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**Collection 334**  
**Whitfield B. Case (28 March 1907 – 5 June 1994)**  
**and Trenton Box Lunch Company**  
**Collection**

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**History**

Whitfield B. Case was a long time resident of Trenton, having moved from Clover Hill, near Hillsborough, in Hunterdon County, where he was born in 1907. He graduated Flemington High School in 1924, and Bowdoin College in Maine in 1928. Case spent the next four years on a variety of journeys, working all over the country and the world, writing articles updating his progress in the *Hunterdon County Democrat*. In 1932, he moved to Trenton and founded Trenton Box Lunch Company with his first wife Carolyn. It was located on South Clinton Avenue. Having had previous endeavors in Newark where he learned of the possibility for profits, he saw the opportunity to open such a company in the Trenton area. Later renamed as W.B Case Box Lunch, the business would expand to include locations in New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Maryland.

Trenton Box Lunch became an example of early 20th century entrepreneurship in the United States. Founded in the midst of the Great Depression, Case's company would make it through those tough times, even being requisitioned for military production in the 1940s. Surviving such hardships allowed him to reap the benefits of the post-war economic and population booms. The business continued for roughly 50 years.

Case was also very involved in the local community. Especially noteworthy was his Y.M.C.A membership, which dates back to before his relocation to Trenton. In the years spent traveling the world after his graduation, he often stayed with or met local Y.M.C.A chapters. He continued

to be an active member for many years, later serving in more directorial roles, and receiving recognition for this commitment. Another organization he became a part of was the city of Trenton's Chamber of Commerce. He became a dedicated member for many years, including a role of assisting with the canvassing and marketing operations for the city. Case was a member of the Shriners fraternal organization, then known as the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine. He also participated in amateur adult baseball leagues, either as a player or a leader and sponsor.

Case's first wife died in 1982, and he subsequently sold the business to Vincent DeMarco, who renamed it Vinnie's Catering. He and his second wife, Jane F. relocated to Florida for the next few years, taking part for a time in a seniors' softball league. He passed away in 1994 in Pennsylvania, his wife's home, while she passed away five years later.

### **Scope and Content Notes**

This collection consists of newspaper clippings, yearbooks, journals, writings/drafts, programs, personal letters, memorabilia, company flyers, letterheads, advertisements, organizational magazines, financial statements, and other similar documents or writings all pertaining to Whitfield B. Case, Trenton Box Lunch Company, and W.B. Case Lunch Company. It is contained in 13 folders in two boxes.

The collection is divided into two series: I. Whitfield B. Case - Personal; and II. Trenton Box Lunch Company / W.B Case Box Lunch Company. The Trentoniana Department also has a cardboard box that the lunches would be delivered in, as well as a crate from the company, in its museum collection.

The Whitfield B. Case / Trenton Box Lunch Company Collection is important in documenting the life of a person that dedicated much of their life to the area, engaged in the community, and lived the "American dream." It is also an example of how a small business rose in the post-World War II era, as well as a surprisingly successful one during the challenges of the Great Depression and the war itself. This collection will be of use to researchers interested in 20th century Trenton, the Y.M.C.A, the service industry, economic trends in Trenton, the Trenton Chamber of Commerce, the Baby Boom in New Jersey, and Flemington High School.

### **Series Description**

#### **Series I. Whitfield B. Case - Personal**

The first series covers material of Whitfield Case's life from his early years to his eventual passing. These include school journals and class assignments (mostly undated), report cards (1912-1913, 1916-1917), Greenleaf's *New Primary Arithmetic* textbook (1861), "The Student's School Crayons" box (1914), school play programs and newspapers, student calling cards, Junior

Promenade dance card (1922), "The Reading Echo" yearbook (1924), postcards from family members, many personal letters, newspaper clippings about or highlighting him, Y.M.C.A.-related documents, financial transactions and purchases, and similar works. Folder 3 contains Christmas cards all sent in December 1937 and a couple Valentine's cards. Of other interest is an article detailing Case's worldwide journeys after his college graduation. It describes his affiliation with the Y.M.C.A, his connection with the organization during his trip, and includes a letter from an associate who invited him to assist in their membership drive. Another item of note is a letter detailing the declining health of his father, and others in which friends of Case discuss their applications to colleges, and inquire about his own decision which seemed to be in limbo at the time of writing. Also included is an extremely brief autobiography (1921) by a young Whitfield Case, recognitions from the Shriners, various subscribed-to magazines, and flyers from various events. The Shriners awards are of interest due to their recognition of Case's support for a Shriners Children's Hospital. Likely located in Philadelphia, these hospitals are common in the United States, and again point to his community involvement.

There are two "miscellaneous" folders. One includes items directly attributed to Case such as a deposit ticket (1933); banking folder (1926); Bowdoin College Student Handbook (1924-1925); promotional material sent to prospective students from Ursinus College in PA and William & Mary in VA (1924); and a metal tag with his name. The other folder contains general items that Case collected such as copies of "The News Outline – A Weekly Guide for the Teaching of Current Events" (1922-1923); Mating List of the Jersey Ridge Poultry Farm, 1918-1923 (Davenport, Iowa); "Keeping Fit – A Pamphlet for Boys 14 and Over" from the Bureau of Venereal Disease Control in the N.J. State Dept. of Health (n.d.); "The Larro Dairyman" (Detroit, 1923); business card of Live Stock Dealer Roy C. Grove of West Virginia; medium format film negatives of a car with a person hanging out the side window and a haystack, print of haystack negative, and photo developing envelope; prayer card (1913); advert for Pennsylvania Handmade Championship Tennis Balls; and mailing tag for Herskovits Fur Company in N.Y.

## **Series II. Trenton Box Lunch Company / W. B Case Box Lunch Company**

This series contains company circulatory material, newspaper clippings regarding the company, advertisements (1960-1961), letterheads, an employee handbook, a company newsletter (1952), and company memos all pertaining to Trenton Box Lunch Company and/or W.B. Case Box Lunch Company. The employee handbook is of note for outlining a brief history of the company, as well as insight into the business and its hiring practices. Also notable are multiple clippings discussing robberies and other legal challenges (such as a strike) that afflicted the company. Also included in this series is a folder of material related to the Greater Trenton Chamber of Commerce, including magazines and newspaper clippings.

**Provenance**

Received from various sources. Also in this collection (Folder 1) are print-outs of scanned items from Special Collections at Bowdoin College where there is a scholarship in his name. From their website: "The Whitfield B. Case Scholarship Fund was established (in 1996) at the request of Jane F. Case in memory of her husband, Whitfield Bateman Case of the Class of 1928. The fund will provide (undergraduate) scholarships in keeping with the financial aid policies of the College. Mr. Case was the founder and owner of the Trenton Box Lunch Company (later the W.B. Case Box Lunch Company), with locations in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Long Island City, New York, and vice president of Breece's Bakeries in Trenton, New Jersey. In later years, he was the owner of W.B. Case Supply Company, retiring in 1984. Mr. Case served as Planned Giving Chairman for the Class of 1928, co-chairman of the 25th reunion for his class, and Princeton (New Jersey) area chair for the capital campaign of the early 1960s."

**Restrictions:** None

**Container List****Box / Folder / Title**

Series I. Whitfield B. Case - Personal

1 / 1 / Autobiography (1921)

1 / 2 / Letters (1913-1929)

1 / 3 / Letters (1930-1937, undated)

1 / 4 / School Journals (n.d., 1921, 1923)

1 / 5 / Class Assignments (n.d., 1919) and Report Cards

1 / 5a / School text book, crayon box

1 / 6 / High School Extracurricular and Important Events/Materials

1 / 7 / Miscellaneous – Whitfield Case

1 / 8 / Miscellaneous – General Items

1 / 9 / Y.M.C.A Affiliation and Related Clippings

1 / 10 / Shriner's Affiliation/Awards/ Documents

Series II. Trenton Box Lunch Company / W.B Case Box Lunch Company

1 / 11 / Trenton Box Lunch Company Materials

1 / 12 / Newspaper Articles

1 / 13 / Chamber of Commerce

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