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Otis A. Hood Papers

1941-1957

1 box (0.5 linear foot)

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[Credo digital](#)

[Scope](#)

[Inventory](#)

[Admin info](#)

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A long-time leader in the Communist Party in Massachusetts, Otis A. Hood (1900-1983) was a frequent candidate for public office between the late 1930s and early 1950s. At a time of increasing repression, he stood openly for Communist principles, speaking regularly on the radio and at public forums. In 1954, he was one of several activists arrested for violating the state ban on the Communist Party, winning acquittal, and he was acquitted again after a second indictment in 1956 on charges of inciting the overthrow of the federal government.

The Hood papers are a slender reflection of Communist politics during the height of McCarthy-era repression. The collection centers around Otis Hood's public espousal of Communist ideals as a candidate for public office in Boston, and particularly his runs for the city School Board in 1943 through 1949, but it includes fliers, handbills, and other materials relating to Communist-led campaigns relating to the war, housing, public transportation, and education, but most importantly, transcripts of radio

broadcasts made by Hood during his political campaigns and relating to a variety of social issues.

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Background on Otis A. Hood

An architectural sculptor and chair of the Massachusetts Communist Party during the height of McCarthy-era repression, Otis Archer Hood was a child of the working class. Born in either North Abington or Randolph, Massachusetts (depending on the source), on March 29, 1900, Hood was a descendent of old Yankee stock, but not a member of the economic elite. His father, Otis R. Hood, worked as a rough rounder and stitcher in a shoe factory, and his siblings worked either in the shoe factories or, for his sisters, as stenographers.

Raised without a strong political compass, Hood moved to Boston as a young man and worked in the Boston Public Schools teaching clay modeling and as an architectural modeler. The Depression of 1929, however, profoundly changed his course in life. Unemployed for the first time in his life, he encountered a group of radicals who introduced him to the Communist Manifesto, and soon thereafter to join the Communist Party formally in 1934.

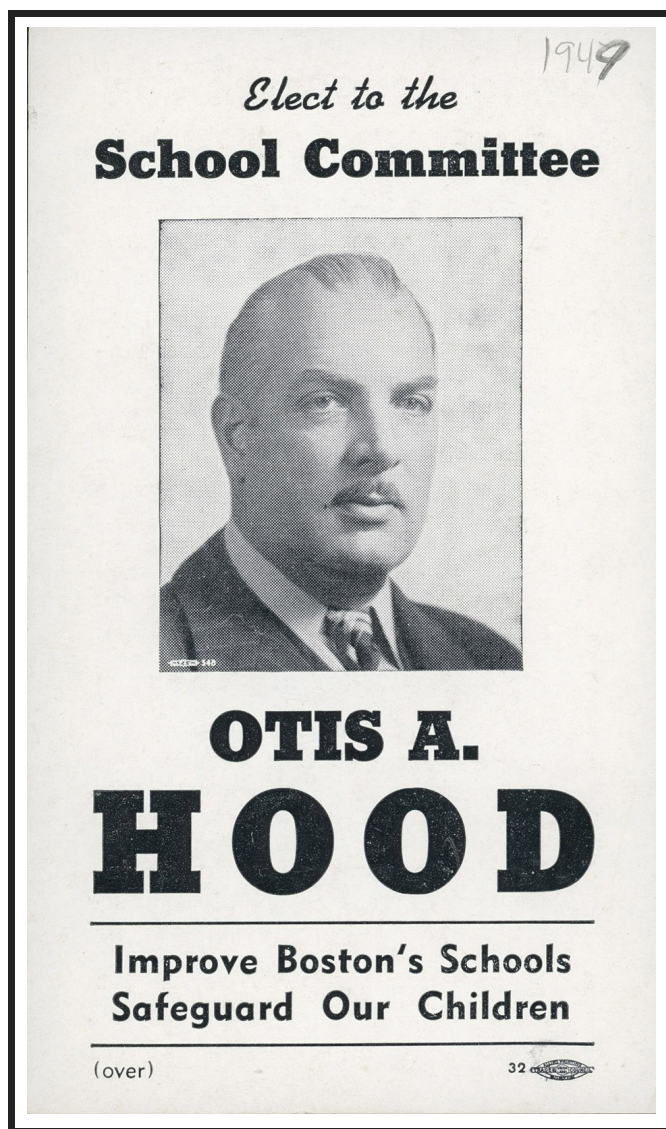
After organizing for the Party in Vermont for a brief period, Hood returned to Boston and rose through party ranks. He married a fellow Communist, Frances Briggs Allen, in 1939 (a party member since 1936) settling in a rental in the Fenway prior to the war and in half a duplex in Roxbury after. Unlike other Party members, Hood never hid his political commitments. As chair of the state Communist Party for many years, he became a perpetual -- perpetually unsuccessful -- candidate for public office, beginning with a campaign for Mayor of Boston in 1937, four runs for governor (1938-1944), four attempts the for Boston School Board (1943-1949), and at least one for representative in the Massachusetts General Court (1952). His best showing was for School Board in 1945, when he received over 27,000 votes.

In addition to running for office, Hood frequently represented Communist ideas at public forms and through radio broadcasts, always insisting that the state's suppression of political ideas was unconstitutional. He became well known as an advocate for unemployment insurance, rent control, and public transport, and he was a prominent voice opposing antisemitism and racism. The state did not ignore him. During the post-war repression of Communists, he refused to answer questions before the state commission on subversive activities, earning arrest in 1954 for violating the 1951 law banning the Communist Party. Although the case against him was quashed in 1956, he was among five Communists (including Sidney Lipshires and Michael Russo) indicted under the Smith Act in June 1957 on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government. These charges too were dismissed on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence that the defendants had attempted to incite the overthrow of the government.

Out of the public eye for most of the last two decades of his life, Hood died in Randolph, Mass., on Nov. 11, 1983, leaving behind his wife and two daughters. His body was donated to the Boston University Medical School.

Scope of collection

The Hood papers are a slender reflection of Communist politics during the height of McCarthy-era repression. The collection



Otis Hood for School Board, 1949

centers around Otis Hood's public espousal of Communist ideals as a candidate for public office in Boston, and particularly his runs for the city School Board in 1943 through 1949, but it includes fliers, handbills, and other materials relating to Communist-led campaigns relating to the war, housing, public transportation, and education, but most importantly, transcripts of radio broadcasts made by Hood during his political campaigns and relating to a variety of social issues. Many of the items in the collection appear to have been part of the evidence assembled during the prosecution of Hood in the 1950s for membership in the party.

Inventory

Book burning case

1954-1955

Folder 1

Boston School Board campaigns: ephemera and correspondence

1941-1947

Folder 2

Boston School Board campaigns: correspondence

1949

Folder 3

Boston School Board campaigns: ephemera

1949

Folder 4

Boston School Board campaigns: Facts about the Boston public schools

1949

Folder 5

Communist Party of Massachusetts: Convention

1945-1947

Folder 6

Communist Party of Massachusetts: employment and jobs (ephemera)

1949-1950

Folder 7

Communist Party of Massachusetts: Financial

1956

Folder 8

Communist Party of Massachusetts: Financial (checkbook)

1952-1954

Folder 9

Communist Party of Massachusetts: Housing and rent control (fliers)

1947-1949

Folder 10

Communist Party of Massachusetts: Miscellaneous

1946-1955

Folder 11

Communist Party of Massachusetts: Press releases

1943-1954

Folder 12

Communist Party of Massachusetts: Public transport (fliers)

1947

Folder 13

Communist Party of Massachusetts: World War

1942-1943

Folder 14

Correspondence

1942-1956

Folder 15

Hood, Frances A.: Testimony to the Massachusetts Commission on Subversive Activities

1951

Folder 16

Hood, Otis A.: Notes on capitalist reaction and Communism

1949

Folder 17

Hood, Otis A.: Press releases
1949-1954
Folder 18
Hood, Otis A.: Statement. . . Before the Committee on Constitutional Law
1954
Folder 19
Hood, Otis A.: Statement on the Bowker Commission
1954
Folder 20
Hood, Otis A.: Statement to the Massachusetts Commission on Subversive Activities
1951
Folder 21
Massachusetts state representative campaigns
1951
Folder 22
Miscellaneous
1946-1954
Folder 23
Pitfalls for labor in the Slichter report
1947
Folder 24
Radio broadcasts: contracts and ephemera
1946-1949
Folder 25
Radio broadcasts: scripts
1943-1953
Folder 26
Radio broadcasts: Sign up for peace!
ca.1950
Folder 27
Repressive bills in the Massachusetts General Court
1949
Folder 28
Smith Act defense
1956-1957
Folder 29
Struggle against white chauvinism
1951
Folder 30

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Bruce Rubenstein through Eugene Povirk, Oct. 2018.

Bibliography

Hood's obituary appeared in the Boston Globe for Nov. 15, 1983.

Related Material

A two-part interview with Hood can be found [online through the Tamiment Library](#), New York University.

Processing Information

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Language:

English

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Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

Boston (Mass.)--History--20th century

Communists--Massachusetts

Racism--Massachusetts

Schools--Massachusetts--Boston

World War, 1939-1945

Contributors

Hood, Otis A. (Otis Archer) **[main entry]**

Communist Party of the United States of America (Mass.)

Genres and formats

Fliers (Printed matter)

Printed ephemera

Radio scripts

Link to similar SCUA collections

Communism & Socialism

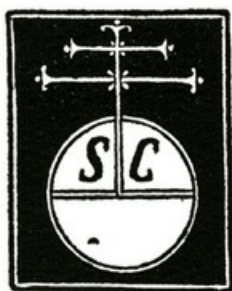
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