

Robert Richardson Coker Papers Mss.0297

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SUMMARY INFORMATION

Repository

Clemson University Libraries Special Collections

Creator

Coker, Robert Richardson, 1905-1987

Title

Robert Richardson Coker Papers

ID

Mss.0297

Date [bulk]

Bulk, 1972-1987

Date [inclusive]

1888-1988 1972-1987

Extent

8.2 cubic feet (17 document boxes, 2 folders of photographs and one oversize folder)

Language

English

Abstract

Robert Richardson Coker had a distinguished career as a leader in agriculture and business and served as a life trustee of Clemson University. The correspondence, memos, minutes, newspaper clippings and other materials relate to his participation as a member of the Board of Trustees and various matters that came to its attention.

Preferred Citation

[description of item such as "Letter from John Smith, Clemson, SC to Michael Jones, Columbia, SC"], box number, folder number, Mss 297, Robert

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Robert Richardson Coker was born September 6, 1905 in Hartsville, South Carolina, the son of David Robert Coker and Jessie Ruth Richardson Coker. Educated in Hartsville public schools, he first graduated in 1924 from Webb School in Bell Buckle Tennessee and in 1928 received a Bachelor's of Arts from the University of South Carolina. After graduation, he began working for Coker's Pedigreed Seed Company, the firm his father founded in 1902. During the following decade, he assumed responsibilities for sales and became a member of the board of directors of the Company. In 1951 he was named President of the firm, a position that he held until its sale in 1978 to the German agricultural seed firm KWS. Under his direction, Coker Pedigreed Seed became a leader in the breeding of seed varieties for the South's major crops.

In 1944, Coker helped to found the South Carolina Farm Bureau and served as its first president. He was active in a wide variety of local, state and national farm organizations, paying particular attention to the promotion of cotton and the eradication of the boll weevil. He served as member of the National Agricultural Advisory Commission, 1953; president of National Council of Plant Breeders, 1959-1960; director Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, 1962-1968; and president National Cotton Council, 1963. Coker had an active interest in education serving as an *ex officio* member of the State Commission on Higher Education, 1967 and as a Life Trustee of Clemson University, 1960-1987. He received numerous awards, including honorary degree from Clemson in 1955 and the Clemson Medallion in 1985.

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers include correspondence, a blueprint, memos, minutes, newspaper clippings and reports all related to Clemson University.

The papers document Coker's service as a member of the Clemson Board of Trustees, 1960-1987. During this period, Clemson became a University, integrated, and doubled its enrollment. His expertise as a businessman and agriculturalist can be found in papers related to the

building of the new agricultural building, Poole Agricultural Building; the Foundation Seed Association; and Clemson University's Extension Services and Experiment Stations. Coker served during the period when Clemson experienced a number of controversies connected with the Athletic Department and this is reflected in the papers. Also documented in the papers is Coker's actively engagement in the Board's work with Institutional Advancement and established the Robert and Lois Coker Chair of Molecular Genetics. As a member of the Board of Trustees, he was in communication with other Board members including Louis Batson, Edgar Brown, Paul McAlister and James Self as well as senior administrators such as Bill Atchley, Hugh Clausen, Robert C. Edwards, and Joseph McDevitt.

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Publication Information

Clemson University Libraries Special Collections 2010
August 9

Restrictions on Use

One file of personnel records is restricted.

Provenance

Mrs. Lois Coker accession 88-89; Jane Lee accession 02-64.

Processing Information

Michael Kohl prepared the finding aid in 2007-2008 with processing help from student assistant, Deanna Panetta.

The conversion of this finding aid to Encoded Archival Description format was made possible with a grant from the South Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board in 2009-2010. The finding aid was prepared for encoding by Kristi Roberts.

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CONTROLLED ACCESS HEADINGS

Corporate Name(s)

- Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina. Extension Service.

- Clemson University. Board of Trustees.
- Clemson University. College of Agricultural Sciences.
- Clemson University. Extension Service.
- Clemson University. -- Administration
- Clemson University. -- History
- Clemson University. -- Sports
- South Carolina Foundation Seed Association.
- Southeastern Forest Experiment Station. (Clemson, S.C.)

Personal Name(s)

- Atchley, B.L. (Bill L.)
- Batson, Louis Pinckney
- Brown, Edgar A. (Edgar Allan), 1888-1975
- Clausen, H. J.
- Coker, Robert Richardson, 1905-1987
- Edwards, Robert C. (Robert Cook), 1914-
- McAlister, Paul W.
- McDevitt, Joseph B., 1918-
- Self, James Cuthbert, 1876-1955

Subject(s)

- College sports--South Carolina.

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FOLDER

1 36"x54" drawing of Proposed Agricultural Building Program at Clemson Agricultural College for the State of South Carolina, by Hopkins, Baker & Gill and William G. Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle, & Wolff 1952

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