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Graham, Robert Duke, 1900-1984 (MSS 473)

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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 473 GRAHAM, Robert Duke, 1900-1984

9 boxes. 16 folders. 321 items. 1930-1982. Originals, photocopies, photographs.

1984.129.1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Robert Duke Graham was born on 8 September 1900 in Greensboro, North Carolina. He worked in a Durham, North Carolina hotel as a youth before moving to Kentucky with the Lowry Hotel Company, where he was desk clerk and then assistant manager of Frankfort's New Capitol Hotel. In 1926, Graham became manager of the Helm Hotel in Bowling Green, Kentucky after the Lampkin Hotel Company acquired its lease. In 1931, he moved to the Owen Hotel in Horse Cave, Kentucky, but soon returned to the Helm Hotel; during World War II, he also served briefly as personnel director of Ken-Rad Tube and Lamp Company in Bowling Green. Graham's business interests eventually extended to ownership of several hotels in other Kentucky cities.

On 20 August 1937, Graham married Edith Brown (1904-1976), the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David Hamilton Brown. He was elected to the Bowling Green City Council the same year, but declined the office in order to join the Board of Public Works, where he served for 14 years. Graham also accepted other civic posts and became active in Democratic politics. In 1938, Governor "Happy" Chandler appointed him as an employer representative to the Minimum Wage Board, and in September 1941 he was made Democratic Election Commissioner for Warren County. His other appointments included Chairman of the Warren County Democratic Committee, member of the Kentucky State Police Personnel Board, and member of the building board for the Warren County Tuberculosis Hospital. One of the founders of Fidelity Savings and Loan, Graham served as a director from 1966-1980.

On 26 May 1959, Graham won the Democratic nomination for mayor of Bowling Green. On 4 August 1959, however, Clifton W. "Cliff" Lampkin, the incumbent, died suddenly, and Graham was appointed to fill the unexpired five-month portion of his term. In November 1959, Graham, who campaigned on a platform of opposition to increased city taxes, especially a payroll or occupational levy, was elected to a full four-year term as mayor. By the end of his term (31 December 1963), Graham had been recognized for three principal achievements: urban renewal projects in the Jonesville and Parker-Bennett neighborhoods; expanded street lighting; and systematized refuse collection using a sanitary landfill disposal system. He had also overseen pay increases for city employees, street repavings, and an expansion of Fairview

Cemetery. Graham also worked in statewide Democratic races, and on 8 October 1960 hosted a visit to Bowling Green by Democratic presidential nominee John F. Kennedy.

In 1967, Graham was again elected Bowling Green's mayor, serving from 1 January 1968 until 31 December 1971. The first day of Graham's term was also the effective date of a new form of municipal government; on 8 November 1966, voters had approved the elimination of the city's bicameral governing body (the Board of Councilmen and Board of Aldermen) and its replacement with a commission-manager form of government consisting of a mayor and a board of commissioners directing the activities of a city manager. Graham's second stint as mayor was marked with greater turmoil, as participants debated their roles under this new form of government. A notable achievement, however, was in 1969, when the city received a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development under the Model Cities Program for improvements such as housing, sewers, transportation, poverty and unemployment reduction, and the establishment of a regional medical center. One of the more visible acts of Graham's second administration was the 1970 painting of the Reservoir Hill water tower in patriotic red, white and blue colors.

Robert Duke Graham died in Bowling Green on 16 January 1984 and was buried in Fairview Cemetery.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection contains primarily correspondence and scrapbooks relating to the public career of Robert D. Graham, with emphasis on his terms as mayor of Bowling Green, Kentucky. Some personal letters and papers of Graham and his wife Edith are included. Photographs in the collection have been transferred to the Kentucky Library, but some photographs remain pasted into the scrapbooks (Boxes 2-8).

Box 1 contains primarily correspondence, political material, and miscellaneous papers of Robert D. Graham. Graham's correspondence from 1930-1959 (Folder 2) includes a letter providing information on his early hotel career, and recommendation letters from prominent citizens of Bowling Green in support of his effort to enlist in some branch of the service during World War II. Also included are congratulatory letters following his victory in the 1959 Democratic mayoral primary, a few letters from constituents outlining civic concerns, and campaign material. Graham's correspondence from 1960-1972 (Folder 3) includes a telegram from John F. Kennedy acknowledging his support in the 1960 presidential campaign; a few personal postcards and letters from constituents; letters from various Kentucky politicians, including Congressman William Natcher, who refers to Louisville's "pouting" over not being given a Model Cities grant ahead of Bowling Green; letters regarding a grant for sewer system planning from the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and a letter from a soldier objecting to the 1970 painting of the Reservoir Hill water tower in the national colors, and Graham's response defending the decision. Letters to Edith B. Graham (Folder 4) include personal notes and cards from young members of her family and from her husband. Clippings (Folder 5) relate to Graham's public career and include a feature on the Grahams' home. Election and campaign material includes advertisements and vote counts for Graham (Folder 6) and for other local mayoral candidates (Folder 7). Other political material includes campaign material and primary election reports for Kentucky state offices (Folders 8, 10), miscellaneous material relating to the Kentucky Democratic Party, including the Democratic Woman's Club

(Folder 9), and to national Democratic election campaigns (Folder 11). Church materials, mostly programs and newsletters (Folder 12), other miscellaneous programs and keepsakes (Folders 13, 14), and oversized materials, mostly political campaign and election materials (Folder 15) make up the remainder of this box.

Boxes 2-8 contain scrapbooks which mostly document Robert D. Graham's public career, but also include some personal items. The scrapbooks include many clippings, usually from the (Bowling Green) *Park City Daily News* or the (Louisville) *Courier-Journal*; letters and cards; photographs; event programs; certificates; and political campaign materials. Most of the clippings concern Graham's mayoral campaigns and municipal issues with which he was involved, special or ceremonial occasions, and state or national Democratic politics. Also of interest in the scrapbooks are: a letter of greeting to Mrs. Graham from former president Lyndon B. Johnson (Box 2, p. 31); an autographed photo of burlesque performer Sandy O'Hara (Box 2, p. 125); photographs of the 1967 opening of Bowling Green's Western Towers student apartments (Box 3, p. 92); a typescripted article about Graham entitled "Candid of a Candidate" (Box 3, p. 133); a personal reflection on John F. Kennedy by the pastor of Bowling Green's First Baptist Church dated 24 November 1963 (Box 4, p. 115); clippings detailing John F. Kennedy's visit to Bowling Green on 8 October 1960, including a slip of paper with an address, written by Kennedy, for sending a recipe for Kentucky ham to Mrs. Kennedy (Box 5, pp. 50-55, 255); a program for the Bowling Green Civil War Centennial ceremonies on 27-30 June 1962 (Box 5, p. 185); a letter of thanks from Muriel (Mrs. Hubert H.) Humphrey after her visit to Bowling Green in 1968 (Box 6, p. 11); tickets to the 1969 Kentucky Derby (Box 6, p. 109); a copy of Graham's 1969 letter to President Richard Nixon asking for a commitment to rebuilding cities comparable to President Kennedy's commitment to the space program (Box 6, p. 183; see also Box 1, Folder 3 for a reply from the Vice-President's office); and some personal items such as a wedding announcement, cards, family snapshots and several "vacation newsletters" from Morgantown, Kentucky native and Arkansas resident S. E. Tanner (Box 8).

Box 9 contains certificates and plaques of appointment or awards presented to Robert D. Graham in connection with his political and civic service.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	Graham, Robert Duke	1930-1974	281 items
Folder 1	Inventory, obituary, separation sheet		3 items
Folder 2	Robert D. Graham – Correspondence	1930-1959	69 items
Folder 3	Robert D. Graham – Correspondence	1960-1972, n.d.	71 items
Folder 4	Edith B. Graham – Letters to	1937-1974, n.d.	17 items
Folder 5	Robert D. Graham – Clippings relating to public career and home	1940-1971, n.d.	16 items

Folder 6	Robert D. Graham – Campaign and election material	1959, 1967	8 items
Folder 7	Bowling Green city offices – Handbills, sample ballots, etc.	1959, n.d.	5 items
Folder 8	Kentucky state offices – Newsletters, campaign material	1939-1973	28 items
Folder 9	Kentucky Democratic Party – Miscellaneous material	1950-1968, n.d.	10 items
Folder 10	Kentucky Registry of Election Finance – Primary Election Reports	1967, 1968	2 items
Folder 11	National Democratic offices – Campaign material	1961-1968	6 items
Folder 12	Church programs and newsletters	1961-1970	17 items
Folder 13	U. S. Senate Restaurant and “Kentucky Belle” – Menus and placemat	1966, n.d.	4 items
Folder 14	Miscellaneous programs	1951-1971	16 items
Folder 15	Oversized items list	1940-1973, n.d.	9 items
BOX 2	Graham, Robert Duke	1969-1971	1 item
	Scrapbook	1969-1971	1 item
BOX 3	Graham, Robert Duke	1958-1968	1 item
	Scrapbook	1958-1968	1 item
BOX 4	Graham, Robert Duke	1959-1967	1 item
	Scrapbook	1959-1967	1 item

BOX 5	Graham, Robert Duke	1953-1965	1 item
	Scrapbook	1953-1965	1 item
BOX 6	Graham, Robert Duke	1957-1969	1 item
	Scrapbook	1957-1969	1 item
BOX 7	Graham, Robert Duke	1968	1 item
	Scrapbook	1968	1 item
BOX 8	Graham, Robert Duke	1937-1973	1 item
	Scrapbook	1937-1973	1 item
BOX 9	Graham, Robert Duke	1928-1982	33 items
Folder 1	Certificates	1928-1982	28 items
	Plaques	1968-1980	5 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS GRAHAM, Robert Duke, 1930-1982
473 1900-1984

Correspondence and scrapbooks of Robert D. Graham, Democratic mayor of Bowling Green, Kentucky from 1960-1963 and 1968-1971. The materials mostly document his public career, but some personal papers, including those of his wife Edith, are included.

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SUBJECT ANALYTICS

African Americans – Relating to B1,F8
 Black, Malcolm H. B1,F2
 Booth, B. J. – Relating to B1,F8
 Breathitt, Edward Thompson, Jr., 1924-2003 B1,F3
 Breathitt, Edward Thompson, Jr., 1924-2003 – Relating to B1,F3,8,9,14
 Brown, Muriel Fay (Buck) Humphrey, 1912-1998 B6, p.11
 Brown, Muriel Fay (Buck) Humphrey, 1912-1998 – Relating to B1,F9
 Callis, T. B. – Relating to B1,F7
 Campbell, Elvis R., 1898-1978 B1,F2
 Carroll, Julian Morton, b. 1931 – Relating to B1,F8
 Chandler, Albert Benjamin “Happy,” 1898-1991 B1,F2,3
 Chandler, Albert Benjamin “Happy,” 1898-1991 – Relating to B1,F2,8
 Civil War, 1861-1865 – Bowling Green – Relating to B5, p.185
 Clements, Earle Chester, 1896-1985 B1,F2,3
 Clubs – Bowling Green – Barons, 1959 B1,F2
 Clubs – Bowling Green – Lions Club, 1976-1980 B9
 Cole, Thomas Kerney, 1916-2000 – Relating to B1,F8
 Combs, Bertram Thomas, 1911-1991 B1,F2,3
 Combs, Bertram Thomas, 1911-1991 – Relating to B1,F8
 Communism – Comments about, 1959 B1,F2
 Cowger, William O., 1922-1971 B1,F3
 Deeds – Warren County, 1931 B1,F2
 Democratic Party – Relating to B1,F2-4,8,9,11
 Democratic Woman’s Club of Kentucky – Relating to B1,F9; B8
 Diddle, Edgar Allen, 1895-1970 – Photograph B2, p.113
 Doran, Adron, 1909-2001 B1,F3
 Elections and election campaigns – Bowling Green, 1959, 1967 – Relating to
 B1,F2,5-7,10,15; B2-6
 Elections and election campaigns, 1939-1973 – Relating to B1,F2,8,11
 Emberton, Thomas Dale “Tom,” Sr., b. 1934? B1,F3
 Emberton, Thomas Dale “Tom,” Sr., b. 1934? – Relating to B1,F8
 Fairbanks, H. V. B1,F2
 First Baptist Church – Bowling Green – Relating to B1,F12
 Ford, Wendell Hampton, b. 1924 – Relating to B1,F3
 Garrett, Paul Loos, 1894-1955 B1,F2
 Gilliam, Sidney B. B1,F2
 Goldfarb, Jacob A., 1895-1978 – Relating to B1,F14
 Graham, Edith (Brown), 1904-1976 – Letters to B1,F4; B2; B8
 Graham, Edith (Brown), 1904-1976 – Photograph B8, p.55
 Graham, Robert Duke, 1900-1984 – Photographs B2; B3; B5; B7; B8
 Hanley, John, 1890-1961 B1,F2,15
 Hanley, John, 1890-1961 – Relating to B1,F2; B4
 Helm Hotel – Bowling Green – Letterhead, 1930s B1,F3
 Hill, J. Murray, Sr., 1891-1961 B1,F2,3

Hillvue Heights Baptist Church – Bowling Green – Relating to B1,F12
 Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, 1928-1961 – Certificates B9
 Hospitals – Barren County – Glasgow Tuberculosis Hospital – Letterhead, 1959 B1,F2
 Hospitals – Warren County – Sunrise Tuberculosis Hospital – Relating to B1,F5
 Hotel Irvin Cobb – Paducah – Letterhead, 1940 B1,F2
 Houchens, Ann B1,F3
 Humphrey, Hubert Horatio, Jr., 1911-1978 – Relating to B1,F11
 Hyde, Floyd H., b. 1921 B1,F3
 Hyde, Floyd H., b. 1921 – Photograph B2, p.81
 Johnson, Keen, 1896-1970 B1,F2
 Johnson, Keen, 1896-1970 – Relating to B1,F8
 Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 1908-1973 B2, p.31
 Kennedy, John Fitzgerald, 1917-1963 B1,F3
 Kennedy, John Fitzgerald, 1917-1963 – Relating to B1,F5,11,14; B4, p.115; B5, pp.50-55, 255
 Kentucky Derby, 1969 – Relating to B6, p.109
 Lampkin, Clifton Wallace, 1884-1959 B1,F2
 Local government – Bowling Green – Relating to B1,F2,3,6,7; B2-8
 Logan, Rex A., 1902-1973 – Relating to B1,F8
 Manning, Julie B1,F3,4
 Mansfield, Louise B1,F4
 Matthews, Robert Foster, Jr., 1923-2010 B1,F3
 Matthews, Robert Foster, Jr., 1923-2010 – Photograph B1,F3
 Mayors – Bowling Green
 Menus B1,F13
 Milliken, George Duncan, Jr., 1908-1995 – Correspondence B1,F3
 Model Cities Program – Bowling Green – Relating to B1,F3,15; B7
 Morton, Thruston Ballard, 1907-1982 – Relating to B1,F8
 Municipal government – Bowling Green – Relating to B1,F2,3,6,7; B2-8
 Myers, Rodes Kirby, 1900-1960 B1,F2
 Myers, Rodes Kirby, 1900-1960 – Relating to B1,F8
 Natcher, William Huston, 1909-1994 – Correspondence B1,F2,3
 Natcher, William Huston, 1909-1994 – Relating to B1,F11
 National Secretaries Association – Bowling Green – Relating to B1,F14
 Nelson, John M. B1,F2
 Nixon, Richard Milhous, 1913-1994 – Letter to B6, p.183
 O'Hara, Sandy – Photograph B2, p.125
 Politicians
 Politics
 Poston, James S. B1,F2
 Potter, Max B., 1900-1968 B1,F2
 Richards, Frances, 1893-1991 B1,F2
 Richeson, William H., 1887-1973 B1,F2
 Roads – Bowling Green, 1959 – Relating to B1,F2,3
 Rodes, John Barret, 1870-1970 B1,F2
 Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 1882-1945 – Relating to B1,F15
 Sampson, Flemon Davis, 1875-1967 B1,F2

Stuart, Jesse Hilton, 1907-1984 – Photograph B2, p.45
 Tanner, Samuel E., 1883-1969 B8
 Tanner, Samuel E., 1883-1969 – Relating to B8
 Thomas, Aubrey E., 1914-1974 – Relating to B1,F7
 Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972 – Relating to B1,F9
 Vincent, Beverly Mills, 1890-1980 B1,F2
 Wallace, Lurleen Brigham Burns, 1926-1968 B8, p.50,60
 Waterfield, Harry Lee, 1911-1988 – Relating to B1,F2
 Western Kentucky University – Basketball – Men, 1970 – Photograph B2, p.21
 Western Towers – Bowling Green – Relating to B1,F14; B2, p.92; B8, p.44
 Wetherby, Lawrence Winchester, 1908-1994 – Relating to B1,F14
 Wilson, Gaines, Jr. – Relating to B1,F8
 WLBK (Radio station) – Letterhead, 1950 B1,F2
 Wyatt, Wilson Watkins, 1905-1996 B1,F2
 Wyatt, Wilson Watkins, 1905-1996 – Relating to B1,F8
 Yorty, Samuel William “Sam,” 1909-1998 – Relating to B1,F3

SEE or SEE ALSO

Humphrey, Muriel Fay (Buck), 1912-1998
 See:
 Brown, Muriel Fay (Buck) Humphrey

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