

# A Guide to the Papers of Helen Estes Baker, 1950-1967

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1950-1967



A Collection in Special Collections and Archives 1982-19  
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## History

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# Descriptive Summary

## Collection number

1982-19

## Language

English

## Abstract

The personal and business correspondence of Helen Estes Baker reflects her long career as a social activist committed to the betterment of human kind. She was a graduate of Virginia State University and was born in Suffolk, Virginia.

## Collector

Helen Estes Baker

## Physical Characteristics

200 items

## Repository

Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University

# Administrative Information

## Access

No restrictions on access.

## Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

## Preferred Citation

Helen Estes Baker Papers, Accession number: 1982-19, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

# Biographical/Historical Information

Helen Estes Baker was born in Suffolk, Virginia on September 6, 1906 to James and Mary Estes. She attended the public schools and high school at the Nansemond Industrial Institute. She entered the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute in 1923 and was graduated in 1927. Three years later she earned a Masters degree in Education from Rhode Island College. Thirty years later Mrs. Baker returned to school, earning a law degree from the University of Maryland in 1962. Helen Baker returned home to Suffolk to began her career in education, teaching at Booker T. Washington High School.

In 1931 she joined the faculty at what was then the Virginia State College for Negroes. Here she taught educational psychology and was one of several who supervised student teachers. Mrs. Baker was assigned to the Blanford Elementary School, which was located near one of Petersburg's largest tobacco factories. Mrs. Baker became involved with the effect of the Tobacco Steemers to unionize, and this led her to new career, working with unions. The Southern School for Workers employed Mrs. Baker from 1943 to 1948 as director of literary education. In addition, Mrs. Baker was involved with the Adult Education program at Virginia state from 1942-1949.

In 1950 she worked with the American Friends Service Committee, as co-director with her husband conducting a series of work-study projects for college students, as well as The North Richmond Neighborhood House, International Student House, and an overseas work camp in Berlin, Germany. She was active in the Prince Edward County School conflict, 1960-1963. In 1963, she organized the Metropolitan Washington Housing Project.

She was married to Dr. Percy H. Baker, also a graduate of Virginia State University, who was a biology professor at Morgan State College.

# Scope and Content Information

Helen Estes Baker was a remarkable women. Unfortunately, much of her work in improving the human condition is undocumented. Fortunately, in this collection of papers many of the activities which Mrs. Baker was affluented with are present. Of particular interest was her work with the Prince Edward County Free-School Association.

# Series Description

Series I. Correspondence generated by Mrs. Baker documenting her activities as a unionizer and social activist. There are also two diaries.

## Contents List

### Diaries and Correspondence

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**Diary #2 1963**

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**Biography and Correspondence 1960-1967**

Box-folder 1:2

**North Richmond, Ca. 1950-1952**

Box-folder 1:3

**Metropolitan Washington Housing Program 1961-1963**

Box-folder 1:4

**Chicago housing Program 1962**

Box-folder 1:5

**International Student House 1956-1958**

Box-folder 1:6

**Berlin (photos) 1958**

Box-folder 1:7

**Berlin 1958**

Box-folder 1:8

**South Jersey Rural Program Development Project 1965**

Box-folder 1:9

**Interns in Community Service (Kansas City, Chicago) 1950-1953**

Box-folder 1:10

**American Friends Service Communitiy Board 1963-1964**

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**Prince Edward County Schools (1) 1961-1964**

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**Prince Edward County (2) 1960-1961**

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**Prince Edward County (3) 1961-1963**

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**Prince Edward County Schools (5)**

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**Helen Baker**

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