

*South Carolina Political Collections*

*The University of South Carolina*

**Joseph O. Rogers, Jr.**

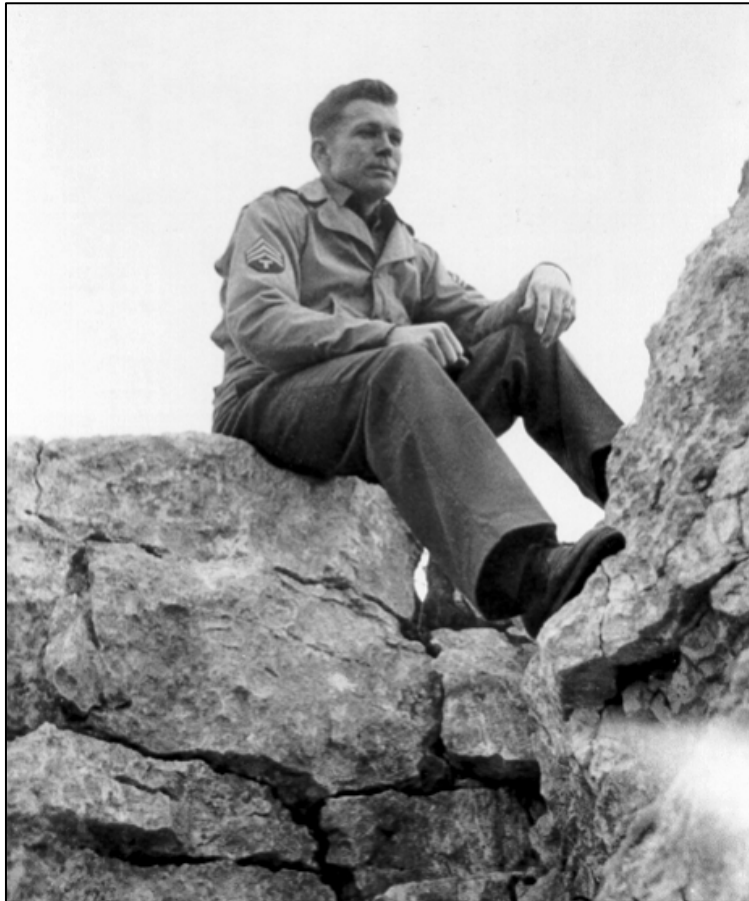
*(1921 - 1999)*

**Papers, 1942-1999**

<b>Volume:</b>	1.25 linear ft.
<b>Processed by:</b>	2001, Kelly R. Gilbert
<b>Provenance:</b>	Donated by Mrs. Joseph O. Rogers.
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**Biographical Note:**

“When I ran for Governor four years ago, it was because of the feeling that the people of South Carolina deserved to have a choice when they went to the polls.” (*Manning Times*, September 14, 1970) Joseph O. Rogers (1921-1999) was the first gubernatorial candidate of the modern Republican Party in South Carolina. Rogers, who would later serve as United States Attorney for the state, based his 1966 campaign on twelve years of service in the General Assembly and a promise to be “a man who stands up for South Carolina.”



Joseph Oscar Rogers, Jr. was born in Mullins, South Carolina on October 8, 1921, to Joseph Oscar and Lila McDonald Rogers. He graduated from Charleston High School and entered the College of Charleston in 1938. Rogers worked as a clerk at the Charleston Naval Shipyard from 1939 until 1943, when he volunteered for the United States Army. He was promoted to the rank of staff sergeant in the Army Corps of Engineers and served in Morocco, Algiers, Tunisia, and Southern France.

Following his discharge in March 1946, Rogers returned to Charleston, resumed his work in the Navy Yard and entered the Citadel in September with the aid of the G.I. Bill. Rogers entered the University of South Carolina Law School in the fall of 1948 and graduated in September 1950. In 1949 he married Kathleen

Brown, a native of Hemingway, South Carolina.

Rogers and his wife moved to Manning in 1950, where he practiced law with the firm of DuRant, DuRant & Rogers. Rogers became a respected member of the community, serving as a lay leader in the Manning Methodist Church. When Clarendon County experienced what *The State* termed “agitation in the county for younger men in the legislature,” he was a natural candidate. (*The State*, September 25, 1966) Rogers was elected as a Democrat to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1954 to represent Clarendon County. He was a member of the Ways and Means Committee, the Education and Public Works Committee, and served three times as a member of the Conference Committee on State Budget. Rogers also served as vice chairman of the South Carolina School Committee (popularly known as the Gressette Committee), a fifteen-man committee

appointed by the governor to seek legal means to avoid forced integration of the state's public schools. While the original intent and historic role of the committee have been issues of debate for historians and journalists, Marion Gressette observed in 1984 that, "The committee's real accomplishment was in preventing violence such as occurred in some other southern states." [3/3/84] Rogers also was involved in both the Reapportionment Study Committee and the House-Senate conference committee on reapportionment of the Senate. Rogers served in the General Assembly for six consecutive terms, 1955 to 1967.



Over the course of his legislative service, Rogers became discouraged with what he viewed as a lack of resolve on the part of South Carolina Democrats to resist federal encroachment into the affairs of state government. The proposed transfer of the state's Alcoholic Rehabilitation Center to the State Agency of Vocational Rehabilitation in order to qualify for federal funds particularly galled Rogers. He led the floor fight that stopped the transfer, and later told *The State* that "he could not accept an attitude of 'If you can get it, it doesn't matter what you have to give up to get it.'" (*The State*, September 25, 1966)

On March 7, 1966, Rogers formally announced that he would switch to the Republican Party and seek its gubernatorial nomination, which he received at the party convention on March 26. Rogers,

the first Republican candidate for the office in the twentieth century, challenged incumbent governor Robert E. McNair with a platform that stressed local control of schools and strong state leadership. Both of these positions stemmed largely from the efforts of the federal government to desegregate public schools in South Carolina. "We oppose them on both grounds that they are an unwarranted and unwise invasion by the Federal Government of the education function of the state and that they injure education by making education secondary in its own field," Rogers wrote in a 1966 statement.

In his first formal speech as a candidate, Rogers said, "It is my opinion and conviction that we should move voluntarily in separate columns toward a common goal, I believe that the expression and hopes and dreams of both races are better realized through this voluntarily social agreement."

Rogers was unable to defeat the popular incumbent, but did poll 188,000 votes to McNair's 255,000.

He returned to his law practice in Manning and remained active in the Republican Party, giving speeches and helping to plan for the 1968 Republican convention. Rogers served as a delegate to that convention and as manager for Richard Nixon's presidential campaign in South Carolina.

Rogers was nominated to succeed Klyde Robinson as the United States Attorney for the District of South Carolina in 1969. Rogers' nomination was supported by most South Carolina newspapers, but opposed by South Carolina's branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The Rev. I. DeQuincey Newman, a former field secretary for the NAACP, observed that U.S. Attorneys played a "definite role in carrying out the Civil Rights Act," and that Rogers' appointment in that capacity "would not enhance the black minority." (*The State*, June 20, 1969) The Rev. A. W. Holman, president of the South Carolina Conference of NAACP Branches, said that confirming Rogers' nomination would be comparable to appointing "a fox to stand guard over a chicken house." (*Columbia Record*, July 8, 1969) Rogers countered this accusation, saying that while he had worked to change laws, he had never broken them and that as United States Attorney he could be trusted to enforce laws impartially. His nomination was confirmed on July 22, 1969 and at his swearing in, August 11, he said he planned to enforce the law "fairly and impartially without regard to race, color or creed." (*State*, August 12, 1969)



Rogers had served for little more than a year when he was recommended for a federal judgeship by Senator Strom Thurmond. But the nomination stalled. Rogers resigned as United States Attorney on December 18, 1970, and withdrew his name from consideration for the judgeship, saying, "It's obvious that the major blame for inaction on my nomination lies with the current [Nixon] administration." (*Manning Times*, December 24, 1970) Rogers returned to his law firm and practiced actively until his 1990 retirement. He served as a Special Circuit Court Judge on numerous occasions into the 1990s, on the Clarendon County Development Board, and was named an Economic Ambassador for Clarendon County in 1993. Rogers was active in the Manning United Methodist Church, serving as a lay leader and as chairman of the official board. He was a Mason, Rotarian, member of the American Legion, and director of the Bank of Clarendon. Rogers died in April 1999.

### **Scope and Content Note:**

The Rogers Papers consist of 1.25 linear feet of material, 1942 to 1999. The collection has significant material relating to Rogers' 1966 bid for governor and his work with the Republican Party. The papers are arranged in 5 series: Public Papers, Personal Papers, Audio-Visual Records, Clippings, and Ephemera.



Public Papers, 1955 to 1993, largely pertain to Rogers' work in the General Assembly and as U.S. Attorney. Much of the U.S. Attorney material is correspondence from associates of Rogers congratulating him on his nomination and expressing dismay at his resignation. General Assembly material includes correspondence, speeches, and programs for various events. The general folder includes papers related to public positions such as appointments to the State Commission on Higher Education, the State Development Board, and special circuit court sessions.

Personal Papers, 1942 to 1992, arranged topically, concern the 1966 Governor's campaign and the Republican Party. Campaign material consists of general papers, press releases, speeches, and schedules. General papers include correspondence, memoranda, and newsletters. Speeches and press releases are generally handwritten and undated. Republican Party papers relate to activities such as Rogers' role as a delegate to the 1968 Republican National Convention in Miami Beach. These files include newsletters, programs, agendas, speeches, and membership lists. Materials specifically related to the Nixon campaign are composed of similar material and have been assigned a separate folder. Other files regard Rogers' service on the Clarendon County Development Board and activities with the Manning United Methodist Church.

Audio-Visual Records consist of photographs of Rogers and others from the 1940s to 1988. Many are World War II-era photos, and several document his role in the General Assembly as well as later activities in South Carolina. Also present are four television campaign advertisements from 1966, transferred to videotape.

Clippings are arranged chronologically and provide insight into legislative, campaign, and personal activities and interests.

Ephemera consists of campaign material, including a smock designed to be worn by women working in the Rogers for Governor campaign. Campaign posters (consisting of three promoting Rogers for Governor, one promoting Inez Clark Eddings for State Superintendent of Education, and one advertising a Horry GOP Whistle Stop) are located in Oversized Items.



**Series List:**      *General*  
                             *Public Papers*  
                             *Personal Papers*  
                             *Audio-Visual Records*  
                             *Clippings*  
                             *Ephemera*  
                             *Oversized Items*

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**Box List:**

General:	<b>Box 1</b>
1942-1969	
1970-1988	
1990-1997 and n.d.	
Public Papers:	
South Carolina House of Representatives, 1955-1966	
United States Attorney:	
1969	
1970	
Personal Papers:	
General:	
1942-1966	
1967-1984 and n.d.	
Invitations, 1955-1981	
Topical:	
Campaign, Gubernatorial, 1966:	
General, 1966-1967	
Press Releases	
Schedules	
Speeches	
Civil Rights, 1964-1968	
Clarendon County Development Board, 1990-1994	
Federal Judgeship, 1970-1979	
Law Practice, 1957-1992	
Manning United Methodist Church, 1957-1990	
Republican Party:	
General, 1966-1974 and n.d.	
Campaigns [other than J.O. Rogers]:	
General, 1966-1976 and n.d.	
Nixon, 1968-1972	
Audio-Visual Records:	
Photographs, c. 1943-1988	
Videotape [1966 campaign spots]	
Clippings:	
1954-1964	
1965-1966	
1967-1999 and n.d.	
Ephemera	
Oversized Items	