



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Herbert Bruce papers

1914-1982 [bulk 1934-1959]

Sc MG 79

Summary

Creator: Bruce, Herbert L., 1900-1990

Title: Herbert Bruce papers

Date: 1914-1982 [bulk 1934-1959]

Size: 3.21 linear feet (4 boxes)

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: Herbert L. Bruce was the district leader of the 12th and 21st Assembly Districts, and the first black Tammany Hall leader in New York City, 1935-1945. This collection consists of personal papers, letters, texts of speeches, news clippings, and subjects files.

Preferred citation: [Item], Herbert Bruce papers, Sc MG 79, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Accessioned by Diana Lachatanere, 1983, and Janice Quinter, 2006.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Creator History

Born in 1900 in Barbados, Herbert Bruce was a leading Black Democratic politician in Harlem during the 1930-1950s. He won the leadership of the Beaver Democratic Club in 1935 with the assistance of the Ramapo Democratic Club, leading to his election as the first Black Tammany Hall District leader in New York City. Later, in 1950, he became the leader of the Crusaders Democratic Club. At different times, Bruce was elected as district leader of the 21st and 12th Assembly Districts, and he was considered the most powerful unifying figure among Blacks before the emergence of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.

Bruce used his position on the executive committee of Tammany Hall to seek opportunities for people in his district. Among his accomplishments was the appointment of a Black individual as collector of Internal Revenue in the Third District, a position won by James Weldon Johnson in 1939. Bruce also succeeded in gaining support for the idea of a Black representative in Congress, opening the path for the election of Powell in 1952. At odds for years with Powell, it was Bruce who ran against, but lost to, Powell in the Democratic primary.

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of personal papers, letters, texts of speeches, news clippings, and invitations. The campaign files pertain to the Beaver-Ramapo Democratic Club; Crusader Democratic Club; the 12th Assembly District; the 21st Assembly District; Tammany Hall; Blacks for Truman, an organization working for Truman in the election of 1948; Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.; and Hulan Jack. Also included are district maps and lists of enrolled voters. These papers document Bruce's role as a leader in the New York City Democratic Party and his efforts to get more patronage jobs and political posts for Blacks. Additional files pertain to the Harlem Hospital Lay Advisory Board, of which Bruce served as treasurer, 1956-1972.

Arrangement: Arranged into 4 series: (1) Personal; (2) Correspondence; (3) Community files; and (4) Campaign files.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American politicians
African Americans -- Political activity
African Americans -- Politics and government
Political clubs -- United States

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.) -- Politics and government
United States -- Politics and government

Names

Bethune, Mary McLeod, 1875-1955
Bruce, Herbert L., 1900-1990
Jack, Hulan E. (Hulan Edwin), 1906-1986
Powell, Adam Clayton, Jr., 1908-1972
Democratic Party (N.Y.)
Tammany Hall (Political organization)

Container List

Personal 1914-1968

- b. 1 f. 1 1914-1958
- Financial
- b. 1 f. 2 Liquor store/restaurant
- b. 1 f. 3 Personal bills 1939-1957
- b. 1 f. 4 St. James Community House School of the Arts 1965-1968

Correspondence 1935-1982

- b. 1 f. 5 Bethune, Mary McLeod 1943-1950
- b. 1 f. 6 1935
- b. 1 f. 7 1936
- b. 1 f. 8 1937
- b. 1 f. 9 1938
- b. 1 f. 10 1939
- b. 1 f. 11 1940
- b. 1 f. 12 1941
- b. 1 f. 13 1942
- b. 1 f. 14 1943
- b. 1 f. 15 1944
- b. 1 f. 16 1945-1947
- b. 1 f. 17 1948-1949
- b. 1 f. 18 1950-1952
- b. 1 f. 19 1953-1954
- b. 1 f. 20 1956-1982
- b. 1 f. 21 Mount Morris Park Hospital 1950-1951

Community files 1935-1982

- b. 1 f. 22 Speeches 1941-1948
- b. 1 f. 23 Thomas Dyett Testimonial Dinner 1958-1959

Invitations

- b. 1 f. 24 1935-1936
- b. 1 f. 25 1937
- b. 1 f. 26 1938-1939
- b. 1 f. 27 1940-1942
- b. 1 f. 28 1943-1944
- b. 1 f. 29 1945-1949
- b. 1 f. 30 1950-1951
- b. 1 f. 31 1953-1954 January
- b. 1 f. 32 1954 February-October
- b. 1 f. 33 1956-1982

Harlem Hospital Lay Advisory Board

Community files (cont.)

Harlem Hospital Lay Advisory Board (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 34 1956
- b. 1 f. 35-36 1951-1958
- b. 1 f. 37 1962-1972

Campaign files 1934-1968

- b. 2 f. 1 Jack, Hulan 1959
- b. 2 f. 2 Powell, Adam Clayton, Jr 1942-1958
- b. 2 f. 3 Bruce and Powell Campaign 1954
- b. 2 f. 4 Harry S. Truman Presidential Campaign 1948
- b. 2 f. 5-6 Candidates 1950-1959
Includes several candidates supported by Bruce and/or Run Out of The Beaver–Ramapo and Crusader Democratic Clubs.
Beaver-Ramapo Democratic Club 21st Assembly District
 - b. 2 f. 7 1934-1943
 - b. 2 f. 8 1937-1944
 - b. 2 f. 9 1935-1941Crusaders Democratic Club
 - b. 2 f. 10-11 1951-1954
 - b. 2 f. 12 12th Assembly District Club meeting notices and letters 1950-1952
 - b. 2 f. 13 Financial records 1953Independent Club of Democrats 14th Assembly District West
 - b. 2 f. 14 1959-1960
 - b. 2 f. 15 Lists of voters and district map 1958-1959
 - b. 2 f. 16 Democratic County Committee 1939-1953
 - b. 2 f. 17 Democratic State Convention 1942Democratic National Convention
 - b. 2 f. 18-20 1940
 - b. 2 f. 21 1952
 - b. 2 f. 22 Delegates for Democrat State Convention, Judicial Convention, and State Committee 1950-1952
 - b. 2 f. 23 Independent Club of Democrats 14th Assembly District Club Misel 1957-1959
 - b. 2 f. 24 Witoka Democratic Club 12th Assembly District South 1951-195312th Assembly District
 - b. 2 f. 25 1951-1953
 - b. 2 f. 26 List of registered voters 195321st Assembly District
 - b. 2 f. 27 1935-1937
 - b. 2 f. 28 1939-1943District maps of Manhattan
 - b. 2 f. 29 1944-1947
 - b. 2 f. 30 1949-1952
 - b. 2 f. 31 Lists of Manhattan inspectors and captains for election districts 1936-1954
 - b. 2 f. 32 Harlem Affairs Committee 1935

Campaign files (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 33 Tammany Hall 1936-1960
- b. 2 f. 34 Patronage 1939-1952
- b. 2 f. 35 Campaign literature 1940-1968
Includes flyers, programs, newsletters, and press releases.
- b. 2 f. 36-38 Various lists 1952
- b. 2 f. 39 Miscellaneous 1940-1955
- b. 3 f. 1 "Register to Vote" posters ca. 1941-1952
- b. 3 f. 2 Harlem business register 1951
- b. 3 f. 3 Democratic National Convention miscellaneous 1936
 - b. 4 News clippings 1934-1953