

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Eugene H. Dibble, III

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Dibble, Eugene H., 1929-2014
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 14, 2008 and July 18, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:02:13).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Investment banker and city commissioner Eugene H. Dibble, III (1929 - 2014 ) founded the Astro Investment Company in Chicago in 1965. From 1966 to 1972, he served as Chicago's Water Commissioner. He also owned numerous businesses. Dibble was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 14, 2008 and July 18, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_085
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Eugene Heriot Dibble, III, was born on July 22, 1929, at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama where he was one of four children born to Dr. Eugene Heriot Dibble, Jr., a physician at A. Andrew Memorial Hospital in Tuskegee. Dibble graduated from the Monson Academy preparatory school in Massachusetts and then received his B.S. degree in chemistry from the Tuskegee Institute in 1952. During his undergraduate career, Dibble also worked in the chemistry laboratory at John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital under the tutelage of famed immunologist Dr. Reuben Kahn at the University of Michigan. Following college graduation, Dibble was

called to active duty in the United States Air Force and served as a munitions and demolition officer. He was discharged at the rank of second lieutenant. Following his tenure in the U.S. Air Force, Dibble attended the New York Institute of Finance and completed the broker's trainee program in 1954. Only a year later, Dibble passed the examination to become a registered stock broker on the New York Stock Exchange.

Dibble worked as a stockbroker for the investment firm of Strauss, Blosser and MacDowell from 1956 until 1962. Dibble was one of only three African American stockbrokers working in Chicago investment firms. In 1965, Dibble and Rufus Cook began the Astro Investment Company. The goal of this business was to expand African American influence within the economy through direct investment. Muhammad Ali was one of his clients. In 1966, Dibble ran as the Republican candidate for Water Commissioner for the City of Chicago and was elected to a six-year term. He also served as trustee and chairman of the Metropolitan Sanitary District's Committee on Maintenance and Operation in 1972. Following his tenure in this position, he owned numerous businesses including Jackson Parks Storage, Piggley Wrigley Bar-B-Q, New Racks Garage and Olly Trolley. In addition to these business endeavors, Dibble also volunteered for the Salvation Army Canteen Program.

Dibble received numerous civic awards, including Honorary Sheriff of Maywood and the Danny Davis Congressional Roll of Honor. He married Jeanette Campbell on August 6, 1955. She is a graduate of Wellesley College and the Yale University School of Nursing. The couple has five children: Rochon, Chyla, Eugene, Andrew and Hillary.

Dibble passed away on June 6, 2014, at the age of 84.

Dibble was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 14, 2008.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III was conducted by Larry Crowe and Thomas Jefferson on July 14, 2008 and July 18, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Investment banker and city commissioner Eugene H. Dibble, III (1929 - 2014 ) founded the Astro Investment Company in Chicago in 1965. From 1966 to 1972, he served as Chicago's Water Commissioner. He also owned numerous businesses.

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# 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

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

### Persons:

Dibble, Eugene H., 1929-2014

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Jefferson, Thomas (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

(Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Dibble, Eugene H., 1929-2014--Interviews

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African American businesspeople--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

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African American investment advisors--Interviews

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African American civic leaders--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Chicago (Ill.). Bureau of Water Operations

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## **Occupations:**

Investment Banker

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City Commissioner

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

BusinessMakers|CivicMakers

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## **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 Eugene H. Dibble, III, July 14, 2008 and July 18, 2008. 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).

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## **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.

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## **Detailed Description of the Collection**

### **Series I: Original Interview Footage**

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III, Section A2008\_085\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:26 2008/07/14

Eugene H. Dibble, III was born on July 22, 1929 in Tuskegee, Alabama to Helen Taylor Dibble and Eugene H. Dibble, Jr. His paternal great-grandfather, Andrew Dibble, and grandfather were landowning entrepreneurs in Camden, South Carolina, where Dibble's father grew up. His father attended Atlanta University and Howard University College of Medicine, and he went on to become the director of the John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute,

where he met Dibble's mother. She was born in 1908 at Tuskegee, where her father, Robert Robinson Taylor, had designed many of the campus buildings. As a young girl, she moved to her family's native area of Wilmington, North Carolina, where her father invested in real estate. A graduate of Fisk University, she was the hostess for Tuskegee's special guests. Dibble's maternal uncle, architect Robert Rochon Taylor, chaired the Chicago Housing Authority, and was president of the Illinois Federal Savings and Loan Association in Chicago, Illinois.

African American businesspeople--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American investment advisors--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III, Section A2008\_085\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:14 2008/07/14

Eugene H. Dibble, III grew up on the campus of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, where his father, Eugene H. Dibble, Jr., headed the John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital. His father also directed the nearby Tuskegee Veterans Administration Medical Center, and the annual clinic of the John A. Andrew Clinical Society. As a young child, Dibble joined his father on outings to see patients throughout Macon County, Alabama, and interacted with patients of the veterans' hospital who had post-traumatic stress disorder. He also met physicians Charles R. Drew, George Clayton Branche, Sr. and Walter Gray Crump. One of his neighbors was George Washington Carver, who taught him about plant biology on excursions to the Alabama countryside. Dibble attended kindergarten and elementary school on the Tuskegee campus. He enjoyed chemistry, played football and basketball, and rode horses. He describes the movie theater that his family owned in Camden, South Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III, Section A2008\_085\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:19 2008/07/14

Eugene H. Dibble, III was raised on the campus of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee,

Alabama, where his father was director of the John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital. He accompanied his father to the rural areas of Macon County, Alabama to see patients who were unable to visit the hospital. In 1941, he became a student of the Tuskegee Advanced Flying School at Moton Field, where he learned to fly the Piper J-3 Cub. He began his formal schooling on the Tuskegee campus, and he went on to graduate from Monson Academy, an all-male boarding school in Monson, Massachusetts where he was one of two black students. Then, at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, he majored in chemistry, and traveled often to Philadelphia. Upon learning of his father's illness, Dibble returned to Tuskegee to support his family. Dibble remembers George Washington Carver; Tuskegee founder Booker T. Washington; and Tuskegee Airman Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. He also recalls First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's visits to Tuskegee.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III, Section A2008\_085\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:04 2008/07/14

Eugene H. Dibble, III began his undergraduate studies at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. When his father became ill, he returned to Tuskegee, Alabama, where he matriculated at Tuskegee Institute. There, he met Pilot Daniel "Chappie" James, Jr., majored in chemistry and joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. Upon graduating in 1952, he began his service with the U.S. Air Force under General Curtis LeMay. He was discharged after two years, and moved to Chicago, Illinois. Dibble began his brokerage career as the first black employee of Wayne Hummer and Co., an investment banking firm on LaSalle Street in Chicago. He then managed his own Wayne Hummer and Co. office in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood for three years. After he left the firm, Dibble invested his own funds in a number of businesses on the South Side of Chicago, including a storage facility; a barbecue restaurant; and a garage, where he first met his client, Muhammad Ali. He also wrote a financial column for the Chicago Defender.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III, Section A2008\_085\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:12 2008/07/14

Eugene H. Dibble, III first met Muhammad Ali at the

garage that Dibble owned on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois. Dibble began advising Ali on his finances and real estate investments, and negotiated the \$62 million deal that propelled Ali's return to boxing. He also represented Elijah Muhammad in the acquisition of his home. In Chicago, Dibble helped found the Seaway Bank and Trust Company and Guaranty Bank and Trust Company, of which he named Oscar S. Williams as president. He ran for Cook County public office on the Republican Party ticket to become the commissioner of the Metropolitan Sanitary District of Greater Chicago. At this point in the interview, Dibble describes the black business network in Chicago that included businessmen like John H. Johnson of Johnson Publishing Company, real estate entrepreneur Dempsey J. Travis and boxing promoter Truman K. Gibson, Jr.; his advice for aspiring investors; and investment opportunities in Chicago. He also remembers Chicago Mayor Harold Washington.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III, Section  
A2008\_085\_001\_006, TRT: 0:14:11 2008/07/14

Eugene H. Dibble, III owned a garage on 69th Street and Stony Island Avenue on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois, where Muhammad Ali was one of his regular customers. As a result of Dibble's connection to Ali, the Blackstone Rangers attempted to rob his garage. In 1966, Dibble ran for public office on the Republican Party ticket. He went on to serve as the commissioner of the Metropolitan Sanitary District of Greater Chicago for six years under Mayor Richard J. Daley's administration. Dibble also remembers the Chicago blizzard of 1967 when the Chicago Fire Department used his garage to house their trucks, as the snow had rendered their own space inaccessible. Dibble and his wife, Jeannette Campbell Dibble, had five children together: Rochon Dibble, Chyla Dibble Evans, Andrew Dibble, Eugene H. Dibble, IV and Hillary Dibble Baltimore. He reflects upon his legacy. He concludes this part of the interview by talking about smoking a cigar with Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III, Section  
A2008\_085\_002\_007, TRT: 0:29:44 2008/07/18

Eugene H. Dibble, III moved to Chicago, Illinois in 1954



following two years of service in the U.S. Air Force. He began his brokerage career with the firm Wayne Hummer and Co., for which he operated an office in the Hyde Park area of Chicago for five years. Dibble also worked for the Chicago offices of Hornblower and Weeks; and Straus, Blosser and McDowell. He went on to found his independent brokerage company, E.H.D. and Sons, Inc., that occupied offices in the Guaranty Bank and Trust Company building in Chicago. Dibble invested in properties on the South Side of Chicago, including a garage on Stony Island Avenue that the city bought in 1980. His clients included John H. Johnson of the Johnson Publishing Company, and the Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad, for whom Dibble, III negotiated deals in the real estate and food industries. He and his wife, Jeannette Campbell Dibble, raised five children, whose careers spanned investment, law and construction management.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III, Section A2008\_085\_002\_008, TRT: 0:30:04 2008/07/18

Eugene H. Dibble, III's father, Eugene H. Dibble, Jr., served as director of the John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama during the 1930s and 1940s. In this role, Dibble, Jr. treated both African American and white patients at Tuskegee and throughout Macon County, Alabama. He led the annual clinic of the John A. Andrew Clinical Society, which was attended by physicians like Charles R. Drew, Paul Dudley White, Walter Gray Crump and Reuben Leon Kahn, for whom Dibble worked at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Dibble, Jr. also helped develop the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male, and recruited doctors from around the country to help facilitate it. Dibble describes criticism of the study that his father received from other doctors. At this point in the interview, Dibble, III talks about his carry out restaurant, car collection, and his children's education, as well as his advice for aspiring investors.

Video Oral History Interview with Eugene H. Dibble, III, Section A2008\_085\_002\_009, TRT: 0:23:59 2008/07/18

Eugene H. Dibble, III often conversed with fellow brokers as well as other Chicagoans, to identify potential investments. He talks about successful African American women in business who ascended quickly in their careers. Dibble also describes the abundant networking opportunities in Chicago, Illinois, and his hopes for the African American community. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.