Donald S. Russell  
*(1906-1998)*  
Papers, 1929-1998

Volume: 23.75 linear feet  
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Biographical Note:

Few individuals achieve the success that Donald S. Russell enjoyed in life, fewer still achieve success in such a wide range of arenas, and even fewer have active careers of the duration of Russell’s. Donald Russell held important positions in the Roosevelt administration during World War II. Following the war, he returned to the private practice of law and gained wealth and influence in South Carolina. In 1952, Russell was named president of the University of South Carolina. He took no salary while president and used his personal funds to establish important endowments and refurbish the president’s home. He resigned as president in 1957 to run for governor. He was unsuccessful in his first attempt, but in 1962, was elected governor. Russell will forever be remembered for opening his inaugural reception and barbecue to all South Carolinians and personally greeting many black and white well-wishers who attended the event.

Upon the death of Olin Johnston, South Carolina’s senior senator, Russell stepped down as governor. He was succeeded by his Lieutenant Governor, Robert McNair, who appointed Russell to serve as South Carolina’s senator until such time as a special election could be held. Russell was praised for his acumen and activities as senator, but was defeated by Fritz Hollings in the 1966 special election.

President Lyndon Johnson appointed Russell a U.S. District Court judge in 1967. In 1971, he was appointed to the U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals. He served as an appellate court judge until the time of his death, in 1998, on his 92nd birthday.

Donald Stuart Russell was born in Lafayette Springs, Mississippi, in 1906. When Russell was four his father died, and, unable to keep the family farm viable, Lula Russell moved with her children to Chester, South Carolina, to be nearer her own parents. Graduating from high school early, Russell began attending the University of South Carolina at fifteen and graduated in 1925. After completing law school in 1928, Russell was admitted to the bar and began practicing in Union, South Carolina. In 1930, Russell joined the prestigious law practice of Nichols, Wyche and Byrnes of Spartanburg. He had impressed the firm by winning a case in which he was opposed by partner Charles Cecil Wyche. Russell was running the practice alone by 1937, following the death of George Nichols and the appointments of James F. Byrnes to the United States Supreme Court and Wyche to the Federal District Court.

Russell’s relationship with Byrnes became very important over the following years, particularly as Byrnes took on increasingly prominent positions in the Roosevelt administration. Russell went to Washington as Byrnes’ assistant when Byrnes was appointed director of the Office of Economic Stabilization in October 1942. In May 1943, Russell followed Byrnes to the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, which Byrnes had been appointed to direct. In October 1944 Russell went on active duty serving at the Army’s Supreme Allied Headquarters in Europe. Major Russell was discharged later that year. In early 1945, Russell served as Deputy Director of the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, then as Assistant Secretary of State for Administration, under Byrnes, from August 1945 to January 1947. Russell implemented plans for the reorganization of the Foreign Service and developed the first series of continual regional foreign policy statements, which was later to become standard practice. Russell’s interest in the Foreign Service later led to his involvement on several federal committees. As the assistant to
Byrnes, Russell was at Potsdam with President Harry Truman and Byrnes and took part in the decision to drop the first atomic bomb. Byrnes and Russell left the administration shortly after the war ended and joined Hogan & Hartson, a Washington, D.C., law firm.

Returning to Spartanburg, Russell practiced law until 1951, when he was named President of the University of South Carolina. As president, Russell guided the school from regional significance towards its current national prestige. He instigated the creation of the international studies program, and encouraged the improvement of the school’s facilities. Russell resigned in 1957 to run for governor, but was defeated in the Democratic primary by Ernest F. Hollings.

Russell returned to Spartanburg to practice law and renewed his involvement in a variety of community organizations. He served as Chairman of the Spartanburg General Hospital Board of Trustees and as a member of the boards of the Spartanburg County Foundation and Converse College. In 1957, Russell served as State Easter Seals Chairman for the Crippled Children Society, and belonged to the Executive Committee from 1958 to 1961. Russell served as the Advanced Gifts Chairman for the United Way Community Campaign in 1959. He had been State Chairman of this campaign in 1953.

In 1962, Russell again ran for governor. He was opposed by incumbent Lieutenant Governor Burnet Maybank Jr. Russell won the primary and was unopposed in the general election. To celebrate his election, Russell held a barbecue which included both white and black guests. This was the first integrated political event held in South Carolina since Reconstruction. As governor, Russell stressed the importance of improving the state’s educational programs. He also established an open-door policy at the Governor’s Mansion, inviting all citizens to come and see him at any time. These innovations led both Time and Life magazines to feature Russell as an example of a leader of the New South.

One of the first challenges Russell faced as governor was the court-ordered integration of Clemson College. Russell received high praise when he refused the offer of federal troops from U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy. As reported in The State newspaper, he assured Kennedy South Carolina was “perfectly capable” itself of maintaining law and order “and we are not going to have any violence” (25 Jan. 1963). South Carolina was distinguished among the southern states for the peaceful integration of its schools. Russell also helped expand the technical education system and worked to continue the dramatic expansion of industry in the state.

U.S. Senator Olin Johnston died unexpectedly in April 1965. The governor appoints a successor to serve until such time as a special election can be held. Russell said that he felt South Carolina needed a strong and able leader in Washington to deal with the important issues, and he believed that he had the best record of experience in Washington. He stepped down as governor and was appointed Senator by Robert E. McNair, who became governor upon Russell’s resignation. By all accounts, he was an effective senator who quickly won the respect of his fellow senators. However, he was defeated in the special election by Ernest F. “Fritz” Hollings. Voters appeared critical of the manner of Russell’s appointment. During his gubernatorial campaign, Russell had promised to serve his full term as governor and not to use the position for further political advancement. Russell served in the Senate
from April 22, 1965 to November 8, 1966.

Russell was appointed U.S. District Judge for the Western District of South Carolina by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967, filling the vacancy created by the death of his former partner Charles Cecil Wyche. Russell had campaigned for Johnson during the 1964 election and attended the Johnson inauguration, even though their opinions on the Voting Rights Bill differed significantly.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon assigned Russell to the Appellate Court bench. Russell and his wife Virginia continued to reside in Spartanburg, though in his capacity as Appellate Judge, Russell traveled to Richmond, Virginia, one week a month for nine months of the year. Known for having a thorough knowledge of the law, Russell served until his death in February 1998. He never took senior status or lightened his case load.

**Scope and Content Note:**

The collection consists of 23.75 linear feet of records, 1929 to 1998, arranged in five major series: Public Papers, Personal Papers, Speeches, Audio-Visual Material and Clippings. Public Papers document Russell’s service at the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, and as Assistant Secretary of State, Governor of South Carolina and U.S. Senator. The bulk of the public materials regard his Senate service and demonstrate Russell’s commitment to constituent service as well as significant work on the Post Office and Civil Service Committee and the Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Personal Papers document Russell’s interests in business, finance, charity, education and Foreign Service. Russell’s personal activities rival his public work in importance to the state; he worked particularly diligently to promote education and the welfare of children and the disabled.

**Public Papers,** 11.25 linear feet, are arranged in the chronological order of the positions Russell held. These materials document Russell’s service as: Secretary and later Deputy Director of the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, 1943 to July 1945; Assistant Secretary of State, July 1945 to January 1947; Governor of South Carolina, January 1963 to April 1965; and United States Senator, April 1965 to January 1967.

The War Mobilization and Assistant Secretary of State records consist of six folders and are arranged chronologically.

Gubernatorial papers are divided into general and topical files. The materials chiefly document some of Russell’s activities as governor, such as the governor’s hearings on Trotter’s Shoals Dam, education programs and political appointments. Russell’s own appointment to the Senate is included. Documents later than 21 April 1965 are filed in the Senate series. Materials documenting Russell’s Senate appointment are divided between the Gubernatorial and Senatorial records, with the date of Russell’s official appointment, 22 April 1965, as the dividing line. The files preceding Russell’s appointment to the Senate contain correspondence from many constituents with recommendations for Johnston’s replacement. Ernest F. Hollings’ name was suggested multiple times.
Senate papers are arranged in the following sub-series: General, Grants and Projects, Newsletters, Press Releases, Schedules, and Topical files. General papers contain constituent correspondence which address multiple subjects or do not fall under a specific topical heading, thus to ensure that they have seen everything on a topic, researchers may need to study both General Papers and Topical Files.

Grants and Projects, 2.5 linear feet, relate to everything from agricultural grants to postal construction projects, and are organized topically. Community Development files include projects to improve the economic and social aspects of municipalities as well as their infrastructure. Materials are arranged according to the funding agency or the name given a specific project. Energy files relate to the building of federal dams and nuclear facilities. Correspondence regarding energy issues of a political nature will be found in Topical Files. Water files relate to water and sewage projects for local communities and the maintenance of public waterways.

Newsletters and Press Releases chiefly relate to national issues and legislation sponsored by Russell, ranging from agriculture to Vietnam. On that latter, Russell stated, “our action in Vietnam is a responsible, necessary, and restrained use of the minimal force required to deter present levels of aggression in Vietnam.”

Schedules include an appointment book, accepted invitations and weekly schedules, and document his Senate campaign as well as his service in that body.

Topical Files relate to issues and legislation before the Senate. Particularly rich are the files relating to Russell’s committees: Agriculture and Forestry; Post Office and Civil Service; and Labor and Public Welfare. The topics Agriculture, Civil Service, Labor, Postal Affairs, and Welfare have been maintained as separate headings as they were in the Russell office. Agriculture files chiefly concern cotton, dairy farming, tobacco and special legislation like the “Food for Freedom” Bill, the Rural Electrification Act, and the Special Milk-School Lunch Program. Civil Service files relate to issues such as the Federal Pay Bill and Retirement Benefits. Labor files chiefly relate to legislation regulating the compensation of workers and restriction of protest rights, and Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act, regarding compulsory union membership. Materials relating to federal postal employees are located in the Postal Affairs files. Postal Affairs materials chiefly concern proposed parcel post rate increases, size and weight standards, and local postal appointments.

Personal Papers, 10.5 linear feet, are divided into: General Papers, Campaign Files, Financial Records, Topical Files and Schedules.

General Papers chiefly consist of correspondence with family and friends and document Russell’s personal interests and concerns.

Campaign files, 2.5 linear feet, 1947 to 1966, chiefly relate to Russell’s 1962 gubernatorial campaign against Burnet R. Maybank Jr., and some material documenting his 1966 Senate race. The 1962 materials are arranged by county, and chiefly consist of correspondence, much of it received in response to a form letter Russell sent out soliciting voter sentiment.
Financial Records concern stock, bond, and real estate investments.

Topical papers, 4.5 linear feet, include major topics such as Board Memberships, Education, Foreign Affairs, and Persons with whom Russell was associated. Russell served on a variety of business and charitable boards. He was associated with the Auto Finance Company for years. The Company owned several newspapers, Southeast Fire Insurance and other subsidiaries. Russell was Chairman of the Board in 1949 and President from 1951 to 1953. He also served as Chairman of the American Discount Company, a related company, from 1952 to 1953. Russell served on the board of the Spartanburg County Foundation from 1955 to 1961, raising money for several charitable funds. As Chairman of the Board of Spartanburg General Hospital, 1958 to 1961, Russell worked to improve the Radiology Department at the Nursing School and helped to fight two lawsuits brought against the board. Russell also served on the boards of Bran-Don Inc. and Palmetto Transmission. Russell’s papers as president of The University of South Carolina are maintained by the University Archives, a division of The South Caroliniana Library.


Persons files chiefly consist of materials relating to individuals with whom Russell corresponded on a regular basis, including friends, business associates and family. These files may not represent the complete body of correspondence between Russell and these individuals. For example, the 1962 campaign files contain letters of advice and encouragement from some of these influential people. Persons with significant materials include; James F. Byrnes, Carter Burgess, Burnet R. Maybank, Anthony J. Panuch, Julian Wolfe, and Charles Cecil Wyche.

Schedules chiefly pertain to Russell’s activities while not in public service, 1952 to 1961. Included in the series are appointment books, accepted invitations and schedules.

Speeches, 1.25 linear feet, 1953 to 1983, excluding those as University President, are arranged chronologically. Speech background files contain materials used by Russell in preparing speeches.

Audio-Visual Material consists of artwork, audio recordings, films, photographs and slides. Two pencil drawings of Mrs. Virginia Russell and Donald Russell, Jr. are included. Two audio recordings contain some of Russell’s gubernatorial speeches and his opponent’s stump meeting in the 1962 primary campaign. Two films record Russell’s 1963 inauguration. Photographs are arranged topically and include portraits, and family and group shots.

Clippings, 1929 to 1998, include newspaper articles from local and national papers, as well as a Life Magazine article featuring Russell. One oversized folder contains a feature article from The State’s weekend insert, 20 December 1953. Of particular interest are articles pertaining to all three of his campaigns, his appointments to the bench and his tenure as president of the University of South Carolina.
Collection Inventory:

Public Papers: Box 1
War Mobilization and Reconversion, Office of, May 1943- July 1945 [See also: Personal, Topical, Oral History Interview, 15 Mar. 1984]
Assistant Secretary of State: [See also: Personal, Topical, Assistant Secretary of State]
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        Economic Development Administration
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   Packaging-Labeling Bill, S. 985
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   Community Development Districts Act, S. 2934
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  Impact Area Funds, P.L. 874
  Library Services and Construction Act, S. 3076
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School Prayer Amendment, S.J. Res. 148

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  Hemphill, Robert, Judicial Appointment

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- Crowley, Leo T., 1949-1954
- Maybank, Burnet R., 1947-1956
- McGuinn, Lula Russell Moore [Mother], 1945-1953
- Panuch, J. Anthony:
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- Russell, Virginia [Wife], 1962-1965
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1958:
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7 Mar., Introduction and Address to the Citizens' Council, Otanta, SC
Apr.:
21, Campaign Speech, Sumter, SC
28, Campaign Speech, Orangeburg SC
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6, Address before the North Carolina State School Board Association, Chapel Hill, NC
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28, Marion Production Credit Association, Marion, SC
Oct.: 
2, Pleasant Hill Community, Georgetown County, SC
18, SC Association of Real Estate Boards, Columbia, SC
23, Tobacco in the South Carolina Economy, Florence, SC
1 Dec., Dedication of Camden City Arena, Camden, SC

Speech Background

1964:
15 Jan., Message to the SC General Assembly
25 Mar., SC Democratic Party Convention, Columbia, SC
14 Apr., Special Message to the Joint Session of the SC General Assembly
30 May, Clemson Graduation Address, Clemson, SC
8 June, Remarks to Governor's Conference
16 July, Poverty Bill
Oct.: 
2, Pleasant Hill Community, Georgetown County, SC
17 Nov., Address at the Annual Banquet of the Chester County Board of Commerce and Development, Chester, SC
10 Dec., Industrial Appreciation Dinner

1965:
13 Jan., Message to the SC General Assembly
3 Feb., Leadership Conference on Mental Health Legislative Banquet, Columbia, SC
Apr.: 
12, Mortgage Bankers Association of America, Charleston, SC
14, Special Message to the Joint Session of the SC General Assembly
[c. Apr. 1965], Statement in Memory of Senator Johnston
30 May, Introduction and Address at the Presbyterian College Commencement Exercises, 10 June, 150th Anniversary of the Founding of Pendleton Farmers Society, Clemson, SC
7 July, Extension of Remarks of Russell, Columbia, SC
Oct.: 
13, United Daughters of the Confederacy of SC Annual Conference, Columbia, SC
19, SC Society for Crippled Children and Adults, Columbia, SC
23 Nov., North Augusta Lion's Club
7 Dec., Commissioning of United States Ship Davidson, US Naval Base, Charleston, SC
[c. 1965] defense of Russell appointment to Olin Johnston's seat

[c. 1963- Apr. 1965):
Group Meeting on Education and Civil Rights National Governor's Conference, Cleveland, OH
Statement on Trotter's Shoals Proposal
Statement Regarding the Resignation of Solicitor Stoney
Proposal regarding use of State's Credit for Industrial and Private-Financing Purposes South Carolina Education Association Convention, Greenville, SC
Defense Department Subcommittee Hearings on the Charleston Naval Yard, Washington, DC
Statement to Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments regarding Integration
Editorial by Russell on WSPA-TV

1966:
18 Jan., South Carolina Peach Council, Greenville, SC
Feb.: 
15, Remarks made at Founders Day Exercises, Anderson, SC
24, Taped Editorial for WIS-TV
Mar.: 
4, Announcement of Candidacy
24:
Spartanburg Chamber of Commerce, on Agriculture, Spartanburg, SC
Spartanburg Chamber of Commerce, "Vietnam," Spartanburg, SC
20 Apr., Remarks at Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce, Myrtle Beach, SC
5 May, Statements on wage increases
c. 1966:
"Senator Russell Speaks Out for Agriculture," reprinted from *The Southern Planter*
Cotton, Tobacco, and Senate Appointment
Farmers and the Economy
South Carolina Economy
The Importance of Agriculture
Economy- Progress and Prospects
n.d:
Address to the Daughters of the Confederacy
Campaign Introduction
Coker Commencement
Coker Library Dedication
"South Carolina is No Longer a One Party State"
Private Educational Institutions, and possible financial solutions
Speech about the future of South Carolina; economic, social, and educational reform, [missing page 1]
Statement against proposed Congressional commerce law that would contradict with the 14th Amendment
and the Civil Rights Act of 1875
Union Speech
Speech fragments

Audiovisual Materials: Box 20
Audio Tapes:
1962, Aiken Stump Meeting, Maybank, Burnett R. Jr.
n.d., Governor Russell’s Freedom Phrases
Film, Russell Inauguration, 15 Jan. 1963 (2 reels)
Photographs:
Family:
1940s-1990s
n.d.
Groups:
1940s-1980s
n.d.
Gubernatorial:
Governor’s Reception, Presidential Inaugural, 19 Jan. 1965
Judicial, c. 1970s-1990s
Oversized [See; Oversized folder]
Persons, Byrnes, James F.
Portraits, 1940-1965 and n.d.
Senatorial, 1965-1966
University of South Carolina (USC), 1952-1957 (3)
Miscellaneous
Slides:
Inauguration, 15 Jan. 1963
Governor’s Mansion, c.1962
Miscellaneous
Clippings:
Public:
General:
1942-1956
n.d.
Governor, 1963-1965
Senator, 1965-1966
Personal:
General:
  1928-1998
  n.d.
Campaign:
  1958
  1962
  1966
Topical:
  Foreign Service
  Hall of Fame, 1987
  University of South Carolina (USC)