

Reference Code MS 129

Repository: Georgia Room, Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System, 823 Telfair Street, Augusta, Ga 30901

Title: J. B. White Foundation Collection

Date: September 18, 1920 – September 9, 1982

Extent: 3 boxes

Scope and Content: Material includes 2 ledgers and a receipt book. Ledger one (1) covers the dates September 1923-October 1963 and contains the minutes from the meetings of the Trustees of the J. B. White Fund. Ledger two (2) covers the dates February 1970-November 1981 and contains the minutes from the meetings of the Trustees of the J. B. White Fund. Both ledgers also contain administrative papers concerning the Trustees. The receipt book includes an account of funds paid for the dates September 7, 1966-September 9, 1982.

Name of Creator: J.B. White Foundation

Administrative/Biographical: Materials were a gift from the Community Foundation of the CSRA to Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System on September 18, 2023. The Community Foundation became stewards of the Fund in 2012.

The collection details the financial and philanthropic legacy of early twentieth century Augusta entrepreneur J. B. White. White's department store on Broad Street stood as a fixture of commerce and retail excellence for much of mid to late nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century.

Born on October 12, 1849 in Milford County, Donegal, Ireland, James Bryce White immigrated to New York from Belfast, Ireland shortly after the Civil War and made his way to Augusta around 1868. He worked as a dry goods clerk for several years, gaining a reputation among Augusta merchants and community leaders as a brilliant businessman. When he decided in 1874 to open J. B. White & Co., on what is now the 700 block of Broad Street, he had no trouble finding business partners. His mercantile store boomed and expanded for over thirty years. White's success as an entrepreneur became a model for other merchants throughout the region.

In 1904 after amassing considerable wealth as Augusta's premier purveyor of retail goods, J. B. White retired, selling his company. Suffering from poor health, White eventually relocated to Europe in search of a more healing climate. He died in Genoa, Italy on March 31, 1917 at the age of 67.

Three days after his obituary appeared in the *Augusta Chronicle* on April 11, 1917, the newspaper reported that J. B. White had bequeathed \$400,000.00 to the city, to be spent for the public good. In the months following the announcement, the City Council of Augusta appointed a committee of local officials to devise a plan for the money. Many ideas were on the table, among them, a public library and auditorium, a grammar school for African American children, and a public park. But in 1918, Augusta City Council, per the committee's suggestion, allotted \$200,000 for two new YMCA buildings; one downtown on Broad St, and one that was in the Mill District of the city at the corner of Broad and Crawford Streets. Five years later, in 1923, the remaining funds were placed in an endowment to be managed by a group of trustees selected by city council, named the J.B. White Foundation.

For 100 years, the J.B. White Foundation has been a source of charitable giving within the Augusta community, early on providing thousands of educational scholarships to students in need, and for many years offering substantial financial support to Shiloh Orphanage and the Tuttle-Newton Home, formerly the Augusta Orphan Society. In 2012, the Community Foundation of the CSRA became stewards of the Fund and continues to honor J. B. White's wish to provide for the public good.

To that end, the Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System will ensure public access to the historical records of the J. B. White Foundation once they've been processed and digitized. The records are of value to both historians and genealogists alike, opening a window into the early philanthropic activities of Augusta's business class, and adding primary source material to the historical records of Shiloh Orphanage and the Tuttle-Newton Home. Family history researchers will find the records especially beneficial if they have ancestors who lived in the Augusta area, as the records contain names of local individuals who were awarded educational scholarships.

Conditions governing access: No restrictions

Related Resources:

See AUGUSTA CHRONICLE digital archive. Search term "J. B. White Fund", date range 1917 – 1923.

Box 1:

- J. B. White Foundation. Ledger with 152 leaves. Meeting minutes and administrative papers of the Trustees of the J. B. White Fund, September 18, 1923 – October 21, 1963.

Box 2:

- J. B. White Foundation. Ledger containing meeting minutes and administrative papers of the Trustees of the J. B. White Fund, February 25, 1970 – November, 1982. Missing November 1963 and February 1970.

Box 3:

- Receipt book, September 7, 1966 – September 9, 1982.