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Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

# **Guide to the Richard S. Becker Collection of Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander and Other Papers**

**JWJ MSS 95**



by Beinecke staff

October 2012

P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** JWJ MSS 95

**CREATOR:** Becker, Richard S.

**TITLE:** Richard S. Becker collection of Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander and other papers

**DATES:** 1961-2014

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1.88 linear feet (9 boxes) + 1 art storage

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Collection contains memorabilia relating to Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander assembled by music publisher Richard S. Becker and some of Becker's personal papers. The memorabilia, such as framed albums and printed ephemera, relates to Alex Bradford's and Arthur Alexander's better known works, including Bradford's theatrical work, "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope," and covers of Alexander's songs by The Rolling Stones ("You Better Move On") and The Beatles ("Anna"). Becker's personal papers include awards and a small number of photographs and letters from political figures.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.becker>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.becker>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Richard S. Becker, 2005 and 2014.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Box 10 (DVD and CD): Restricted fragile. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

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## Conditions Governing Use

The Richard S. Becker Collection of Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander and Other Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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## Preferred Citation

Richard S. Becker Collection of Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander and Other Papers. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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## Processing Information

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Former call numbers: Uncat MSS 749, Uncat MSS 774, Uncat MSS 775, and Uncat MSS 816.

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## Alex Bradford (1927-1978)

Alex Bradford, born in 1927 in Bessemer, Alabama, was a clergyman, gospel singer, stage actor, composer, and lyricist. A minister and choir director of the Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey, Bradford believed in bringing black gospel music to the theater. He collaborated on several gospel plays with Vinnette Carroll, including "Your Arms Too Short To Box With God" (1976), which was nominated for several Tony awards. Bradford also won Obie and Drama Desk awards in 1972 for his performance in the musical "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope." In addition, the actor headed a number of gospel singing groups that toured widely, such as the Bradford Specials and the Professor Alex Bradford Singers. His musical compositions include "Too Close to Heaven." Bradford died February 15, 1978, in New York City.

Biographical information taken from "Alex Bradford." *Contemporary Authors Online*. Detroit: Gale, 1998. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 18 Oct. 2012.

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## Arthur Alexander (1940-1993)

Arthur Alexander, born in 1940 in Sheffield, Alabama, was a singer and songwriter. In 1953 Alexander led a teenage gospel group, The Heartstrings, before singing rock-and-roll on regional television in Alabama in the late 1950s. His first recorded song, "Sally Sue Brown," was later covered by Bob Dylan; the title track from his first album, "You Better Move On" (1962), was covered by the Rolling Stones; and the single "Anna" was covered by the Beatles. Alexander toured extensively in the 1960s before quitting the music business in the mid 1970s. He returned to music in the early 1990s, but then died of a heart attack on June 9, 1993.

Biographical information taken from "Arthur Alexander." *Contemporary Musicians*. Vol. 14. Detroit: Gale, 1995. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 19 Oct. 2012.

## **Scope and Contents**

The collection contains memorabilia relating to Alex Bradford and Arthur Alexander assembled by music publisher Richard S. Becker and some of Becker's personal papers. The memorabilia, consisting chiefly of albums and printed ephemera, relates to Alex Bradford's and Arthur Alexander's better known works, including Bradford's theatrical work, "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope," and covers of Alexander's songs by The Rolling Stones ("You Better Move On") and Beatles ("Anna"). Becker's personal papers include awards and a small number of photographs and letters from political figures.

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## **Arrangement**

Organized into five groupings by date of acquisition: January 2005 acquisition, March 2005 acquisition, April 2005 acquisition, October 2005 acquisition, and November 2014 acquisition.

## Collection Contents

### January 2005 acquisition, 1964-1978

1.38 linear feet (7 boxes)

This grouping contains memorabilia, such as albums and printed ephemera, relating to some of Alex Bradford's and Arthur Alexander's better known works, including Bradford's theatrical work, "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope," and covers of Alexander's songs by The Rolling Stones ("You Better Move On") and The Beatles ("Anna").

Former call number: Uncat MSS 749.

b. 1	Certificate, National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences	1977
b. 1	Obie award	1971-1972
b. 1	Printed material relating to "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope"	1973
b. 2 (Art)	Memorabilia, "Anna," The Beatles, framed	1964
b. 3 (Oversize)	Memorabilia, "Souvenir of Their Visit to America, The Beatles," framed	undated
b. 3 (Oversize)	Scrapbook	1978, undated
b. 4 (Oversize)	Memorabilia, "Please please me, The Beatles," framed	undated
b. 5 (Oversize)	Photograph of Marion Williams and Alex Bradford, framed	1962
b. 5 (Oversize)	Memorabilia, "December's Children," The Rolling Stones, framed	undated
b. 6 (Oversize)	Memorabilia, "The Early Beatles," framed	undated
b. 6 (Oversize)	Memorabilia, "You Better Move On," The Rolling Stones, framed	undated
b. 7 (Oversize)	Printed ephemera relating to "Your Arms Too Short To Box With God," framed	1976, undated
b. 7 (Oversize)	Memorabilia, "Anna," The Beatles, framed	undated

**March 2005 acquisition, 1973-1974***2 Folders*

This grouping contains two typed, signed letters to Becker, one each from Alabama governor George C. Wallace and New Jersey senator Harrison A. Williams, two photographs of governor Wallace, and a coin from the 21 Club in New York City.

Former call number: Uncat MSS 774.

b. 8	Coin from "The 21 Club"	undated
b. 8	Letters and photographs	1973-1974

**April 2005 acquisition, 1961-2005***0.21 linear feet (1 box)*

This grouping contains additional memorabilia relating to music as well as personal papers comprised of awards and correspondence.

Former call number: Uncat MSS 775

b. 8	"BMI Pop Hits 1940-1966"	[circa 1967]
b. 8	Letter from Frances W. Preston, BMI	undated
b. 8	Music for guitar, "Your Arms Too Short"	undated
b. 8	Printed material relating to "Your Arms Too Short To Box With God"	1980-2005
b. 8	Letter from Winfield Dunn	1973 June 5
	Clipping about Becker Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	undated
b. 8	Certificate, <i>Who's Who in America</i>	1976-1977
b. 8	Letter from The Juilliard School	2002 February 28
b. 8	Invitation from The Juilliard School	2001-2002
b. 8	Certificate, State of Arkansas	1973 May 31
	"Special Citation of Achievement" presented by BMI Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	undated
	Certificate of honorary citizenship, State of Tennessee Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	1973 April 12
	Appointment, Colonel Aide de Camp, State of Tennessee Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	1973 April 23
	Clipping identifying 1977-78 Broadway productions, <i>Variety</i> Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	1978 May 31
	Appointment, Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Aide-de-Camp, State of Alabama Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	1973 May 4
	Citation of Achievement presented by Broadcast Music, Inc. Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	1961
	Letter from Warner Bros. Records, Inc. Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	1968 November 20
	Memorabilia, "Moody River" Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	1961, undated



**October 2005 acquisition, 1983, undated**

This grouping contains photographs of Governor George C. Wallace and printed ephemera.

Former call number: Uncat MSS 816.

b. 8	Playbill, Gershwin Theatre	1983 June 5
	Photograph of Governor George C. Wallace and [Richard S. Becker?] Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	undated
	Photograph of Governor George C. Wallace, signed Stored in: Oversize, Box 9	undated

**Oversize***0.08 linear feet (1 box)*

b. 9 (Oversize)	Clipping about Becker	undated
b. 9 (Oversize)	"Special Citation of Achievement" presented by BMI	undated
b. 9 (Oversize)	Certificate of honorary citizenship, State of Tennessee	1973 April 12
b. 9 (Oversize)	Appointment, Colonel Aide de Camp, State of Tennessee	1973 April 23
b. 9 (Oversize)	Clipping identifying 1977-78 Broadway productions, <i>Variety</i>	1978 May 31
b. 9 (Oversize)	Appointment, Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Aide-de-Camp, State of Alabama	1973 May 4
b. 9 (Oversize)	Citation of Achievement presented by Broadcast Music, Inc.	1961
b. 9 (Oversize)	Letter from Warner Bros. Records, Inc.	1968 November 20
b. 9 (Oversize)	Memorabilia, "Moody River"	1961, undated
b. 9 (Oversize)	Photograph of Governor George C. Wallace and [Richard S. Becker?]	undated
b. 9 (Oversize)	Photograph of Governor George C. Wallace, signed	undated

**November 2014 acquisition, 2013-2014***0.21 linear feet (1 box)*

Gift of Richard S. Becker, 2014.

Born Digital. Restricted fragile. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

b. 10                      *Muscle Shoals*, original motion picture soundtrack                      2013

Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

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b. 10                      *Muscle Shoals*, motion picture                      2014

Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

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## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

African American singers  
Gospel music  
Popular music -- United States

### **Genres / Formats**

Audiovisual materials  
Photographic prints

### **Names**

Alexander, Arthur  
Becker, Richard S.  
Bradford, Alex

### **Corporate Bodies**

Beatles  
Rolling Stones