

REGISTER OF THE LANE PAPERS,
1924-1986

John Dewey Lane, 1898-1968

Mss 79, 2.5 cu. ft., 1 oversize
folder, photographs

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INTRODUCTION

This collection consists mainly of material relating to John D. Lane's professional career as an English professor at Clemson College from 1924-1961. It also documents Lane's role as faculty advisor to student publications such as The Tiger and Taps and the influence he had upon his students.

The collection was donated to Clemson University in 1986 by Bessie Mell Poats Lane, the widow of John D. Lane. There are no restrictions on the use of this collection beyond those of Special Collections. This register was prepared by David Redekop in 1986.

BIOGRAPHY

John Dewey Lane was born in Darlington County, South Carolina on March 14, 1898 to Joseph Preston Lane and Minnie Ella Carter Lane. He attended Newberry College in 1916 after graduating from LaMar High School. In 1920 he earned his Bachelor of Arts in English. He taught history and mathematics at Newberry from 1920 to 1923. In the Fall of 1923 Lane attended the University of Virginia and received a Master of Arts degree in English in 1924. The following fall he took a position as assistant professor at Clemson College. He took a leave of absence in 1928-1929 and attended Columbia University, where he took graduate courses in English and drama.

When he returned to Clemson in 1929, he met Bessie Mell Poats and they were married in August, 1932. The marriage resulted in four children - Anna Carter Lane born in 1935, Mildred Rutherford Lane in 1936, John Dewey Lane, Jr. in 1944, and Grayson Poats Lane in 1946.

After Lane returned to Clemson in 1929, he was appointed Faculty Advisor to student publications such as The Tiger and the student annual Taps. In 1935 Lane and Octavius Cohen founded an honorary English fraternity, Gamma Alpha Mu, in order to encourage budding writers and journalists.

Lane was promoted to associate professor in 1938. During World War II he took on the extra duties of insuring that The Tiger was published and sent to the Clemson alumni serving throughout the world. Lane became a full professor in 1942. By then he was a well-known banquet speaker who could mix humor with serious topics.

In the 1950s Lane published grammar booklets that were used in thirty-eight states and foreign countries as guides for teaching the English language. In 1956 he became the first president of the newly organized Faculty Senate. Unfortunately, it was at this time that he began to suffer poor health.

In 1957 he had a cataract operation and lost the sight in one eye. By 1960, high blood pressure, poor eyesight, and the demands of teaching forced Lane to give up his position as faculty advisor to student publications after thirty years. A year later Lane retired from teaching after nearly forty years in the profession. He was awarded the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award in 1961 for outstanding and generous service to the college and students. He also received an honorary Doctorate of Laws from Newberry College in 1961. A John Dewey Lane Scholarship Fund began in 1966 through the efforts of Johnston Crapse, a South Carolina lawyer-friend of Lane's, and continues to this day.

The last years of Lane's life produced a lot of unpublished writings, but also a lot of sickness. On January 8, 1968 Lane died of lung cancer at his home in Clemson.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The John D. Lane papers contain material recording his career as an English professor at Clemson and his relationships with many of his students and close friends. These papers largely document the successful training of writers and journalists at Clemson College - an institution without a department or school of journalism. The history of Clemson's success as a school whose graduates included Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists can be traced to John Lane.

The collection contains correspondence from former students and noted journalists such as Harry Ashmore, George Chaplin, and George McMillan. There is also correspondence with Andrew Holt, President of the University of Tennessee, and Henry Rankin, a former colleague at Clemson.

There are several folders of Lane's speeches and writings, including a song, "That Little Cowboy", that he composed in 1950. Also included are diaries of his years at Columbia University in 1928-1929. The diaries are disjointed, but his entire stay is covered. The papers document Lane's professional career extensively. There is also material relating to his involvement with Gamma Alpha Mu, Clemson's Faculty Senate, and The Tiger.