

FROM THE OLD WORLD TO THE NEW: HERMAN CONE'S CITIZENSHIP PAPERS

There's a single-page document found among the Circuit Court case files of 1856 that tells an interesting story. It's an immigrant's story, which, of course, written large, is America's story. The immigrant's name was Herman Cone. In 1856, he lived in Jonesborough on the site of the present Washington County Archives building.

Cone was born in Bavaria in Germany in 1828. Seeking better opportunities and to escape the oppression of being Jewish in Germany, Cone came to America in August 1846, settling initially with family already residing in Richmond, Virginia. In 1853, he and his brother-in-law Jacob Adler arrived in Jonesborough and opened what became a prosperous clothing store known as Cone & Adler. The two-story building was located where the county archives is today. The shop was on the first floor, and Cone and his family lived on the upper floor. Adler eventually lived in the house today known as February Hill.

In Jonesborough, Cone raised what became a rather remarkable family. His two oldest sons, Moses and Ceasar, went on to establish the largest denim manufacturer in the world in Greensboro, North Carolina. Moses Cone's mountain mansion is now part of the Blue Ridge Parkway property. Herman Cone's daughter Claribel became one of the early women physicians in America. She and her younger sister Etta in later years spent much time in Europe collecting art. They were among the first to befriend and recognize such modern painters as Matisse, Gauguin, Cezanne, Van Gogh, and Picasso. They were friends of Gertrude Stein and many of the artists then developing in Paris. Pablo Picasso, who entranced by American color comic strips, sometimes traded them his sketches and drawings for the Cone's newspapers. The Cone sister eventually acquired one of the great collections of modern art. Today, their collection forms a major wing of the Baltimore Museum of Art.

On the 1st day of November 1856, Cone went into open court before the Washington County Circuit Court judge and took the oath of citizenship to "support the constitution of these United States...to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign State, prince, potentate, or sovereignty, whatever and particularly to Maximillian, King of Bavaria." Click below to see a digital copy of Herman Cone's naturalization papers.

Herman Cone this day appeared in open Court and declared on oath before this Court that he is an alien being a native of the Kingdom of Bavaria, and a subject of Maximilian that he is a free white person; that he came to the United States of America in the month of August 1846, that it was then, and is now bona fide his intention to become a citizen of these United States and to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign State, prince, potentate, or sovereignty, whatever and particularly to Maximilian King of Bavaria.

Said Herman Cone further declares, on oath that he has resided within these United States ever since his arrival in August 1846 and has not been out of them since, and that he will support the Constitution of these United States, and that he has never been of any of the orders of nobility.

Sworn to and subscribed in open Court
November 1st, 1856,

John W. Laney J. W. C. Herman Cone