

## MSS. Collection #25

**Benjamin Cone Papers, 1893-1982 (bulk 1917-1921, 1940-1970).  
9 boxes (88 folders), ca. 1000 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:** The collection is arranged in series by document type, and within most series, chronologically. The series are: **Correspondence, Financial Documents, Speeches, Printed Material, Newspapers and Newspaper Scrapbook, and Photographs.**

**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, 1909-1911, 1934-1982. 2.33 linear feet. Arranged chronologically, with subject classification.**

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, 1893-1921, 1935, 1962-1982. 10½ inches. Arranged chronologically, with subject classification.**

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, 1948-1958. 1/2 inch. Arranged chronologically.**

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

**4. Printed Material, 1908, 1917, 1935-1981. 3 inches. Arranged alphabetically.**

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 Scrapbooks, 1908, 1927, 1943-1977. 2 inches. Arranged chronologically.**

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, 1909, 1928, 1943-1976. 4 inches. Arranged topically.**

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****Series Folder Contents**

1	1	Correspondence -- Prospects for Sale of Property
1	2	Correspondence -- Lot #353 80 Acres Lake Placid
1	3-A	Correspondence -- Camp Carolina 1963
1	3-B	Correspondence -- Camp Carolina 1963
1	4	Correspondence -- 1023 Summit Avenue Property
1	5	Correspondence -- South Carolina Hunting File
1	6	Correspondence -- 1952 Newfoundland Fishing File
1	7	Correspondence -- Collector of Customs and Excise Canada
1	8	Correspondence -- Norway Fishing File
1	9	Correspondence -- Ben Cone Alpargatas Visit
1	10	Correspondence -- Israel File
1	11	Correspondence -- Ben Cone 1966 Trip Around the World
1	12	Correspondence -- Masonic and Eastern Star Home
1	13	Correspondence -- Army and Navy Club
1	14	Correspondence -- Greensboro Kiwanis
1	15	Correspondence -- Travel/Recreation Miscellaneous
1	16	<a href="#">Correspondence -- Letterbook of Thank-you's to Cone Family</a>
1	17	Correspondence -- U.N.C. Television Project
1	18	Correspondence -- Letters of Thanks, etc. Community Chest Committees
1	19	Correspondence -- World War II Memorial Auditorium - Coliseum
1	20	Correspondence -- N.C. Trade Fair
1	21	Correspondence -- Donations to UNC-G and Weatherspoon Gallery
1	22	Correspondence -- Intention to Run for City Council
1	23	Correspondence -- City of Greensboro Administrative Instructions
1	24	Correspondence -- Personal: Letters of Support of Mayor
1	25	Correspondence -- Politics
1	26	Correspondence -- Correspondence with City of Greensboro, Governor Scott
1	27	Correspondence -- Governor Terry Sanford 1941 Correspondence on 1936 Guilford County Intangible Settlement
1	29	Correspondence -- Selection Committee for Director Cone Hospital
1	30-A	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
1	30-B	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
1	30-C	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
1	30-D	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
1	30-E	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
1	30-F	Correspondence -- Ben Cone: Director, President, Chairman
1	31	Correspondence -- Correspondence 1965
1	32	Correspondence -- Moses Cone Park (Blowing Rock)
1	33	Correspondence -- Bettis/Doyle Controversy
1	34	Correspondence -- Dennis Nathaniel -- Indian Student UNC-CH
1	35	Correspondence -- Other Hospitals

**Series   Folder   Contents**

1	36	Correspondence -- Cornerstone Laying
1	37	Correspondence -- 1942 Ben Cone, Resignations
1	38-A	Correspondence -- Navy Records
1	38-B	Correspondence -- Navy Records
1	38-C	Correspondence -- Navy Records
1	38-D	Correspondence -- Navy Records
1	39	Correspondence -- Ben Cone Memoirs
1	40	Correspondence -- Andrew Zimmer, Attorney
1	41	Correspondence -- Letters of Thanks – 80 <sup>th</sup> Birthday
1	42	Correspondence -- Cone Family Honors
1	43	Correspondence -- Portraits of Moses H. Cone Received
1	44	Correspondence -- Cone Export & Commission Co.
1	45	Correspondence -- Messages of Congratulations (B.C.)
1	46	Correspondence -- Ben Cone – Retirement
2	1	Financial Documents -- Stocks
2	2-A	Financial Documents -- Ceasar Cone Estate Settlement
2	2-B	Financial Documents -- Ceasar Cone Estate Settlement
2	2-C	Financial Documents -- Ceasar Cone Estate Settlement
2	2-D	Financial Documents -- Ceasar Cone Estate Settlement
2	3-A	Financial Documents -- Jeanette Cone Estate Settlement
2	3-B	Financial Documents -- Jeanette Cone Estate Settlement
2	3-C	Financial Documents -- Jeanette Cone Estate Settlement
2	4	Financial Documents -- Jeanette Cone Personal Effects
2	5	Financial Documents -- Payroll File
2	-	Financial Documents -- Moses H. Cone Checkbooks
3	1	Speeches -- Speech File
4	1	<a href="#">Printed Material -- Ceasar Cone</a>
4	2	Printed Material -- Cone Family Honors
4	3	Printed Material -- Political
4	4	<a href="#">Printed Material -- Business</a>
4	5	Printed Material -- Community Service
4	-	Printed Material -- Campaign Posters for Lewis E. Teague
5	-	Newspaper Clipping Scrapbooks (filed with oversize flat scrapbooks)
5	1-6	Newspaper Clippings (filed by accession no. with general clippings collection)
6	1	Photographs -- Stereograph cards of White Oak Mills
6	2	Photographs -- Fourth of July company picnic, Cone Mills
6	3	Photographs -- Cone Business Activities
6	4	Photographs -- Greensboro High School Class of 1916
6	5	Photographs -- Greensboro Manufacturing Co.

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
6	6	Photographs -- Army/Navy "E" Award Ceremony
6	7	Photographs -- Class Reunion, UNC-Chapel Hill
6	8	Photographs -- Miscellaneous