

## MSS. Collection #25

**Benjamin Cone Papers, 1893-1982 [bulk 1917-1921, 1940-1970].**  
**9½ boxes (89 folders), ca. 2700 items.**

### INTRODUCTION

The Benjamin Cone Papers are composed of materials from the files of his personal office. Since the collection originated from the Cone office files it by no means represents a complete collection of his papers. Although the bulk of the material relates directly to Cone, a substantial amount deals with other members of his family.

The collection is important to persons studying Greensboro business history, placing emphasis on textiles. It provides an overview of the Cone family, covering their business activities and community service. In particular, the collection relates the originator's involvement in Cone industries, as well as his activities politically and in the community at large.

**Arrangement:** This collection is arranged into six series by document type and chronologically within most series. The series are: **Correspondence**, 1909-1982; **Financial Documents**, 1893-1982; **Speeches**, 1948-1958; **Printed Material**, 1908-1981; **Newspaper Clippings and Scrapbooks**, 1908-1977; and **Photographs**, 1909-1976.

**Provenance:** The bulk of this collection was donated in 1983 by Benjamin Cone's daughter-in-law, Mrs. Benjamin (Betty) Cone Jr. It includes accession numbers 1976.168.19a-b and 1983.72.1-6.

**Processing:** This collection was processed by Jeffrey C. Mingus, and the finding aid was completed in April 1984.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The Cone family of Greensboro, North Carolina began with Benjamin Cone's grandfather, Herman Kuhn (Cone), who came to the United States in 1845. After living in Tennessee for several years, Herman Cone, his wife and family moved to Baltimore, Maryland. In 1870 the company of H. Cone & Sons began dealing in the sale of wholesale commodities. A new company, Cone Export & Commission Co., was formed in 1890 with its corporate offices located in New York City and dealt in the selling and exporting of cloth goods. In 1892, expanded by purchasing the Asheville Cotton Mills, within the next few decades, the Cone family textile mill holdings grew to one of the largest in the world. They included the following:

- 1895 - Proximity Manufacturing Co., Greensboro, N.C.
- 1899 - Revolution Cotton Mills, Greensboro, N.C.
- 1903 - Cliffside Mills, Cliffside, N.C.
- 1905 - White Oak Mills, Greensboro, N.C.
- 1909 - Bleachery at Revolution Cotton Mills
- 1912 - Proximity Print Works, Greensboro, N.C.

- 1920 - Salisbury Cotton Mills, Salisbury, N.C.
- 1926 - Eno Cotton Mill, Hillsboro, N.C.
- 1928 - Tarbardley Manufacturing Co., Haw River, N.C.

Benjamin Cone was born in New York City, on August 10, 1899, the second son of Ceasar and Jeanette Cone. His family eventually moved to Greensboro, North Carolina, where much of the Cone family's business interests became located. In Greensboro, he attended grade school and high school, graduating in 1916. He entered the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and graduated, with Thomas Wolfe, in 1920. That same year, he was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Proximity Manufacturing Company, remaining until 1942. In 1935, a new phase of Benjamin Cone's life began with his election to the North Carolina General Assembly. Soon after the outbreak of World War II and United States involvement, Cone resigned his posts in Cone industries and the community and joined the navy receiving a Lieutenant's commission. After his discharge from the U.S. Navy in 1945, he resumed a role in the Cone business affairs and the Greensboro community, as follows:

- 1947-53 Greensboro City Councilman
- 1949-51 Mayor of Greensboro
- 1954 President of the Greensboro Community Chest
- 1956-71 President of Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital
- 1956-65 Chairman of the Board for Cone Mills
- 1957-58 President of the Greensboro United Fund
- 1960-65 President of the Children's Home Society
- 1965-71 Resigns Chairmanship of Cone Mills and assumes position of Director

In 1971, Benjamin Cone retired to private life. Two years later, he was honored with the Distinguished Citizen Award by the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce and the Eleanor Roosevelt Humanitarian Award by the Bonds for Israel Committee. Cone continued his generosity and public service with a donation of \$2 million to the Weatherspoon Gallery and UNC-Greensboro Art Department in 1981.

### **SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE**

The Benjamin Cone Papers consist of personal and business correspondence, financial and legal documents, printed materials, newspaper clippings, maps, photographs, speeches and notes, posters and military records. The collection contains materials dating from 1893 to 1982 and covering most of Benjamin Cone's life. The greatest bulk of material falls between the years 1917-1921 and 1940-1970. The years with the least coverage relate to Cone's childhood and adolescence (1908-1916) and then again immediately following the settlement of his father's estate (1922-1934).

The strengths of this collection are numerous and relate to a great portion of Benjamin Cone's affairs. The collection includes materials, relevant to business historians, covering the Cone family's textile industry activities and shows Benjamin Cone's active role inside the corporation. Cone's community involvement is also illustrated, providing social and community historians with several files relating to his participation on several charitable committees and projects. The

political interests of Benjamin Cone, important to political historians of the local and state level, are shown by correspondence from his terms on the Greensboro City Council and as mayor. These interests are also illustrated by the names and positions of correspondents found in the collection, including Governors Terry Sanford, W. Kerr Scott, Luther H. Hodges and R. Gregg Cherry and Senators Alton Lennon, B. Everette Jordan, Clyde R. Hoey and William B. Umstead. Multiple files dealing with Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital illustrate Benjamin Cone's active role within that organization. The collection also includes files pertaining to his leisurely activities, hunting and fishing trips and around the world vacations.

Although the materials are revealing about Cone's lifestyle and business dealings, they pay little heed to his family and the private side of his life. Very little can be found concerning his wife, children and their families. Only the documents covering the deaths and settlement of estates of his mother, Jeanette Cone, and his father, Ceasar Cone, reveal any information on his family. Through printed material and speeches, the collection illustrates some early history on the Cone family, including Benjamin's father and other relations. Little information is contained on any of Benjamin Cone's brothers and their families.

Other weaknesses and gaps in the collection include Benjamin Cone's college and early business career, his military service in the United States Marine Corps, his early political career in the North Carolina General Assembly, and, finally, his activities and correspondence after retirement.

Despite the gaps in the collection, it is still a valid and useful collection that illustrates the life of Benjamin Cone and his interaction with the Cone family and Cone industries. The collection would be of interest to anyone studying the Cone family and their influence on the history of Greensboro and Guilford County, and the Jewish heritage of the North Carolina.

## **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

### **1. Correspondence. 55 folders (ca. 2000 items). 1909-1911, 1934-1982.**

This series includes property files concerning the Ceasar Cone Estate (1023 Summit Avenue), with maps showing the location and layout of the house, service buildings, drives, and walkways and records of land transactions of Cone property at Lake Placid, New York. Other papers involve the Cone's community services (Community Chest Committees, World War II Memorial Auditorium, and the Weatherspoon Gallery); political involvement (Mayoral term [1949-1951], correspondence with Governors W. Kerr Scott and Terry Sanford and service on Greensboro's City Council); and work relating to the Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital.

### **2. Financial Documents. 11 folders (ca. 500 items). 1893-1921, 1935, 1962-1982.**

This series consists of files dealing with the deaths and estate settlements of Ceasar Cone Sr. and his wife Jeanette, several stock transactions not relating to Greensboro, and payroll activities for Benjamin Cone's personal servants (1963-1982).

**3. Speeches. 1 folder (ca. 25 items). 1948-1958.**

Includes speeches by Benjamin Cone, both printed and written, relating to company events, family history, and community service.

**4. Printed Material. 6 folders (ca. 30 items). 1908, 1917, 1935-1981.**

This series contains materials relating to the Cone's business achievements, the Cone's Jewish heritage, and other miscellaneous subjects. Other materials include books, a brief by Ceasar Cone Sr., programs, pamphlets, newsletters, handbooks, magazines and a campaign poster advocating Congressional New Deal candidate, Lewis Teague, who opposed the Cone policy of wage cuts (circa 1934).

**5. Newspaper Clippings and Scrapbook. 7 folders (ca. 35 items). 1908, 1927, 1943-1977.**

Includes newspaper clippings concerning citizen's editorial comments on creating a park out of the Cone Estate (1023 Summit Avenue), the Cone collection of artwork at the Weatherspoon Gallery, and a scrapbook of Benjamin Cone's term as mayor of Greensboro. Other miscellaneous clippings deal with Cone's life, remembrances, achievements, and the burial of his uncle Moses H. Cone.

**6. Photographs. 9 folders (ca. 80 items). 1909, 1928, 1943-1976.**

This series contains photographs of Benjamin Cone's high school reunions for the class of 1916, of the Army/Navy "E" ceremony, and Cone Mill openings and company picnics. Also included are a set of stereograph cards entitled "A Visit To White Oak Cotton Mills, Greensboro, N.C." and printed in 1909.

**FOLDER LISTING**

<b>Series</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>
1	1	Correspondence -- Prospects for Sale of Property
	2	Correspondence -- Lot #353 80 Acres Lake Placid
	3-A	Correspondence -- Camp Carolina 1963
	3-B	Correspondence -- Camp Carolina 1963
	4	Correspondence -- 1023 Summit Avenue Property
	5	Correspondence -- South Carolina Hunting File
	6	Correspondence -- 1952 Newfoundland Fishing File
	7	Correspondence -- Collector of Customs and Excise Canada
	8	Correspondence -- Norway Fishing File
	9	Correspondence -- Ben Cone Alparagas Visit
	10	Correspondence -- Israel File
	11	Correspondence -- Ben Cone 1966 Trip Around the World
	12	Correspondence -- Masonic and Eastern Star Home
	13	Correspondence -- Army and Navy Club

<b>Series</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>
1	14	Correspondence -- Greensboro Kiwanis
	15	Correspondence -- Travel/Recreation Miscellaneous
	16	<a href="#">Correspondence -- Letterbook of Thank-you's to Cone Family</a>
	17	Correspondence -- U.N.C. Television Project
	18	Correspondence -- Letters of Thanks, etc. Community Chest Committees
	19	Correspondence -- World War II Memorial Auditorium - Coliseum
	20	Correspondence -- N.C. Trade Fair
	21	Correspondence -- Donations to UNC-G and Weatherspoon Gallery
	22	Correspondence -- Intention to Run for City Council
	23	Correspondence -- City of Greensboro Administrative Instructions
	24	Correspondence -- Personal: Letters of Support of Mayor
	25	Correspondence -- Politics
	26	Correspondence -- Correspondence with City of Greensboro, Governor Scott
	27	Correspondence -- Governor Terry Sanford
	28	Correspondence -- 1941 Correspondence on 1936 Guilford County Intangible Settlement
	29	Correspondence -- Selection Committee for Director Cone Hospital
	30-A	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
	30-B	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
	30-C	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
	30-D	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
	30-E	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
	30-F	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
	31	Correspondence -- Correspondence 1965
	32	Correspondence -- Moses Cone Park (Blowing Rock)
	33	Correspondence -- Bettis/Doyle Controversy
	34	Correspondence -- Dennis Nathaniel -- Indian Student UNC-CH
	35	Correspondence -- Other Hospitals
	36	Correspondence -- Cornerstone Laying
	37	Correspondence -- 1942 Ben Cone, Resignations
	38-A	Correspondence -- Navy Records
	38-B	Correspondence -- Navy Records
	38-C	Correspondence -- Navy Records
	38-D	Correspondence -- Navy Records
	39	Correspondence -- Ben Cone Memoirs
	40	Correspondence -- Andrew Zimmer, Attorney
	41	Correspondence -- Letters of Thanks -- 80 <sup>th</sup> Birthday
	42	Correspondence -- Cone Family Honors
	43	Correspondence -- Portraits of Moses H. Cone Received
	44	Correspondence -- Cone Export & Commission Co.
	45	Correspondence -- Messages of Congratulations (B.C.)
	46	Correspondence -- Ben Cone -- Retirement
2	1	Financial Documents -- Stocks
	2-A	Financial Documents -- Ceasar Cone Estate Settlement

<b>Series</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>
2	2-B	Financial Documents -- Ceasar Cone Estate Settlement
	2-C	Financial Documents -- Ceasar Cone Estate Settlement
	2-D	Financial Documents -- Ceasar Cone Estate Settlement
	3-A	Financial Documents -- Jeanette Cone Estate Settlement
	3-B	Financial Documents -- Jeanette Cone Estate Settlement
	3-C	Financial Documents -- Jeanette Cone Estate Settlement
	4	Financial Documents -- Jeanette Cone Personal Effects
	5	Financial Documents -- Payroll File
	6	Financial Documents -- Moses H. Cone Checkbooks (filed with oversize flat scrapbooks)
3	1	Speeches -- Speech File
4	1	<a href="#">Printed Material -- Ceasar Cone</a>
	2	Printed Material -- Cone Family Honors
	3	Printed Material -- Political
	4	<a href="#">Printed Material -- Business</a>
	5	Printed Material -- Community Service
	6	Printed Material -- Campaign Posters for Lewis E. Teague
5	1	Newspaper Clippings -- Moses H. Cone Burial
	2	Newspaper Clippings -- Cone Mills Army/Navy "E" Award
	3	Newspaper Clippings -- Save the House (1023 Summit Ave.)
	4	Newspaper Clippings -- Remembrances
	5	Newspaper Clippings -- Cone Sisters' Art Collection (Weatherspoon)
	6	Newspaper Clippings -- Miscellaneous
	7	Newspaper Clippings -- Scrapbook (filed with oversize flat scrapbooks)
6	1	<a href="#">Photographs -- Stereograph cards of White Oak Mills</a>
	2	Photographs -- Fourth of July company picnic, Cone Mills
	3	Photographs -- Cone Business Activities
	4	Photographs -- Greensboro High School Class of 1916
	5	Photographs -- Greensboro Manufacturing Co.
	6	Photographs -- Army/Navy "E" Award Ceremony
	7	Photographs -- Class Reunion, UNC-Chapel Hill
	8	Photographs -- Miscellaneous
	9	Photographs -- Proximity Mill