



Guide to the Falkener Family Papers, 1893-2001

This collection guide was produced in **2015**.

This PDF version was created on **April 2, 2026**.

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Summary

Collection Title:

Falkener Family papers, 1893-2001

Source:

John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture

Creator:

Falkener family

Abstract:

African-American family based in Greensboro (Guildford Co.), North Carolina. Waldo C. Falkener served on the Greensboro City Council from 1959-1963. His wife, Margaret, was also politically active. The collection primarily documents the political career of Waldo C. Falkener, and comprises minutes and reports from Greensboro City Council meetings. There are also materials from his campaigns for office and items that document his successes as a council member. In addition, there are documents relating to other family members, including photographs, news articles, correspondence, and deeds. Later accessions include clippings, correspondence, and other materials documenting the political careers of the Falkeners. Acquired as part of the John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture.

Extent:

9 Linear Feet
7000 Items

Language:

Material in English

Collection ID:

RL.00379

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m13k83>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Falkener Family Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

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Background

Scope and Content

The collection primarily documents the political career of Waldo C. Falkener and comprises minutes and reports from Greensboro City Council meetings. The council minutes include committee reports (finance, public works, transportation, and real estate committees), as well as ordinances, laws, memoranda, and letters. Meeting notes are arranged by date, spanning 1959-1966. There are also materials from his campaigns for office and items that document his successes as a council member. Some correspondence relates to the life of Falkener's father, Henry Hall Falkener, also an active politician and public school teacher. Documents span beyond Falkener's death in 1992 up until 2001, including obituaries and memorial material. In addition, there are documents relating to other family members, George H. Falkener, Henry Hall Falkener, Madge Z. Mitchell Falkener, and Margaret E. Falkener. Materials include photographs, news articles, correspondence, and deeds. Printed materials consist largely of those published by the Greensboro City Council, including annual budget reports, personnel reviews, and handbooks. The collection includes newspaper articles about Falkener's civic services and letters of appreciation (1972, 1979), as well as materials related to the successful campaign to name a Greensboro elementary school after Falkener and his father (2001).

Acquired as part of the John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture.

Biographical/Historical

Waldo and Margaret Falkener were descendants from a well-established African-American family based in Greensboro (Guildford Co.), North Carolina. The Falkener family was involved in the Ohio abolitionist and underground railroad movements during the Civil War. Through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they were active lawyers, teachers, and community leaders.

Waldo C. Falkener, a black civil rights activist in Greensboro, first began lobbying the city for equal rights in the 1940s. His demand for African Americans to have access to Greensboro's public golf courses led to the city's closing the courses in 1949. Falkener was elected to the Greensboro City Council in 1959, and was the only black member of the Greensboro City Council during the 1960 Woolworth's lunch counter sit-ins. While on the council, Falkener pursued better roads, public utilities, recreational facilities, and more public employment. After his second term, Falkener worked as a bail bondsman and real estate developer. He died in 1992 at age 89.

His wife, Margaret Evelyn Evans Falkener, was born in 1919 to Robert and Lillie Evans of Salisbury, North Carolina. She attended Talladega College in Alabama, graduating in 1940. Margaret and Waldo married on January 23, 1942, and eventually had three children. Along with her husband, Margaret was also politically active in the Democratic Party, and was a member of numerous civic groups in Greensboro, including the AKA Sorority, Greensboro United Way, Greensboro Girl Scouts, Jack and Jill of America, Inc, and The Girlfriends. Margaret Falkener died in 2004.

Waldo Falkener's parents were active community members in central North Carolina. His mother, Margaret Mitchell Falkener, was born in 1870 in Oberlin, Ohio. She attended Oberlin College, moved to North Carolina to teach, and married Henry Hall Falkener in 1892. Henry Falkener was born in Warren City and attended Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. He was a schoolteacher in the 1880s. He was elected to the North Carolina State Senate and served from January to March 1889 as a representative of Warren County. Following his term, a new North Carolina law requiring a poll tax and literacy test for all voters went into effect, essentially ending the black vote and any chance for his re-election. (It was 80 years before another black representative was elected to North Carolina's state government.) After 1889, he worked at the newly established A&M College for the Colored Race (now North Carolina A&T) as a bursar, librarian, and English professor. Meanwhile, Margaret Mitchell Falkener founded the music department at A&M College in 1894, where she taught piano. She later became the first woman supervisor of Guilford County's black schools. Margaret was an organizing member of Unified Institutional Baptist Church, a founder of the county's first black garden club, and was a member of the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs of North Carolina. They had five sons, including Waldo.

Margaret Mitchell Falkener's younger brother, George Henry Mitchell, was born in Washington, D.C., in 1875, and grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He attended Shaw University for a Bachelor of Laws in 1899, and then went to University of New York for his Master of Laws. He was admitted to the North Carolina bar in 1900, and moved to Greensboro in 1902. George Henry Mitchell was the first black attorney in Greensboro, and became the first president of the North Carolina Negro Bar Association. Along with his law career, Falkener was a real estate developer and published a weekly paper, *The Carolina Patriot*, with William Windsor. He married his first wife, Maude M. Wood, in 1903; they had one son, George Junior. Maude died in 1907. George Mitchell later married Lucy C. Smith, of Chattanooga, and they had five children.

Margaret and George Mitchell's father, George W. Mitchell, was a professor of Latin and Greek at Howard University. He also practiced law. Their mother, Alvira Scott, was the daughter of abolitionist John H. Scott, of Oberlin, Ohio. Scott was active in Oberlin's anti-slavery movement, and at one point had led a protest at a jail to free 15 of Oberlin's black residents who had been called

before the U.S. District Court to answer charges of infringement of Fugitive Slave Laws. He also attended Oberlin College.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Acquisition Information

The Falkener Family Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift, beginning in 1996.

Processing Information

Processed by Rubenstein Library Staff, 1999

Encoded by Meghan Lyon, December 2010

Updated by Katrina Martin, March 2015

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

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Names and Subjects

- African American business enterprises
- African American business people
- Clippings (information artifacts)
- African Americans -- North Carolina -- Greensboro
- African Americans -- Political activity -- Southern States
- Greensboro (N.C.) -- Politics and government.
- African Americans -- Correspondence
- African American women -- Political activity
- Photographic prints
- Civil rights -- North Carolina -- Greensboro
- Deeds
- Minority business enterprises -- United States
- John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture
- Falkener, Margaret
- Falkener, Waldo
- Falkener family

Collection Inventory

Falkener Family

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| "The Falkener Family: Portrait of Black Civic Leadership from the Mid 1800s to the Present", 1990 | Box 1 |
| News articles about the family | Box 1 |

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George H. Falkener

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Henry Hall Falkener

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| North Carolina A&T College | Box 1 |
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Deed, 1895, 1895	Box 1
Mortgage, 1896, 1896	Box 1

Madge Z. Mitchell Falkener

News article about her	Box 1
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Margaret E. Falkener

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Correspondence	Box 1
Programs she participated in	Box 1
Bob Jordan for Governor campaign	Box 1
Centennial planning committee	Box 1
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1972 Democratic National Convention	Box 1
Finding Funding Conference, Sept. 17-19, 1987	Box 1
Frank Holder Dance Co. 10th Anniversary Gala	Box 1
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Programs he participated in	Box 1
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Campaign materials	Box 1
Campaign materials, 1959	Box 1
Campaign materials, 1961	Box 1
Campaign materials, 1963	Box 1
Campaign materials, 1963, testimonial dinner	Box 1
Physical Description: 2 folders	
Campaign materials, 1965	Box 1
Financial papers--cancelled checks	Box 1
American Federal Savings and Loan Association	Box 1
American Municipal Association, 1959	Box 1
American Municipal Association, 1961	Box 1
American Municipal Congress, 1961	Box 1
American Municipal Congress, 1962	Box 1
Black firefighters	Box 1
Bond maker	Box 1
Physical Description: 2 folders	

Access Restrictions:

Access is RESTRICTED. Patrons must sign a waiver to use these materials.

Conference of Community Leaders on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1962	Box 1
Door sign	Box 1
Segregated golf facilities	Box 1
West African visitors, 1961	Box 1
Programs	Box 1
Clippings	Box 1
Waldo C. Falkener Elementary School	Box 1

Greensboro City Council

City Charter	Box 1
Correspondence	Box 1
Report on Examination, 1959	Box 1
Application for Employment	Box 1
Memoranda and Correspondence, 1960-1962	Box 1

City Council Meeting Agendas and Associated Materials

March 1959	Box 1
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Physical Description: 2 folders	
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Public Management	Box 4
Report on Examination, City of Greensboro 1959	Box 4
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Report on a Review of the Personnel System of Greensboro, 1959	Box 4
Community Facilities Plan	Box 4
Handbook on Boards and Commissions of the City of Greensboro, 1959	Box 4
Handbook on Boards and Commissions of the City of Greensboro, 1961	Box 4
City of Greensboro Annual Reports	Box 4
American Municipal News, 1959	Box 4
Columbia University Course Catalog, 1961	Box 4
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Advance Legislative Service to the General Statutes of North Carolina	Box 4

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