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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Hosea Hudson Papers

1941-1980 [bulk 1952-1958]

Sc MG 168

Processed by T. Weissinger.

Summary

Creator: Hudson, Hosea

Title: Hosea Hudson Papers

Date: 1941-1980 [bulk 1952-1958]

Source: Gift of Hosea Hudson to the Department of Special Collections and Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, February 1985. Transferred to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, March 1987.

Abstract: The Hosea Hudson Papers document this labor leader and communist organizer's political activities in Alabama and the Communist Party's attitude toward labor and the rights of African Americans. The bulk of the collection, dating from 1952 to 1958, consists mainly of Communist Party material: reports, memoranda, resolutions and printed matter. Subjects reflected in these papers are labor-unions, farm labor, unemployment, industrial workers, segregation, and the right of African Americans to vote. Hudson's writings are represented by drafts of two books: "Black Worker in the Deep South: A Personal Record" Written by Hudson (1972) and "The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: His Life as a Negro Communist in the South" written by Nell Irvin Painter (1979), and of several unpublished works, in addition to book reviews, notes and some correspondence. Hudson's intensive trade-union involvement at the Wallwork Foundry of the Tennessee Coal and Railroad Company and the Jackson Foundry in the 1930's and 1940's are sparsely documented.

Conditions Governing Access:

References to individuals named in the papers may be published during the individuals' lifetimes only with the permission of Hosea Hudson or Henry Winston.

Preferred citation: Hosea Hudson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by T. Weissinger; Machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services; revised by Terry Catapano.

Creator History

Hosea Hudson was born April 12, 1898, in Wilkes County, Georgia, to Thomas and Laura Camella Smith Hudson. When his parents separated in 1902, he went to live with his grandmother Julia Smith. From age 14 to 19, he headed up a farm with his grandmother as a sharecropper. At 19 Hosea married Lucy Goosby, his first wife, and continued to sharecrop for another six years until 1923. Hosea and Lucy had one child, Hosea Hudson Jr. They were separated in 1946.

From 1923 to 1947, Hudson's principal means of employment was as an iron molder. He worked in various steel foundries throughout Georgia and Alabama. Chief among these were the Stockham Pipe and Fittings Plant from 1927 to 1932 (Bham, Alabama), the Tennessee Coal and Iron Railroad Company from 1937 to 1938, the Alabama Foundry Company from 1939 to 1942, and the Flakley Foundry Company of the Production Foundry Division Jackson Inc from 1942 to 1947. When unemployed in 1933 and 1938, he worked on projects of the Alabama Welfare Department and the Federal Works Project Administration, respectively.

Hudson's rise to prominence as a leading and militant Black trade unionist coincides with his development as a member of the Communist Party from 1931 to 1948. During these years Hudson held prominent positions in both the Party and the United Steel Workers of America.

He joined the Communist Party in 1931 and soon after was elected a unit leader. Hudson was responsible for the organization's membership among workers in his own plant, the Stockham Foundry. Under his leadership, the party membership in the shop increased from 8 to 35 workers in seven units throughout the plant. When identified as a member of the Party in 1932, he was released from the Stockham plant.

A year later, while working on welfare projects, Hudson was instrumental in organizing various mass meetings of the unemployed in Birmingham, Alabama. The focus of these rallies were the use of unskilled workers to do the work of skilled road construction laborers without commensurate wages and need by the unemployed for more relief. These rallies culminated in marches on the Birmingham City Hall.

In 1934 the Communist Party sent Hudson to its National Training School in New York City. All along, Hudson's local party unit had served an educational role in his political development. He attributed the ten week session at the National Training School with further developing his reading skills and understanding of political economy, the Communist Party and history of the trade union movement.

Hudson next found employment in 1937 at the Wallwork Foundry (Tennessee Coal and Iron Railroad Co.) The steel workers union permitted him to become a member of a shop at another plant because unions were not allowed by the Wallwork Foundry. He became the recording secretary of Steel workers Local 1489 (1937-1938). When the Local elected him to serve as a delegate to the second Southern Negro Youth Congress convention (1938), he served on the Congress' resolutions committee. His resolution that the next convention be held in Birmingham, Alabama, provided him with an opportunity to serve on the planning committee for the next convention with Henry O. Mayfield. The Congress relocated to Birmingham soon after and Hudson remained an active member until the Congress' dissolution in 1948.

Unemployed again in 1938, Hudson found relief work with the federal government's Works Project Administration. He became a central figure in Birmingham's Local 1 of the Workers Alliance union. This was the largest Workers Alliance local in Jefferson County, Alabama. Hudson was elected its vice-president and was one of three officers sent to confer with the head of the Works Project Administration

in Washington, D.C., with regard to more projects for workers and increased relief aid. Also around this time, Hudson was vice-president of the Jefferson County Industrial Union Council.

In 1942 he found employment in the Jackson Foundry (Flakley Foundry Co.). There he organized Local 2815, United Steel Workers of America, CIO. While president of the Local and a member of the Birmingham Industrial Union Council, Hudson was named one of the *Birmingham World* newspaper's "Men of the Year." This was largely in response to his militant role at the Alabama CIO convention in support of voting rights for Blacks in the state.

At Industrial Union Council meetings Hudson introduced various resolutions. Among these was a resolution to give the CIO Executive Board an additional officer since it was almost impossible for Black delegates to be elected to positions in the state Industrial Union Council (1943). The following year the union's black membership organized a caucus to nominate their own delegates. He introduced a resolution condemning discrimination (1944) and one that condemned the lynching of two Black World War II veterans (1944). Also in 1944, he was chairman of the Labor and Industrial Committee at a conference organized by Rev. Maynard Jackson on voting rights, held in New Orleans, Louisiana. Returning from the conference, Hudson formed a statewide (Alabama) organization for the right of Blacks to vote.

Given his role in carrying out one of the main points in the Communist Party program, industrial concentration, and his continuing role as a local leader of the party, Hudson was nominated to the National Committee of the Communist Party in July 1945. He received more votes than any other candidate. His task as the national representative of the South was to organize the Party in Alabama and Louisiana. In 1947 he was identified as a member of the National Committee of the Communist Party in the *Birmingham Post* (Oct. 1947). Subsequently, he was discharged from the union and lost his job at the Jackson Foundry.

Hudson found various short term jobs in plants thereafter, including work as a mason. In 1951 he came North and settled in Newark, New Jersey. He remarried in 1962 and lived with his wife, Virginia Larue Marson, in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Following his wife's death in 1971, Hudson remained in Atlantic City an additional 13 years before moving to Florida where he now resides (1984).

Scope and Content Note

The Hosea Hudson Papers comprise one cubic foot of documents. The papers of Hudson (1894-), labor leader and communist party organizer, span the period 1941 to 1980. The bulk of material dates from 1952 to 1958. Material from this period documents Hudson's communist party organizing activities in the South, particularly Alabama, and the party's concern with Negro rights and labor. As the bulk of Hudson's material dates from four years after his dismissal from the CIO as a communist, his activities as a leader of the Workers Alliance union and steel local 2815 are sparsely documented. Hudson's early years, however, are reflected in a series of notebooks in which he drafted his first book, *Black Worker in the Deep South*.

The Hudson Papers are arranged into two series. Papers documenting Hudson's communist party activities, including labor organizing, are in his GENERAL FILE, 1941 (1952-1958) 1980. Subjects reflected in the papers are labor unions, farm labor, unemployment, industrial workers, segregation, and the right of Blacks to vote. In the series of WRITINGS are holograph notes and chapters of two published books, *Black Worker in the Deep South*, written by Hudson, and *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson*, written by Nell Painter. Also included are various unpublished manuscripts, book reviews, and commentaries.

Arrangement: Hudson's papers, when received, were grouped in two large boxes. Within the boxes only some of the documents were arranged together, having been grouped into several large envelopes. Because of this degree of disorder, it was necessary to supply folder headings for all of the material.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American communists
African American communists -- Southern States -- Biography
African American labor union members -- Southern States
African Americans -- Social conditions
African Americans -- Southern States -- Biography
Communism -- United States
Iron and steel workers -- Southern States -- Biography
Labor unions -- Officials and employees -- Southern States -- Biography
Labor unions -- United States -- Political activity
Labor unions and communism -- United States

Titles

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

Names

Hudson, Hosea
Communist Party of the United States of America

Container List

General File 1941 (1952-1958) 1980 (.65 cubic ft.)

Arranged alphabetically by folder heading. Documentation of national and regional Communist Party activities in general, and of Hosea Hudson's activities in the Alabama Communist Party in particular. The papers pertain to farm and industrial labor, labor unions, political elections, Negro rights and voting rights, unemployment, and Communist Party organization. Included in the papers are newspaper clippings, notebooks, schedules and agenda, brochures, leaflets, greeting cards, holograph notes, Communist Party resolutions and position papers.

Among the documents in this series are Hosea Hudson's letter to industrial workers of Steel Local 1489 (which recommends ways to strengthen the union), Hudson's report for the Communist Party's Review Commission, and the City of Birmingham's proclamation of February 26, 1980, as Hosea Hudson Day.

- b. 1 f. 1-2 Communist Party (South) - Notebooks n.d.
- b. 1 f. 3 Communist Party (South) - Notes, Schedules, etc. 1953-1955
- b. 1 f. 4 Communist Party (USA) - Memos, Agenda, etc. 1954-1955, 1957-1958
- b. 1 f. 5-6 Communist Party (USA) - Reports, Position Papers, etc. 1958
- b. 1 f. 7 Communist Party (USA) - Resolutions, Constitutions, etc. 1956-1958
- b. 1 f. 8 Correspondence 1977
- b. 2 f. 1 Honors, Awards 1980
- b. 2 f. 2 Labor Unions 1953-1957
- b. 2 f. 3 Miscellany 1941, 1950, 1953-1954, 1969, 1979
- b. 2 f. 4 Personal n.d.
- b. 2 f. 5 Publications - Brochures, Flyers, etc. 1952, 1954-1958
- b. 2 f. 6 South-Population Statistics, Politics n.d.

Writings 1954, 1968, 1975, 1980 (.35 cubic ft.)

Arranged alphabetically by folder heading. Drafts of the books *Black Worker in the Deep South*, written by Hosea Hudson, and of *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson*, edited by Nell Painter, and several unpublished works. The papers pertain to Hudson's life in the South, especially his activities in organized labor and the Alabama Communist Party. Included in the papers are a book review written by Hudson, several book reviews about his books, holograph drafts of chapters of the book *Black Worker*, notebooks, and a typed draft of *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson*.

Among the documents in this series is an unpublished draft of Hudson's "Highlights of Some of the United Labor Struggles in Alabama..."

- b. 3 f. 1-4 Black Worker Of The Deep South (Notebooks) n.d.
- b. 3 f. 5 Black Worker Of The Deep South, Part Two (Draft) n.d.
- b. 3 f. 6 Comments, Reviews 1954, 1975, 1980
- b. 3 f. 7 Highlights Of Some Of The United Labor Struggles In Alabama... (Draft) 1968
- b. 3 f. 8 The Narrative Of Hosea Hudson (Draft) n.d.
- b. 3 f. 9 Open Letter To Youth (Drafts) n.d.