



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

Guide to the

**Charles D. Walker papers**

1923-1987

Sc MG 375

Processed by Michael R. West.

## Summary

**Creator:** Walker, Charles D., 1903-

**Title:** Charles D. Walker papers

**Date:** 1923-1987

**Source:** Donated by The Reverend Charles D. Walker, April 13, 1988 SCM 88-41

**Abstract:** The Charles D. Walker Papers consist of personal papers, correspondence, writings, printed material, certificates, a scrapbook, photographs and audiotapes documenting the life and church and civic career of Rev. Walker, primarily in Milford, Connecticut. Correspondence concerns some of his activities as a minister and civic leader, as well as many letters and cards expressing appreciation, 1958-1987. Writings consist of an unfinished novel "Unknown Journey," written in the 1930's; manuscripts for three short stories, 1932; poetry; four essays, two of them written in the 1940's; and texts of sermons and speeches, 1963-1968. Printed material consists of programs pertaining to events in Connecticut, 1965-1969, newspaper clippings regarding racism, 1969-1979; and additional newspaper clippings about Walker, 1923, 1967-1980. There are also certificates of appreciation and a copy of Walker's ordination certificate. The scrapbook contains letters, newspaper clippings; programs and certificates, 1923, 1933-1935, 1959-1965, and 1978, and provides information concerning Walker's years in the real estate business, and later as a community leader and minister of the First Baptist Church in Milford, Conn.

**Preferred citation:** Charles D. Walker papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Michael R. West; machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services; revised by Terry Catapano.

**Separated Materials:**

The following items were removed from the:

The Reverend Charles D. Walker Papers SCM 88-41

*Donor:*Charles D. Walker

*Date received:*April 13, 1988

*Date transferred:*April 15, 1988

*Accessioned by:*D.Lachatanere

*Date:*April 15, 1988

and have been sent to the division indicated, either to be retained or disposed of there. Any items that should receive special disposition are clearly marked.

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Audiotapes of oral history interview with Reverend Walker

1 archival box of photographs

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## **Creator History**

The Reverend Charles D. Walker, pastor and civic leader in Milford, Connecticut, was born in 1903 in Triboro, North Carolina. Orphaned by his fourth birthday, he was raised by an uncle in Hampton, Virginia, where Walker received his public and secondary education. Setting out on his own at the age of fourteen, he eventually settled in the North, working as a butler and cook in Connecticut, New Jersey, and in New York City. In 1923 he received attention from The New York Herald Tribune, which published some of his poems and an article on Walker entitled "*Negro Butler for Jersey family Takes Up Poetry as Side Line.*" From the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, Walker went from working as a butler for W. H. Wheelock to managing residential holdings in Harlem for Wheelock's Wall Street firm. In the late 1930s or early 1940s, Walker seems to have suffered a serious reversal of fortune; the scant evidence from his papers indicates only that Walker was in what he called his "wandering phase," and that he left the Northeast, apparently settling in Washington, D.C. Returning to the Milford-New Haven area in the late 1940s, Walker worked for two aircraft firms; from 1961 to 1978, he worked as a personnel manager for the Hunt Pierce Corporation.

Walker was a member of the Congregationalist Church until he was called to the ministry in 1958. Because the Congregationalists required their minister to attend seminary, and Walker, then 55 years old, felt he was prepared to begin his ministry immediately, he became a member of the Baptist Church, which did not require seminary training. In 1961, he became the pastor of Milford's First Baptist Church.

Walker saw his role in the community as having both a spiritual and a civic aspect. In the latter role, he was involved in a wide variety of charitable and reform efforts in Milford, including leading the local Red Cross and seeking an end to discriminatory practices by lending institutions and real estate agencies. Following his belief that Northern cities also needed a civil rights movement, he issued a "Call to Conscience and Action" in Milford concurrent with the 1963 March on Washington.

Walker continued his active role in the Milford community throughout the 1960s and 1970s, initiating a

successful state-wide effort in 1976 to commemorate Connecticut's African American participants in the Revolutionary War, and building his congregation from 28 in 1961 to nearly 100 members at the time of his retirement in 1980.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Reverend Charles D. Walker Papers, 1923-1985, contain documents from various aspects of Walker's multi-faceted career, especially those years when he was an active figure in the spiritual and civic life of Milford, Connecticut. The collection consists of letters, certificates, programs, photographs, audiotapes, and newspaper clippings on Walker himself, on housing problems, and on local coverage of a cross-burning incident in Milford in 1979. Included are several of Walker's unpublished manuscripts: poems, short stories, an unfinished novel, essays--all written in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s--and a brief autobiographical sketch. The Walker papers also contain speeches made by Walker in the 1960s, including his eulogy to Martin Luther King, Jr. In addition, Walker's scrapbook collects newspaper clippings and correspondence from the 1930s and from his years in Milford.

The Walker Papers contain very little information on Walker's personal life; aside from the fact that he was married and widowed twice, the collection offers little about his private views on his life, on life in Milford, generally, or, on the United States in the civil rights era. The collection also has a large gap in it from the mid-1930s to 1960. Despite these limitations, the Walker Papers may be of use to scholars interested in learning more about a subject that remains largely unexplored by historians and sociologists: the experience of African Americans in small Northern towns where they constituted only a small minority of the population. In this sense, evidence of the extent to which Walker seems to have been able to play an active role in the civic life of the entire Milford community, while at the same time representing the particular needs of his congregants and the black citizenry of Milford, would be useful in the development of studies of black life in the post-World War II North.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American authors  
African American churches -- Connecticut  
African American clergy -- Connecticut  
African American preaching  
African Americans -- Connecticut -- Religion  
Civic leaders -- Connecticut  
Sermons, American -- African American authors

### **Geographic Names**

Connecticut -- Biography

### **Titles**

Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Project funded by the Lilly Endowment  
Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Scrapbooks  
Sermons

**Names**

Walker, Charles D., 1903-

First Baptist Church (Milford, Conn.)

## Container List

- b. 1 Correspondence
  - b. 1 f. 1 Civic Leadership 1958-86
  - b. 1 f. 2 Ministerial Activities 1964-85
- Writings
  - b. 1 f. 3 Autobiographical Sketch
  - b. 1 f. 4 Sermons and Speeches 1963-64, 1980
  - b. 1 f. 5 Essays 1940s
  - b. 1 f. 6 *Novel, "Unknown Journey,"* 1930s
  - b. 1 f. 7 Short Stories 1932
  - b. 1 f. 8 Poetry
- Printed Material
  - b. 1 f. 9 Certificates
  - b. 1 f. 10 Programs
  - b. 1 f. 11 Clippings--on Walker 1923, 1966-85
  - b. 1 f. 12 Clippings--Racism and Busing 1969, 1979
- v. Volume Scrapbook