

REGISTER OF THE
WOFFORD BENJAMIN CAMP, 1894-1986, PAPERS, 1919-1983

Mss 165

Wofford B. Camp Papers

75 cu. ft. 136 document boxes, 3 boxes of index cards, 8 volumes including 2 oversize boxes, 1 box of photographs

Introduction

The Wofford B. Camp Papers were donated to the Clemson University Libraries by Charles A. Segar in 1991. They consist of subject correspondence files, magazine articles, speech memorabilia, newspaper clippings, and photographs documenting Camp's career from his days as a student at Clemson Agriculture College through the operation of the W. B. Camp & Sons Inc. agribusiness in California. There are no restrictions on the use of the papers beyond those of Special Collections. The collection was processed and the register prepared by Adraine Jackson-Garner in 1997. Student assistants Jeff Bogtong, Sean Ervin, Natasha Jenkins, Lisa McAllister, and Cynthia Ritter helped with the processing.

Biographical Sketch

Wofford Benjamin Camp, was born in Gaffney, South Carolina on March 14, 1894, the son of John Clayton and Mary Jane (Atkins) Camp. After a basic education in Gaffney, in 1912 he received a scholarship to Clemson Agricultural College, and although hampered by the lack of a high school education, successfully graduated in 1916 with a BS in agriculture. Camp's first job, that year, was working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in South Carolina where he supervised the growing of alternative crops in areas formerly planted with rice. In 1917 he began working for the USDA in San Joaquin Valley, California where he made his first major contribution to the development of American agriculture by promoting the planting of cotton in California. Camp provided expert advice to farmers, based upon his background and the education, regarding the successful cultivation of this new California crop. The adaption of a single variety of cotton, Acala, insured a product consistency which made California cotton competitive with the finest

varieties in the world. Beginning in 1922 through to 1928, Camp served as Director of the USDA Cotton Experiment Station at Shafter California.

In 1928, Camp was offered a position with the USDA in Georgia but declined and resigned. From 1928-1933 he worked as an agricultural appraiser and land manager for the then Bank of Italy (later known as the Bank of America). In this capacity, he worked to increase the productivity of land under mortgage or owned by the bank, in some cases introducing the cultivation of cotton and vegetable crops rather than grapes and fruit trees. During these years, Camp became active in a number of farmer's cooperatives and succeeded in having Safeway Stores purchase their vegetables from California.

In 1933, Camp came to Washington to work in the Roosevelt administration in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. There he served as an agriculture economist and eventually he became assistant director of all AAA programs in the southern states and cotton programs throughout the nation. He defended western agriculture, particularly cotton, with respect to the regulations set in place by the AAA and attempted unsuccessfully to institute a single variety cotton program throughout the nation. During December 1937, Camp left Washington after purchasing a 5000 acre farm in the San Joaquin Valley, fifteen miles north of Bakersfield.

Beginning in 1937, he was president of Georgianna Farms, growing cotton, potatoes, and other crops on land formerly used only for grazing. During the late 1930s Camp came to be a leader in agricultural innovation and participated in local agriculture associations concerning issues related to prevention of disease and labor problems. In the late 1930s, Camp began growing potatoes on land owned by DiGiorgio Farms. Camp was active in efforts to improve the quality of the potatoes grown and market them nationally.

Although the Second World War brought prosperity to the Camp family whose two sons attended Clemson before enlisting in the military service, Mrs. Georgia Anne Camp died in 1943. The following year, Camp reorganized his farming corporation as W.B. Camp and Sons. With the end of the war Camp entered a period of agricultural leadership based upon the example of his own successful farming. He spoke out repeatedly regarding the need to understand that

agriculture was being transformed and what that meant for the entire nation. Camp continued to urge improvements not only in the West but also in the South where he believed supplementary irrigation was essential. He also urged policies to reduce the role of government in agriculture. Camp's vision of large scale agribusiness helped to transform California agriculture and with it, that of the entire nation. During and after World War II, the increased productivity of American agriculture helped to feed the world and provide this nation with significant increases in the standard of living.

Camp's two sons Bill Jr. and Don worked with their father in a number of enterprises. In 1948 oil was discovered on some of his farm land. Camp came to be involved in a variety of agricultural and business organizations becoming President of the National Potato Council in 1948 and a Director of the US Chamber of Commerce in 1952. In these capacities, he vigorously pursued an agricultural policy based upon modern farming methods in a market determined environment with a reduced role for government under non-crisis circumstances. As such he opposed the Hagen Bill which favored western cotton growers at the expense of other regions.

He received a post graduate degree from University of California in 1951, and honorary degrees from Limestone College in 1955, Whitter College in 1958, and Gardner-Webb College in 1974.

Camp married Georgia Anna App of Bakersfield on December 14, 1921. They had two children, Wofford B. Camp Jr. (born 1923), and Donald Camp (born 1925). Mrs. Camp died in 1943. He later married Louise Phifer Wise Camp in 1956 who had three children, Addie Louise, George and Sarah. Wofford Camp died on August 1, 1986.

Information for this sketch was based upon material from the Papers as well as:

William J. Briggs and Henry Cauthen. *The Cotton Man: Notes on the Life and Times of Wofford B ("Bill") Camp*. Columbia:SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1983.

Wofford B. Camp. *Cotton, Irrigation, and the AAA*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Bancroft Library, Regional Oral History Office, 1971.

Scope and Content

The Wofford B. Camp Papers primarily document his activities as a farmer, leader in developing American agriculture, a proponent of conservative ideals, and civic leader. The Papers span the period from 1919-1983 with the bulk from 1943-1983. They are organized into five series: Subject Correspondence, Speeches, Photographs, Magazines articles and Scrapbooks. Material in the first four series is arranged alphabetically by folder title and chronological within the folders. The scrapbook volumes of newspaper clippings are generally in chronological order.

The Papers document a major transformation in agriculture in the United States with the development of large-scale agri-business in California's interior valleys. These have come to be one of the major areas of intensive agriculture in the United States with California now leading the nation in agriculture. Wofford Camp was one of the major leaders of this development during the Twentieth Century. The papers reflect Camp's activities as a proponent of agriculture while working for the Department of Agriculture and later as a farmer and businessman. The papers specifically document the development of agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley. There is considerable information on the state and national level related to the subjects of the standardization and marketing of agricultural products, water policy and irrigation, farm labor and the right-to-work, and the relationship of agriculture to the rest of American society. There are records, sometimes considerable, related to the organizations in which Camp participated such as the Chamber of Commerce. The scrapbooks and a number of folders contain biographical information about Wofford Camp.