

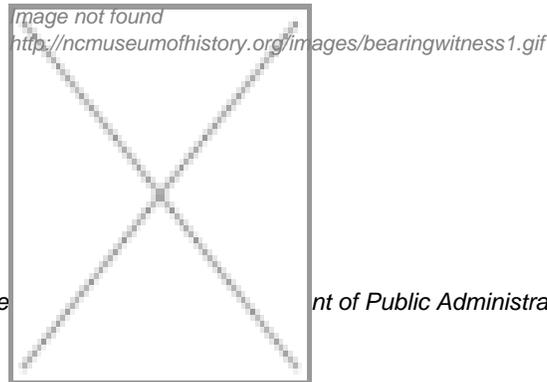


Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Harvey Beech Papers – Meeting with Pam Beech Whaley

By CED Program Interns & Students

Article: <https://ced.sog.unc.edu/harvey-beech-papers-meeting-with-pam-beech-whaley/>

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On February 10th, Community Campus Partnership Intern Adam Parker and Southern Historical Collection Director Tim West met with Pam Beech Whaley, the daughter of Harvey Beech. The meeting focused on cataloging and preserving the historical papers of Mr. Beech in the Southern Historical Collection.

Harvey Beech was the first African American to graduate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and also helped integrate the UNC School of Law. Mr. Beech lived a long, fulfilling life as a lawyer in Kinston. He tended to the needs of his family, built a beautiful house in East Kinston, and was renowned throughout the community for his generous spirit. Pam Whaley, the daughter of Mr. Beech, currently lives in Atlanta. Pam recalled fond memories of her father during a visit on Wednesday. She said he loved to give, but was not a fan of being acknowledged for those gifts. She told Tim and I stories of his countless donations to young Kinston students that came with one stipulation; don't make a fuss over it (many more stories about Mr. Beech's life can be found in a 2005 UNC General Alumni Association Article).

The Southern Historical Collection (SHC) is an internationally recognized archival collection of southern history. It houses numerous collections of important figures in North Carolina and Southern History. One such figure was Mr. Beech's classmate, Kenneth Lee. The SHC houses Mr. Lee's papers and many personal items to preserve his stories, struggles, and triumphs. Items are stored in a secured, climate-controlled environment in Wilson Library, and are accessible to any visitor to Wilson Library. The entire collection is also being digitally archived, ultimately making these materials available instantly around the world.

Mr. Beech passed in 2005, and his law office can still be seen on Queen Street in Kinston (photos of the office are available in this blog post). The office has deteriorated over the years, with some damage to the roof. Thankfully, many of Mr. Beech's documents were removed and stored by Mrs. Whaley. Mrs. Whaley shared some of her finds with Tim and I over lunch, including the story of a very special book. It was Mr. Beech's signed copy of Dr. Martin Luther King's first book, with a special note to Mr. Beech on the inside flap. Pam said she'd like to keep that family treasure, but will work with Tim West and the SHC staff over the next few weeks to begin archiving Mr. Beech's papers and historical items.

A request for a meeting was sent in 2007 by the SHC, but did not occur. This connection with the Beech family was formed through contacts made while working on other Community Campus Partnership projects in Lenoir County.