

South Carolina Political Collections
University of South Carolina Libraries

Thomas William Hunter
(1906-1979)
Papers, 1932-1992

Volume: .25 linear feet

Processed: 2005

Provenance: Donated by daughter Diana Clary

Cite as: Thomas William Hunter Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, The University of South Carolina Libraries

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Biographical Note:

Thomas William "Bill" Hunter (1906-1979), an attorney, farmer, lumberman and oil distributor, was a leader in promoting rural electrification in Newberry County and throughout the United States. In 1940, Hunter helped organize the Newberry Electric Cooperative, and served as its attorney from 1940 to the time of his death in 1979. He served the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association as Secretary-Treasurer, 1963-1965, Vice-President, 1965-1967, and President, 1967-1970. At the time of his election as president, the Association served nearly one thousand nonprofit consumer-owned electric systems serving over twenty million rural Americans in forty-six states.

Hunter was also a founder of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation [CFC]. The CFC provides financing for electrical and telephone projects throughout the U.S. to its more than 1,500 members, most of which are electrical cooperatives. Hunter received his A.B. Degree from Newberry College in 1926 and his LL.B. from the USC School of Law in 1934. Hunter married Leila Cornelia Knotts (1907-1992) in 1933. He served in the S.C. House from 1955-1960.



Scope and Content Note:

.25 feet of papers, 1932-1992, includes correspondence, copies of many newspaper and journal articles, including most of Hunter's columns as president of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, photographs and a film. In a draft speech, c.1970, Hunter describes his vision of the importance of rural electrification, "Outside of church service, I doubt if there is any area of life in which an individual can gain so much personal satisfaction and affect the lives of so many people as he can through the rural electrification program." A letter to his widow from Congressman William Jennings Bryan Dorn states, "He spent his life working to improve rural America and was successful in that effort."

Among the general papers is a transcription of reminiscences of Newberry County Probate Court Judge Frank H. Ward, c.1986, a good friend of Bill Hunter, recalling their friendship and



Hunter's sense of humor. The collection includes one folder of genealogical information on the Knotts Family, compiled by Annie Mercer Knotts of Woodford, S.C. Photos show Hunter with presidents Kennedy and Johnson, Sen. Olin D. Johnston, and others.

A DVD replicates a 16mm film received with the papers. The approximately 28½ minute film documents the 1968 annual meeting of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in Dallas, Texas, which Hunter served at that time as President. It begins with an introduction made by Hunter, and concludes with an appearance by President Lyndon Johnson.

Collection Inventory:

General:

1932-1959

1967

1968-1992

Knotts Family

Miscellany

AV [Photographs & DVD]

Clippings:

1952-1958

1960-1966

1967

1968-1980 & n.d.