

*South Carolina Political Collections*  
*University of South Carolina*

**Modjeska Monteith Simkins**  
(1899-1992)

**Papers, 1909-1992**

- Volume:** 6.25 feet
- Processed:** 1994 to 1996, by Thomas Koehler-Shepley and Scott David French, & 2000, by Deanna Moore
- Provenance:** Donated by Mrs. Emma Wheeler, Mrs. Martha C. Monteith, Dr. Rachel M. Petty, and Dr. Henri M. Treadwell
- Citation Form:** Modjeska Monteith Simkins Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, The University of South Carolina
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## **Biographical Note:**

“I can not be bought and will not be sold.” Such was the way Modjeska Monteith Simkins (1899-1992) lived every day of her life. Fighting discrimination and segregation on the local, state, and national levels, Simkins vowed to “fight for anybody who is suffering.”



Mary Modjeska Monteith Simkins was born in 1899 in Columbia, S.C. to Henry Clarence and Rachel (Hull) Monteith. She attended Benedict School and College, where she received her bachelor’s degree in 1921. She taught at the Booker T. Washington School in Columbia from 1921 to 1929. From 1931 to 1941, Simkins directed the Negro Program for the South Carolina Tuberculosis Association. She received relevant graduate training at Columbia University and the University of Michigan.

“I believe in confrontation.... I believe in raising sand for those who need it.” Simkins raised sand with her work as the South Carolina State Secretary for the NAACP, 1941 to 1957; Campaign Director for the renovation of Good Samaritan-Waverly Hospital, 1944 to 1950; Public Relations Director for the Richland County Citizens Committee, 1956 to 1988; and President of the Southern Conference Educational Fund, 1972 to 1974. Simkins was a founder, in 1921, of the Victory Savings Bank of Columbia. It survives as one of the oldest African-American owned banks in the country. At different times, Simkins worked at Victory as an assistant cashier, branch manager, and Director of Public Relations.

As a voice of African-American leadership in the South, Simkins was routinely asked to use her influence in political campaigns. Although she helped many leaders win election, Simkins was unable to attain elected office herself. She ran unsuccessfully for Columbia City Council in 1966 and 1984 and the S.C. House of Representatives in 1966.

Modjeska Simkins’ papers illustrate her charisma and outspoken nature. William Gibson, chairman of the NAACP Board of Directors, declared at her funeral—“Mrs. Simkins always told it like it was. You never had to wonder where you stood....” In her weekly radio broadcasts for the Richland County Citizens Committee, 1964 to c.1980, or at the many marches and conferences she attended, her voice rang true in its call for social and racial equity. Gibson characterized Simkins as a voice for the people. Forever “impatient with injustice...If the cause was right, Mrs. Simkins was there.... She had integrity that no money could buy, or position or appointment could influence.... She ran a good race, a warrior’s race, until she died.”



## Scope & Content Note:

The collection consists of 6.25 linear feet of material, 1913 to 1992, arranged in six series: Biographical Papers, General Papers, Topical Files, Photographs, Miscellany and Clippings.

Biographical Papers (.1 feet) include articles written prior to and following her death, some personal papers, and a 1976 oral history done with Simkins by Jacquelyn Hall for the Southern Oral History Program, University of North Carolina, in which Simkins recounts the events of her early childhood and her civil rights activities over five decades.



*Interior, Victory Savings Bank*

General Papers (1913 to 1992, .6 feet) consist chiefly of correspondence with friends, relatives, colleagues and politicians. Included are personal and business letters, invitations to social and political events, and requests for support and thank you notes from politicians, notably Jimmy Carter, Jesse Jackson, John F. Kennedy, Thurgood Marshall, George McGovern, and Robert Taft. Invitations to events at which Simkins spoke form the bulk of the file. One particularly interesting item in the General Papers is a ledger from Simkins Liquor store, located in Columbia, which was run by Simkins' husband Andrew.

Topical Files (1921 to 1992, 4 feet) form the bulk of the collection and primarily consist of papers relating to committees and organizations in which Simkins participated. Files that best document Simkins' civil rights activities include those on: the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Campaigns, "Fearless Women" (an essay based on interviews with Simkins), Good Samaritan Waverly Hospital, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Richland County Citizens Committee, and Victory Savings Bank.

The ACLU file documents Simkins' service on the South Carolina ACLU board of directors in the 1980s and 1990s. It includes case work, economic reports, reports on activities within the state and nation, information about the board, and meeting minutes.



*Victory Savings Bank*

Campaigns files include information on Simkins' 1966 and 1984 campaigns, and materials from various elections, 1952 to 1988. Included are press releases, appeals for support, scripts for advertisements, and information on citizen concerns. Of note is an appeal to the Board of State Canvassers for a re-vote in the 1966 City Council elections because of malfunctioning voting machines.

“Fearless Women” consists of an essay authored by J. Elspeth Stucky. With backing from the Center for Research on Women, Stucky traveled the South interviewing “fearless” black women who taught in schools prior to desegregation. In addition to the essay written about Simkins, the file includes lectures delivered by Stucky (based on project interviews) and undated correspondence with Simkins.



Simkins was in charge of raising funds for renovations to Good Samaritan-Waverly Hospital of Columbia. The Hospital file primarily consists of pledge letters, but also contains donor lists, expenditure reports, other correspondence, and information on fund-raising events.

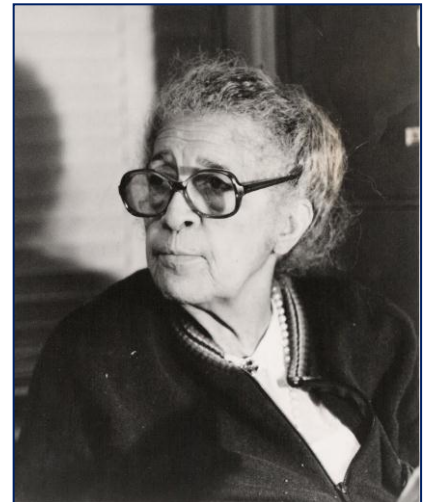
Four folders contain texts of columns, 1947-1948, written by Simkins for the Norfolk, Virginia newspaper the *Journal and Guide*.

As state secretary for the South Carolina branch of the NAACP, Simkins had an active role in its growth in the South. The file includes correspondence, printed materials, budgetary information, fund drive materials, member lists, minutes of meetings, and press releases.

The largest topical file in the collection is that of the Richland County Citizens Committee. Simkins was a founder and the director of public relations. Included are transcripts of her weekly radio addresses, 1964 to c.1980, correspondence, voting recommendations, and records of lawsuits against the City of Columbia and the Election Commission of the City of Columbia charging discrimination.

Records of Victory Savings Bank chiefly date from the 1980s and consist of correspondence, newsletters, and promotional materials. The file also includes a ledger, 1921-1934, that lists early shareholders and contains minutes of the board of directors.

Other topical files of interest include Speeches given by Simkins and papers from Simkins’ early involvement in the Republican Party, 1938 to 1951.



Photographs (c.1920 to c.1990, .1 feet) include portraits and photographs of Simkins and photographs of unidentified subjects. Miscellany (1941-1991 and n.d., .2 feet) includes pamphlets, programs, and other printed material. Clippings (c.1913-1992, .4 feet) highlight civil and social concerns as well as state and national politics.

## Collection Inventory

**Series:** *Biographical Papers* Box 1  
*General Papers* Box 1  
*Topical Files* Boxes 1-5  
*Photographs* Box 5  
*Miscellany* Box 5  
*Clippings* Box 6

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**Biographical Papers:**

**Box 1**

General, 1913-1992  
Oral History, 1976

**General Papers:**

1913-1938  
1940-1949  
1951-1956  
1957-1963  
1964-1966  
1967-1969  
1970-1972  
1973-1975  
1976-1979  
1980-1982  
1983-1986  
1987-1992  
n.d. (Two Folders)

**Topical Files:**

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU):

1954-1977  
1978-1982  
1983-1987  
1988  
1989-1991  
n.d.

Awards:

1942-1985  
1986-1991

Blacks United For Action, 1972 & n.d.

Campaigns:

1966, Columbia City Council & House of Representatives

1984, Columbia County Council

Misc., 1952-1988 & n.d.

Columbia Town Hall, 1946 & n.d.

Columbia Women's Council, 1949-1951 & n.d.

Cultural Action Plan for Richland and Lexington Counties, 1983-1984

Democratic Party:

1928-1982  
1983-1986 & n.d.

Education, Higher:

Allen University and Benedict College, 1930-1990 & n.d.  
South Carolina State College/University, 1939-1990 & n.d.

Equal Rights Amendment, 1982 & n.d.

"Fearless Women," 1990 & n.d.

**Box 2**

Good Samaritan Waverly Hospital (GSWH):

General:

1944

1945

1946

1947-1950

n.d. (Two Folders)

Donor Lists/Notes/Expenditure Reports, 1943-1950 & n.d.

Greater Columbia Inter Group Council, 1953 & n.d.

International Women's Year, 1977

*Journal and Guide* [Norfolk, Va.] Newspaper Column:

1947:

January-May

June-September

October-December

1948, Jan.-Feb. & n.d.

Ku Klux Klan, 1963-1985 & n.d.

Midlands Boys' Club, 1961 & n.d.

Music, 1945-1990 & n.d.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):

General:

1932-1950

1951-1952

1953-1954

1955:

February-September

October-December

1956-1959

1960-1969

1970-1979

1980-1987

1988-1990

n.d. (Three Folders)

Bulletin, "NAACP Bulletin", 1940-1945 [*Note: discarded after filming due to poor physical condition*]

Court Case, *NAACP vs. Carroll Campbell*, 1988

Programs, State Conference,

1951-1967

1970-1983

1985-1989

Property Records, 1939-1991

Republican Party, 1938-1951

Respite House, 1989-1990

Richland County Council, 1971, 1985

Richland County Citizens Committee (RCCC):

1949-1964

1965

1966:

January-August

September-December

1967:

January-March

April-June

July -September

October-December

1968

**Box 3**



1969  
1970  
1971  
1972:  
    February-May  
    June-October  
    November-December  
1973-1974  
1975-1979  
1980-1983

1984  
1985-1990  
n.d. (Three Folders)

**Box 4**

South Carolina Coalition Against the Death Penalty, 1984 & n.d.  
South Carolina Council on Human Relations, 1957-1982 & n.d.  
South Carolina Department of Mental Health, Mental Hospital, 1974-1986 & n.d.  
South Carolina Task Force on Quality Education, 1967 & n.d.  
South Carolina Tuberculosis Association, 1922-1948 & n.d.  
South Carolina Voter Education Project, 1962-1981 & n.d.  
Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1961-1982 & n.d.  
Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF):

    General:  
        1947-1949  
        1954-1958  
        1962-1964  
        1965-1966  
        1967  
        1968-1969  
        1970  
        1971  
        1972  
        1973:  
            January-June  
            July-September  
            October-December  
        1974:  
            January -February  
            March-April  
            May - July  
            September-December  
        1975-1983  
        n.d. (Three Folders)

    Newsletter, "The Southern Patriot": 1944-1976  
    Southern Conference for Human Welfare, 1946-1947 & n.d.  
    Southern Organizing Committee for Economic & Social Justice:  
        General:

            1975-1976  
            1977-1978  
            1979-1980  
            1981-1982

        1983-1992  
        n.d.

**Box 5**

        Newsletter, "Southern Fight-Back," 1976-1991  
    Southern Regional Council, 1944-1991

Speeches:

1964-1971

n.d.

United Citizens Party, c.1969-c.1973

United Negro and Allied Veterans of America, 1941-1947

Victory Savings Bank:

General:

1921-1969

1970-1975

1976-1978

1979

1980-1981

1982-1984

1985

1986

1987:

January-October

November-December

1988

n.d. (Two Folders)

Ledger, 1921-1934

**Photographs:**

Simkins

Other

**Miscellany:**

1941-1959

1960-1971

1972-1979

1980-1991

n.d.

**Newspaper Clippings:**

American Civil Liberties Union

Boycotts

Civil Rights (Two Folders)

Crime

Death Penalty

Desegregation (Two Folders)

Freedom Train

General (Clippings related to Simkins)

Higher Education

Hospitals (GSWH, SC Mental Health, Richland Memorial)

King, Martin Luther Jr. (Two Folders)

Ku Klux Klan

Mitchell, Theo Walker

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Two Folders)

Politics:

Local

National

Richland County Citizens Committee

Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Southern Conference Educational Fund

Southern Conference for Human Welfare, Columbia Committee

Southern Organizing Committee for Economic & Social Justice

Victory Savings Bank

Women's Issues

**Box 6**



*Modjeska Monteith Simkins Microfilm Guide*

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6 TOPICAL, EDUCATION, HIGHER – GSW HOSPITAL, GEN, n.d. (cont.)	4685
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