

MSS. Collection #90

Bert A. Hall Papers, ca. 1940-1985. 1 box (14 folders), ca. 78 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

The bulk of this collection dates from 1973 to 1976, after Bert Hall's retirement as Agricultural Agent for Guilford County and during his tenure as a Guilford County Commissioner. Researchers interested in African Americans in Guilford County and Guilford County government will find this collection useful, as it provides an important glimpse of one man's accomplishments during and after segregation.

Bert Hall was the fourth black man to hold the position of Agricultural Extension Agent for Guilford County. He had a reputation for treating both blacks and whites fairly and worked for over 35 years to help poor farmers obtain economic autonomy. After his retirement, he continued working for Guilford County on the Board of Commissioners, only the second African American member. The collection contains newspaper articles, certificates, and biographies detailing Hall's accomplishments as Agricultural Agent and Commissioner. The scrapbook contains correspondence, newspaper clippings, and photos as mementos of Bert Hall Day. Also of interest is a framed photo of Hall with musician Jester Hairston.

Arrangement: The Bert A. Hall Papers are organized into four series by document type. Each series is then arranged alphabetically by subject. The four series are: **Correspondence**, 1976-1983; **Miscellaneous**, 1983; **Printed Materials**, 1971-1983; and **Scrapbooks**, 1949-1976.

Provenance: This collection was donated to the museum in 1990 by Bert Hall's brother-in-law, Mr. Carl Codrup, 1100 Ross Ave, Greensboro, NC 27406. The accession number is 1990.19.2. Also associated with the collection is an engraved plaque honoring Hall's service on the Guilford County Board of Commissioners, 1975-1978; it is held by the Collections Department.

Processing: J. Stephen Catlett began organizing this collection prior to 2000, and Christine A. Dumoulin, Archives Assistant, completed the final arrangement and finding aid in March 2001. Archivist Elise Allison updated the biographical note with information about Bert Hall's father in January 2014.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Bertrand (Bert) A. Hall was born on May 16, 1908, in Hartford, Connecticut. His father, John Baptist Hall, worked as a personal chef for Col. Charles H. Tenney of Longmeadow, Massachusetts, for 21 years before operating his own restaurant, the Carolina Cafeteria, in Springfield from 1940 to 1945. His mother, a redheaded Portuguese woman, died when he was a

child, and he was reared by his paternal grandparents in Amherst, Massachusetts. Growing up, he worked on their farm, where they raised apples, tobacco, and dairy cattle. His extended family eventually included brothers Charles and Hubert, sister Alma, and 13 half-siblings by his father's second wife. He earned his bachelor's degree in science from Massachusetts State College (later the University of Massachusetts Amherst), received an agricultural science degree from Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, and later studied at Cornell University, N.C. State University, and the University of Arkansas. In 1936, he landed a vocational agricultural job in Burlington, North Carolina, where he met and married **Mae Codrup**, a schoolteacher.

Around 1938, Bert Hall began his career as Agricultural Extension Agent for Guilford County, a position he held for the next 35 years. During his tenure, he made a concerted effort to help both poor white and poor black farmers improve their farming skills and economic conditions. He encouraged black farmers to apply for government loans to obtain better land, to get part-time city jobs to supplement their income during the year, and to grow multiple crops. Upon retiring in 1973, he received numerous awards and acknowledgements for his work in improving the conditions of Guilford County farmers. He was also involved in 4-H clubs in the surrounding counties and won several national awards. In 1975, he was appointed to the Guilford County Board of Commissioners after the first black county commissioner, **Zoe Barbee**, was killed in an automobile accident. He was later formally elected to the position, serving four years. Memberships/honors included: board of trustees for St. James Presbyterian Church, Tau Omega Chapter of the Omega Psi Fraternity, Beta Epsilon Boule (chapter) of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Federal Retirees Organization, and a life member of the Nat Greene Sertoma Club. He passed away on February 7, 1983, at the age of 74 after fighting an illness.

Biographical Sources: Most of the biographical information was gathered from materials within the collection, such as biographical sketches (1:1), copies of newspaper clippings (3:2), and the scrapbook (4:1-6). The information about Bert Hall's father was obtained from his half-brother, A. Christopher Hall, of Springfield, Massachusetts.

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The types of materials in this collection include newspaper clippings, certificates, correspondence, photos, and a scrapbook. The Correspondence series contains two biographies detailing Hall's life and accomplishments and several letters of congratulations for his appointment as county commissioner (1:1,3).

The Miscellaneous series contains a framed photo of Hall with longtime family friend and musician Jester Hairston; it was taken shortly before Hall's death. The certificates in the Printed Materials series detail Hall's many accomplishments as a Commissioner. They include an induction into the **Order of the Long Leaf Pine**, a Distinguished Service Award, and an Achievement in Human Relations award for his work with youth at the Hayes-Taylor YMCA (3:1).

The newspaper clippings include remembrances, and honor Hall at the time of his death in 1983 (3:2). There is also a memorial program from his funeral, which was held at the St. James Presbyterian Church (3:3). The scrapbook contains correspondence, mostly letters of congratulations from prominent individuals around the state. Some of them include: Guilford County Board of Commissioners manager, John **Witherspoon**, Chairman of the Appropriations

Committee on Education for the state of North Carolina, Representative Charlie **Phillips**, Senator Howard **Coble** (1973), and promotions manager for Sears Roebuck & Co., Raleigh **Luter** (4:1). It also contains newspaper clippings on different aspects of Hall's career (4:4) and two photos of Hall.

The main weakness of this collection is the size. While it contains some important information about African Americans in Guilford County, the bulk of the materials are limited to a three-year period and are repetitive in their content.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Correspondence. 3 folders (8 items). 1976-1983.

This series contains two biographical sketches and five letters. The biographical sketches in were possibly for a news release and include a photo of Hall. Folder 1:2 contains a letter from the executive secretary of the Sigma Pi Phi fraternity expressing condolences to Mrs. Mae Hall on the death of her husband. Folder 1:3 contains one newspaper article and four letters from friends and constituents congratulating Hall on his election to the Guilford County Board of Commissioners.

2. Miscellaneous. 1 folder (1 item). 1983.

This item is a framed photo of Bert Hall and longtime friend and supporter, musician Jester Hairston. Included is an editorial from the *Greensboro News & Record* after Hall's death. Eleanor **Peeler** gave the piece to Mae Hall on February 10, 1983.

3. Printed Materials. 4 folders (25 items). 1971-1983.

This series primarily contains materials relating to the death of Bert Hall and his contributions to the community. Folder 3:1 is a collection of certificates of appreciation that Hall received upon retiring as agricultural extension agent and county commissioner. They include achievement in human relations and service to youth for the Hayes-Taylor YMCA, distinguished service by the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, service as executive member of the Greensboro Council on Alcoholism, and a proclamation for Bert Hall Day. Folder 3:2 contains thirteen newspaper clippings about his death, including remembrances, biographical sketches, and detailing his numerous contributions as Agricultural Agent and Guilford County Commissioner. Folder 3:3 is a memorial program from Hall's funeral held at St. James Presbyterian Church. There is also a program from the banquet for the Distinguished Service Award, which Hall was given for his work as Agricultural Extension Agent.

4. Scrapbook. 7 folders. (ca. 45 items). 1949-1976.

This scrapbook is a compilation of letters, newspaper articles, photos, and certificates commemorating Bert Hall. Hall was honored upon retiring from his position as the Guilford County Agricultural Extension Agent. The contents of the scrapbook were removed from the book itself and re-arranged into individual folders.

Folder 4:1 contains several letters from members of the NC State Agricultural Extension Program, such as the Associate Dean and Director of the program, George Hyatt, and Chairman of the McDowell County Extension, Robert L. Love. Letters from NC A & T include Chancellor John T. Caldwell and Associate Director and Dean R.E. Jones. Finally, there is a congratulatory letter from Howard Coble as Agent for the State of North Carolina Department of Revenue (1973).

Folder 4:2 contains materials from the Guilford County American Revolution Bicentennial Committee, of which Hall was member as a county commissioner. Folders 4:3-4 contain a travel log, list of contributors, and nametags for Bert Hall Day. Folder 4:5 contains newspaper clippings of Hall discussing not only his retirement as Agricultural Agent, but also several issues in Greensboro that Hall had to deal with as commissioner. Finally, folders 4:6 and 4:7 contain photos of Hall and programs from events in his honor.

FOLDER LISTING

| <u>Series</u> | <u>Folder</u> | <u>Contents</u> | |
|---------------|---------------|--|---|
| 1 | 1 | Correspondence | -- Biographies -- Bert Hall (1976-1983) |
| | 2 | “ | -- Condolences (1983) |
| | 3 | “ | -- Congratulations (1976-1977) |
| 2 | 1 | Miscellaneous (1983) | |
| 3 | 1 | Printed | -- Certificates (O'size vertical) (1973-1978) |
| | 2 | “ | -- Newspaper Clippings (1983-1985) |
| | 3 | “ | -- Programs (1973, 1983) |
| 4 | | Scrapbook (O'size vertical-book only) (1949-1976) | |
| | 1 | “ | -- Correspondence (1973) |
| | 2 | “ | -- Guilford County American Revolution Bicentennial |
| | 3 | “ | -- Miscellaneous |
| | 4 | “ | -- Name Tags (1976) |
| | 5 | “ | -- Newspaper Clippings (1949-1976) |
| | 6 | “ | -- Photos (1976) |
| | 7 | “ | -- Programs (1973, 1975) |

Index to the Bertrand A. Hall Papers (ca. 1940-1985)

Note: The bulk of the materials date from 1973-1976 unless otherwise noted.

American Revolution Bicentennial Committee: 3:1, 4:2, 4:4

Barbee, Zoe: 1:1, 3:2, 4:1

Caldwell, John T.: 4:1

Churches:

St. James Presbyterian (Greensboro): 1:1, 3:2-3 (1983)

Clubs:

4-H: 1:1, 3:2, 4:6

Nat Greene Sertoma: 1:1, 3:2

Coble, Howard: 4:1

Colleges and Universities:

Cornell University: 1:1, 3:2, 4:5

Massachusetts State College: 1:1, 3:2, 4:5 (1949)

North Carolina A & T: 4:1, 4:5

North Carolina State University: 1:1, 3:2, 4:1, 4:5

Tuskegee Institute: 1:1, 3:2, 4:5

University of Arkansas: 1:1, 3:2, 4:5

Cooper, John: 4:1

Cornell University: 1:1, 3:2, 4:5

Dowdey, Lewis C.: 4:1

Federal Retirees Organization: 1:1, 3:2

Foil, J.E.: 4:1

Fraternal Organizations:

Epsilon Sigma Phi: 4:5

Omega Psi: 1:1, 3:2, 4:5

Sigma Pi Phi: 1:1-2, 3:2, 4:5

Greensboro Center for Alcohol Rehabilitation Educational Services: 3:1 (1971)

Greensboro Council on Alcoholism: 3:1

Guilford County:

Agricultural Extension Agency: 1:1, 3:1-2, 4:1, 4:5

American Revolution Bicentennial Committee: 3:1, 4:2, 4:4

Board of Commissioners: 1:1, 1:3, 3:1-2, 4:5

Greensboro Center for Alcohol Rehabilitation Educational Services: 3:1 (1971)

Greensboro Council on Alcoholism: 3:1

Interagency Task Force on Water Quality: 3:1

Hairston, Jester: photograph, 2:1 (1983)

Hall, Mae Codrup: 1:1, 1:2, 3:2-3

Hayes-Taylor YMCA: 3:1 (1978)

Heird, Jim: 4:1

Hunt, Geneva Collins: 4:1

Hyatt, George: 4:1

Jones, Guy L.: 4:1

Jones, R.E.: 4:1

Love, Robert L.: 4:1

Luter, Raleigh: 4:1

Massachusetts State College: 1:1, 3:2, 4:5 (1949)

Miller, Grady: 4:1

National Association of County Agricultural Agents: 3:1 (1973)

North Carolina A & T: 4:1, 4:5

North Carolina State University: 1:1, 3:2, 4:1, 4:5

Order of the Long Leaf Pine: 3:1 (ca. 1973)

Peeler, Eleanor: 2:1, 4:5

Phillips, Rep. Charlie: 4:1

Rice, Calvin T.: 4:1

Sandin, Emilie: 4:1

Sandin, Tom: 4:1

St. James Presbyterian Church (Greensboro): 1:1, 3:2-3 (1983)

Tuskegee Institute: 1:1, 3:2, 4:5

University of Arkansas: 1:1, 3:2, 4:5

Upjohn, Chip: 4:1

Williford, W.C.: 4:1

Witherspoon, John V.: 4:1