkins attended segregated Edmund Asa Ware Elementary School and Providence Baptist Church, where she sang in the choir. Her family eventually moved from Larkin Avenue to West End Avenue, where they lived near singer Zilla Mays. At Booker T. Washington High School, Watkins sang in the glee club, led by Essie Groves. Upon graduating in 1935, she worked at her aunt, Leanna Ramus' restaurant.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lottie Watkins,
Section A2006_037_001_002, TRT: 0:27:47 2006/03/16

The Honorable Lottie Watkins's father, Eddie Heywood, Sr., studied at the Boston Conservatory of Music and became a renowned jazz pianist. When Watkins graduated from Booker T. Washington High School, she studied typing, shorthand and English at Reid's Business School in Atlanta. She worked at her aunt's restaurant before assisting J.P. Whitaker at Atlanta University's registrar's office. Watkins joined the Alexander-Calloway Realty Company as William L. Calloway's secretary, then became a bank teller at Mutual Federal Savings and Loan Association of Atlanta, a black-owned bank. She was trained to operate the teller machine by Remington Rand, Inc. Later, the bank approved a loan for her to build her house. John Wesley Dobbs, a regular patron, financed Watkins' daughter's education at Clark College. She describes the wedding of her daughter, Joyce Rankin Bacote, to Samuel Bacote, II, the son of historian and voting rights activist Clarence A. Bacote. Watkins also lists Atlanta's neighborhood clubs.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lottie Watkins,
Section A2006_037_001_003, TRT: 0:29:50 2006/03/16

The Honorable Lottie Watkins resigned from Mutual Federal Savings and Loan Association of Atlanta to found her own property management company, Lottie Watkins Enterprises, Inc., in 1960. Through prominent businessmen, she found management opportunities in areas like Gordon Street and Anderson Avenue, where her tenants included Jasper W. Williams, Jr. and Moses C. Norman, Sr. Watkins made a name for herself among her tenants and property owners. She joined the Women's Chamber of Commerce of Atlanta and was the sole black member of Rich's Business Women's Advisory Board. At the time of the interview, Watkins' daughter, Joyce Rankin Bacote, directed the company. In 1962, Watkins registered African American voters during Leroy Johnson's Georgia State Senate campaign. She describes the student protest of Rich's Department Store. Watkins once forgot to attend an important sit-in, hearing Hubert Humphrey speak at the Dinkler Hotel instead. In 1977, she ran successfully for the

Georgia House of Representatives.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lottie Watkins,
Section A2006_037_001_004, TRT: 0:29:09 2006/03/16

The Honorable Lottie Watkins directed Ivan Allen, Jr.'s mayoral campaign on Atlanta's Hunter Street. She also owned a property management company, Lottie Watkins Enterprises, Inc., which, in response to crime, relocated office spaces from Hunter Street to Gordon Street. She describes her building loan, which took ten years to pay off. A member of the Democratic Party and a Georgia State representative, Watkins also campaigned for Charles L. Weltner, as well as for James Earl "Jimmy" Carter's 1977 presidential run. After raising campaign funds, she was appointed to the national Democratic finance committee, serving for the entirety of Carter's presidency. Watkins reflects upon her campaigning activities, including the importance of voter registration efforts. She also reflects upon her participation in SCLC and the NAACP, for which she organized numerous Freedom Fund Dinners in Atlanta. She talks about why she chose to share her story, and reflects upon her legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lottie Watkins,
Section A2006_037_002_005, TRT: 0:24:00 2006/03/16

The Honorable Lottie Watkins narrates her photographs.