

Gourley-Powell Trial Collection

1969

Collection Summary

Title: State vs. William Powell Collection

Summary: Court transcripts from the case of the State of Tennessee vs. William Powell.

Physical Description: 1.67 linear feet

Stack Location: MSS-

Repository: Metropolitan Government Archives of Nashville & Davidson County, 615 Church Street, Nashville, TN 37219

Biographical/Historical Note: One of the most well-known and controversial criminal cases in Nashville, the trial of the State of Tennessee vs. William Powell centers on the 1968 murder of 72-year-old W. Haynie Gourley, founder of Capitol Chevrolet. Gourley was shot to death with a .38 caliber pistol while he and Powell took a fifteen-minute drive down Elm Hill Pike on the morning of May 24. According to Powell, the two men slowed at an intersection when a third man entered the car, carrying a gun and demanding their money. The man then began shooting, killing Gourley with three shots and injuring Powell in the leg before jumping out of the car. Powell described the assailant as a tall, thin, African-American man, approximately 30 years old. The murder itself took place three days after Bill Powell agreed to leave Capitol Chevrolet in order to allow the Gourleys' son, William Haynie "Billy" Gourley, Jr., to take over the business. When no viable suspects were found, Powell came under suspicion. In March of 1969, he was indicted by the Grand Jury for first degree murder. The trial took place over the summer of 1969, with Judge Allen Cornelius presiding. Attorney General Thomas Shriver represented the State, with John J. Hooker, Sr. as a special prosecutor; Cecil Branstetter and Jack Norman, Sr. represented Powell. After around three weeks of witness examinations and nearly five hours of deliberations, the Jury gave a verdict of Not Guilty.

Scope and Content: The Gourley-Powell Trial Collection contains approximately 2400 pages of documents and approximately 65 photographs from the trial of the State of Tennessee vs. William E. Powell. The documents comprise the court transcripts from the trial, spanning from July 21 to August 2, 1969. Included in the transcripts are witness testimonies, Attorney General Thomas Shriver's closing arguments, Judge Allen Cornelius's charge of the Jury, and the final verdict. The transcript is arranged chronologically and divided into individual witness testimonies. The photographs in this collection are *Nashville Tennessean* staff photos taken in the courthouse while the trial was in progress. Subjects include attorneys John J. Hooker, Sr., Cecil Branstetter, Jack Norman, Sr., and Thomas Shriver. Other subjects include

Josephine and Billy Gourley, William Powell, Officers Sherman Nickens, Charles Hunter, and Detective William Larkin. Some subjects are still unidentified. This collection also includes a guide to the trial, which provides bullet-point summaries of each witness testimony, General Shriver's closing argument, and other courtroom proceedings.

Restrictions:

Restrictions on Access: In library use only. Access is available by appointment during Metro Government Archives' open hours, which can be found at http://www.library.nashville.org/locations/loc_all.asp. Please inquire in advance of visiting Metro Government Archives as items are in closed stacks.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction: This material may be protected by copyright (Title 17 U.S. Code).

Administrative Information:

Copyright: Metro Government Archives of Nashville & Davidson County retains intellectual property rights to this collection. Some restrictions may apply

Provenance:

Processing Information: Processed and arranged in 2014 by Kelley Sirko.

Accruals: None expected.

Detailed Description of the Collection:

Box 1: July 21-29, 1969 - pages 1-802

- **Folder 1:** Josephine Gourley Testimony, pp. 1-55 (July 21)
- **Folder 2:** William H. Gourley, Jr. Testimony, pp. 56-84 (July 21)
- **Folder 3:** Samuel M. Fleming Testimony, pp. 85-109 (July 21)
- **Folder 4:** Thomas Jackson, Jr. Testimony, pp. 110-169 (July 21)
- **Folder 5:** John S. Glenn, Jr. Testimony, pp. 170-243 (July 22)
- **Folder 6:** Billie Dee Boyer Testimony, pp. 244-291 (July 22)
- **Folder 7:** Meacham Clark Testimony, pp. 292-308 (July 22)
- **Folder 8:** George E. Crawford Testimony, pp. 309-378 (July 22)
- **Folder 9:** Charles M. Williams Testimony, pp. 379-399 (July 22)
- **Folder 10:** Hamilton Wallace, Jr. Testimony, pp. 400-409 (July 22)
- **Folder 11:** Ruth G. Land Testimony, pp. 410-414 (July 22)
- **Folder 12:** David Allen Testimony, pp. 415-429 (July 22)
- **Folder 13:** James Walter Hughes Testimony, pp. 430-459 (July 23)
- **Folder 14:** Ruth Strupe Testimony, pp. 460-464 (July 23)
- **Folder 15:** Charles Edward Donnelly Testimony, pp. 465-518 (July 23)
- **Folder 16:** Grady Wright Testimony, pp. 519-563 (July 23)
- **Folder 17:** Freddie Cook Testimony, pp. 564-590 (July 23)
- **Folder 18:** Hobart Cook Testimony, pp. 591-609 (July 23)

- **Folder 19:** Sgt. Frank Galbaugh Testimony, pp. 610-626 (July 23)
- **Folder 20:** Ernest Castleman Testimony, pp. 627-661 (July 23)
- **Folder 21:** Joe M. Dodson Testimony, pp. 662-712 (July 23)
- **Folder 22:** T. E. Simpkins Testimony, pp. 713-737 (July 24) – 2 copies
- **Folder 23:** William E. Coleman Testimony, pp. 738-771 (July 24) – 2 copies
- **Folder 24:** Ernest Castleman Testimony (cont.), pp. 772-777 (July 24) – 2 copies
- **Folder 25:** Cortland Cunningham Testimony, pp. 778-802 (July 24)

Box 2: July 24-29, 1969 – pages 804-1737

- **Folder 26:** Thomas L. Hughes Testimony, pp. 804-815 (July 24)
- **Folder 27:** Myron T. Scholberg Testimony, pp. 816-831 (July 24)
- **Folder 28:** Carl Harrison Testimony, pp. 832-892 (July 24)
- **Folder 29:** Donald Barton Testimony, pp. 893-901 (July 24)
- **Folder 30:** William A. McDaniel Testimony, pp. 902-914 (July 24)
- **Folder 31:** Robert Goodwin Testimony, pp. 915-936 (July 24)
- **Folder 32.1:** William Larkin Testimony, pp. 937-981 (July 24)
- **Folder 32.2:** William Larkin Testimony (cont.), pp. 982-1056 (July 25)
- **Folder 33:** Lou Penuel Testimony, pp. 1057-1068 (July 25)
- **Folder 34:** Ernest Lee Wasdon Testimony, pp. 1069-1081 (July 25)
- **Folder 35.1:** Walter Lee Davis Testimony, pp. 1082-1130 (July 25)
- **Folder 35.2:** Walter Lee Davis Testimony (cont.), pp. 1131-1231 (July 25)
- **Folder 36.1:** Sherman Nickens Testimony, pp. 1232-1269 (July 25)
- **Folder 36.2:** Sherman Nickens Testimony, pp. 1270-1306 (July 26)
- **Folder 37.1:** William E. Powell Testimony, pp. 1307-1385 (July 28)
- **Folder 37.2:** William E. Powell Testimony (cont.), pp. 1386-1494 (July 28)
- **Folder 38:** Tommy Lunn Testimony, pp. 1495-1503 (July 28)
- **Folder 39:** Thomas C. Swann Testimony, pp. 1504-1548 (July 28)
- **Folder 40:** Douglas H. Riddell Testimony, pp. 1549-1580 (July 29)
- **Folder 41:** Thomas C. Swann Testimony (cont.), pp. 1581-1645 (July 29)
- **Folder 42:** Frank C. Gorrell Testimony, pp. 1646-1648 (July 29)
- **Folder 43:** Thomas C. Swann Testimony (cont.), pp. 1649-1688 (July 29)

Box 3: July 29-August 2, 1969 – pages 1689-2430

- **Folder 44:** B. F. Hunter Testimony, pp. 1689-1716 (July 29)
- **Folder 45:** Wiley Conerly Testimony, pp. 1717-1737 (July 29)
- **Folder 46:** Clarence Watson Testimony, pp. 1738-1749 (July 29)
- **Folder 47:** Roberta Witherspoon Testimony, pp. 1750-1759 (July 29)
- **Folder 48:** Erline Cockerham Testimony, pp. 1760-1777 (July 29)
- **Folder 49:** John A. Witherspoon Testimony, pp. 1778-1781 (July 29)
- **Folder 50:** William Taylor Moon Testimony, pp. 1782-1783 (July 29)
- **Folder 51:** Charles Wilson Testimony, pp. 1784-1833 (July 29)
- **Folder 52:** Charles Wilson Testimony (cont.), pp. 1834-1868 (July 30)

- **Folder 53:** John Sloan Testimony, pp. 1869-1872 (July 30)
- **Folder 54:** Herman B. Keith Testimony, pp. 1873-1878 (July 30)
- **Folder 55:** William Larkin Testimony, pp. 1879-1886 (July 30)
- **Folder 56:** Billy Easley Testimony, pp. 1887-1896 (July 30)
- **Folder 57:** James A. Swiggart Testimony, pp. 1897-1898 (July 30)
- **Folder 58:** James Hugh Reed, III Testimony, pp. 1899-1901 (July 30)
- **Folder 59:** Carlton Holt Testimony, pp. 1902-1903 (July 30)
- **Folder 60:** Benson Trimble Testimony, pp. 1904-1907 (July 30)
- **Folder 61:** Oscar Randolph Batson Testimony, pp. 1908-1910 (July 30)
- **Folder 62:** Frank Sherer Irvin Testimony, pp. 1911-1918 (July 30)
- **Folder 63:** Helen Suddeth Powell Testimony, pp. 1919-1930 (July 30)
- **Folder 64:** William Coleman Testimony, pp. 1931-1948 (July 30)
- **Folder 65:** Sherman Nickens Testimony, pp. 1949-1957 (July 30)
- **Folder 66:** Vernon Leslie Testimony, pp. 1958-1984 (July 30)
- **Folder 67:** Reynold Abrams Testimony, pp. 1895-1990 (July 30)
- **Folder 68:** William R. Heilman Testimony, pp. 1991-2020 (July 31)
- **Folder 69:** William R. Heilman Testimony (cont.), pp. 2021-2030 (August 1)
- **Folder 70:** Lindel L. Shaneyfelt Testimony, pp. 2031-2064 (August 1)
- **Folder 71:** Robert O. Frensley Testimony, pp. 2065-2156 (August 1)
- **Folder 72:** Donald R. Hall Testimony, pp. 2157-2185 (August 1)
- **Folder 73:** Col. Billy Filmore Huffine Testimony, pp. 2186-2192 (August 1)
- **Folder 74:** Col. Robert Fox Testimony, pp. 2193-2204 (August 1)
- **Folder 75:** R.C. Jackson Testimony, pp. 2205-2227 (August 1)
- **Folder 76:** Henry Lewis Testimony, pp. 2228-2251 (August 1)
- **Folder 77:** Robert Goodwin Testimony, pp. 2252-2268 (August 1)
- **Folder 78:** Robert A. Frazier Testimony, pp. 2269-2283 (August 1)
- **Folder 79:** James H. Allen Testimony, pp. 2284-2305 (August 2)
- **Folder 80:** Herman Bedford Keith Testimony, pp. 2306-2312 (August 2)
- **Folder 81:** Sherman Nickens Testimony, pp. 2313-2317 (August 2)
- **Folder 82:** William "Bill" Larkin Testimony, pp. 2318-2325 (August 2)
- **Folder 83:** Christ Clark Testimony, pp. 2326-2327 (August 2)
- **Folder 84:** William E. Powell Testimony, 2328-2358 (August 2)
- **Folder 85:** State's Closing Argument, pp. 2359-2397 (August 2)
- **Folder 86:** Defense's Motion to Strike, pp. 2398-2403 (August 2)
- **Folder 87:** Charge of the Jury and Verdict, pp. 2404-2430 (August 2)

Box 4: Photographs

- **Folder 1:** Photographs, July 22, 1969 – Billie Dee Boyer
- **Folder 2:** Photographs, July 24, 1969 – William McDaniel, John J. Hooker, Sr., Walter Lee Davis, Sterling Gray, unidentified person
- **Folder 3:** Photographs, July 25, 1969 – Walter Lee Davis
- **Folder 4:** Photographs, July 28, 1969 – unidentified people

- **Folder 5:** Photographs, July 29, 1969 – Herb Rich, unidentified people
- **Folder 6:** Photographs, July 30, 1969 – R.C. Jackson (?), Ernest Castleman (?), unidentified people
- **Folder 7:** Photographs, August 1, 1969 – Ernest Castleman (?), unidentified people
- **Folder 8:** Photographs, August 2, 1969 – William Powell, Bob Frensley, Sherman Nickens, John Lentz, James H. Allen, unidentified people
- **Folder 9:** Photographs, Unknown Date – William Larkin, Sherman Nickens, T.E. Simpkins, Charles Hunter, William Powell, Thomas Shriver, John J. Hooker, Sr., unidentified people
- **Folder 10:** Photographs, Unknown Date – John Lentz, Sherman Nickens, Bob Frensley, Walter Hughes, Billy Gourley, Josephine Gourley, Det. Breedlove, Bob Goodwin, Cecil Branstetter, Jack Norman, Sr., unidentified people
- **Folder 11:** Who's Who in the Case – a guide to the trial, including bullet-point summaries of witness testimonies and courtroom proceedings