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Charles Cecil Wyche
(1885-1966)
Papers, 1903-1969

- Volume:** 4 linear feet
- Processed:** 1999 by Craig Keeney and Meredith Bouchard; revision, 2008, by Julie Milo
- Provenance:** Donated by C. Thomas Wyche
- Citation Form:** Charles Cecil Wyche Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, The University of South Carolina
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Biographical Note:

C.C. Wyche once noted, “A Judge cannot be a great Judge unless the members of the Bar of his State are great lawyers. Lawyers teach Judges the law. That feeling that Judges know all the law is clearly erroneous.” Wyche would have known. The South Carolina native served for thirty years as a U.S. District Judge in Spartanburg.

Judge Charles Cecil Wyche was born in Prosperity on July 7, 1885, to Cyril and Carrie Wyche. He graduated from The Citadel in 1906 and then attended Georgetown University. In 1909, he was admitted to the bar in South Carolina and began practicing law in Spartanburg. On March 12, 1916, he married Evelyn Crawford; the two later had a daughter, Evelyn (Mrs. Charles T. Camp).

Wyche represented Spartanburg County in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1913 to 1914. During World War I, he was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Army. From 1919 to 1933 he served as city and then county attorney for Spartanburg. In 1929 he was specially appointed associate justice to the South Carolina Supreme Court. He served as the U.S. Attorney for the Western District in South Carolina from 1933 to 1937. On January 30, 1937, he was appointed U.S. District Judge for the Western District. He continued to serve until the time of his death in 1966 and was succeeded as U.S. District Judge by his former law partner, Donald S. Russell.



Judge Wyche in 1943

Scope and Content Note:



*September 1918
On his way overseas*

The collection consists of four linear feet of papers, 1903-1969, arranged in six series: Judicial Papers, Topical Files, Personal, Speeches, Clippings, and Photographs.

The collection as a whole consists largely of correspondence – letters to and from Judge Wyche on a number of topics, both quotidian and unique. From letters he wrote to his mother while at The Citadel, to letters to and from other judges, to letters of condolence to his secretary, Mrs. Frances D. Staples, upon the Judge’s death in 1966, the scope and content of the collection are rich and varied. Correspondents of note include fellow judges George Bell Timmerman and Ashton Williams, as well as hundreds of prison inmates seeking to reduce or appeal their sentences.

The Judicial Papers series contains these letters from inmates which illustrate Judge Wyche’s compassionate nature, but also his firm sense of

justice; his belief that the sentences imposed are for the good of those serving them, and can help reform them into law-abiding citizens. In one letter dated 18 December 1952, for example, Judge Wyche wrote to the mother of a man he sentenced to prison:

“In every case it is not the defendant who suffers, but his relatives – his mother, his father, his wife, his children – and I realize, of course, that you will suffer more than he while he is serving his sentence.

“In my opinion it is better for him to serve this sentence, and maybe this sentence will cause him to change his ways and bring him into the Church, as you have so devoutly prayed for.”

In response to many letters the Judge received from financially suffering family members of inmates, or from the inmates themselves detailing their family problems, he arranged for welfare assistance for the family while their primary bread winner was absent. He was particularly passionate about helping to reform juvenile offenders. In a letter dated 10 December 1951, to the Honorable William J. Barker of Tampa, Florida, regarding the possibility of Judge Wyche holding a term of court in Tampa, he expresses a heartfelt sentiment: “Frankly, I prefer to try civil cases rather than criminal cases. I get enough breaking people’s hearts in my own district.”

Also within the Judicial Papers series is information about Wyche’s judicial appointments. Included here are the letters of endorsement and congratulations regarding Wyche’s appointment as U.S. District Judge in 1936. Other papers in this section reveal his bid for an appointment to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in 1939 upon the retirement of the Honorable Elliott Northcutt. Judge Wyche did not receive this appointment; President Franklin D. Roosevelt instead appointed Judge Armistead Mason Dobie of Virginia.



Wyche Portrait Unveiling, The Citadel, 1965

Judicial Papers also documents the routine operation of a federal district court with information about employee salaries and periods of annual leave. Also included are papers tracing Wyche’s effort to create a montage of portraits of all the past and present federal judges from South Carolina to hang in his chambers. The portrait of one judge, Thomas Bee, proved forever elusive.

The Topical Files series includes papers on topics ranging from respected professionals in Wyche’s life to special events to the thorny issue of segregation during the 1950s and 1960s. The “Persons” section delves into Wyche’s personal life, and illustrates his loyalty to friends and colleagues such as Judge Robert A. Cooper, attorney Oscar H. Doyle, and his longtime Clerk of Court, Wilbur D. White.

Included in the correspondence relating to Wyche’s appointment as U.S. District Attorney is a letter

to Abbeville mayor R.B. Cheatham, 12 June 1933, reflecting on his military experience in the First World War: "I too often recall how near you and I came to being buried at sea when we with thousands of others were attacked with influenza on the voyage overseas." In a letter to Greenville attorney W.D. Workman, 16 June 1933, Wyche expressed his high opinion of law partner Donald Russell: "I want to assure you that Donald Russell is one man I am not going to appoint as my assistant....He is too valuable for our firm to release to be an assistant district attorney." Wyche instead offered this position to J. Strom Thurmond, who did not accept it.

The Segregation section within the Topical Files provides reference material and tracts illustrating the viewpoints of contemporary Southerners on the desegregation movement. These viewpoints range from a perceived link between the NAACP and communism, an alleged biblical sanction of segregation, and the opinion that the Supreme Court overstepped its legal bounds in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, decision of 1954, and other similar school desegregation decisions.

Also regarding desegregation, the Clippings series provides important primary source information about the 1962-1963 trials regarding Harvey B. Gantt, a young African-American architectural student, and his admission to the all-white Clemson College. These trials, over which Judge Wyche presided, were among the first major ramifications of desegregation in South Carolina.



The Judge at Work

Several eulogies are present, including one delivered by C.T. Graydon for Coleman L. Blease, and one Wyche himself presented in 1947, on the passing of his predecessor on the District Court, the Honorable Henry Hitt Watkins.

Researchers may also reference the Donald Russell collection housed in South Carolina Political Collections for more information about Wyche. Among Donald Russell's personal papers are correspondence with Wyche and a copy of his living will.



Timeline

- 1885 Charles Cecil Wyche is born, 7 July, in Prosperity, S.C. to Cyril Thomas and Carrie Wyche.
- 1906 graduates from the Citadel
- 1908-09 studies at Georgetown University
- 1909 admitted to the S.C. bar
- 1913-14 member of the S.C. House of Representatives
- 1916 marries Evelyn Crawford, 12 March
- 1917-18 serves in the U.S. Army
- 1919-22 serves as Spartanburg city attorney
- 1919-33 serves as county attorney for Spartanburg County
- 1924 specially appointed circuit judge for the Court of Common Pleas
- 1929 serves as associate justice for the S.C. Supreme Court by special appointment
- 1933-37 serves as U.S. district attorney for the Western District of S.C.
- 1937 appointed U.S. district judge for the Western District of S.C., 30 January
- 1966 September, Judge C.C. Wyche dies

COLLECTION INVENTORY

Series:

Judicial Papers
Topical Files
Personal
Speeches
Clippings
Photographs

Box List:

Judicial Papers:

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General:

1936-1949
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Administrative:

Appointments and Recommendations:

1945-1952
1953-1965

Employee Annual Leave, 1950-1956

Notes

Permission for Use of Offices, 1948-1956

Portraits and Photography, 1949-1955

Reports:

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Retirements and Resignations, 1949-1956

Salaries, 1949-1956

Appointments, Judicial:

U.S. District Judge, 1936-1937 [Western District of South Carolina]:

General

Bid for Appointment
Congratulatory
Endorsements, 1936:
 Nov.-Dec. 9
 Dec. cont.:
 10-11
 12-1937, Jan.
 1936 [bound vol.]
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, 1939 [to succeed Judge
 Elliott Northcutt, did not receive appointment]

Calendars:
 1949-1953
 1954-1956

Congressional Bills:
 General
 H.R. 1689 (Salaries of federal officials, 1949)
 H.R. 5106 (Federal court scheduling, 1947-1948)
 Salary Act (1946)

Constitution Day, Sept. 17, 1951, Court Observance of
Examiner of Offices of U.S. District Court, Reports, 1957-1961

Inmates and Sentencing:
 1947-1949
 1950
 1951
 1952 (2)
 1953 (2)

 1954 (2)
 1955 (2)
 1956 (2)

Judicial Conference, Annual:
 General:
 1939-1952
 1953-1956

 Report Materials:
 1961
 1962

Judicial Opinions, 1932-1956
Juries, 1949-1956
Lawyers' Admission to Practice, 1949-1956
Meetings, 1949-1956
Reports:
 Eastern District [Annual, Fiscal Year]:
 1951-1952
 1952-1953
 1956-1957

Box 2

1957-1958

1958-1959

1959-1960

Western District:

1952-1953, Annual Report

1954, Report of Business Transacted

1955:

Semi-Annual Report of Finances, July-Dec.

Annual Report

1956, Annual Report

1957, Annual Report

1958:

Semi-Annual Report of Finances, July-Dec.

Annual Report

1959:

Semi-Annual Report of Finances

Annual Report

1960:

Semi-Annual Report of Finances, July-Dec.

Annual Report

1963, Annual Report

Terms Served in Other Districts:

1949-1950

1951-1952

1953-1955

Box 3

Trials:

General:

1946-1949

1950

1951

1952 (2)

1953 (2)

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Bankruptcy, 1949-1956

Frank Gill Case, 1951-1952

Immigration and Naturalization, 1952-1956

Land Tracts, 1950-1956

Topical Files:

Applications for Assistant District Attorney, U.S. Marshal, 1933

Congratulations on Appointment to U.S. District Attorney, 1933

Media and Arts:

General, 1942-1965

Articles and Opinions, 1937-1958
Memorials [for Wyche, 1966-1967]
Persons:
 Cooper, Judge Robert A.
 Doyle, Oscar H. [attorney]
 Martin, J.R. [induction as U.S. District Judge, 1961]
 Parker, John J. [Memorial Committee, 1958]
 Russell, Donald S. [re Inaugural and Jas. F. Byrnes]
 Watkins, Henry H., Portrait Unveiling, 1947
 White, Wilbur D. [clerk of court]
 Williams, Judge Ashton H. Portrait Presentation, 1962
Portrait Unveilings:
 1965, The Citadel
 1969, U.S. District Court, Spartanburg
Segregation:
 1954-1956
 1957:
 Jan.-June
 July-Dec.
 1958-1962
Spartanburg Bar Association Dinner Honoring Wyche, 1962

Personal:

 General, 1918-1956
Biographical:
 General
 Family History:
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 Genealogical Notes re Henry and James
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Events and Invitations, 1949-1965

Health, 1949-1965
Letters of Condolence [upon his death], 1966
Military Career:
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 Appointments and Transfers, 1917-1918
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Box 4

Speeches:

 Eulogies:
 General:
 c. 1940s

c. 1950s

Watkins, Henry H., 1947

Speech Materials:

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n.d.

Clippings:

General:

c. 1909-1917

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n.d.

Topical:

District Attorney and Judicial Appointments

Harvey B. Gantt Case [desegregation of Clemson College], 1962-1963

Honorary Degrees [from The Citadel, USC]

Memorials and Obituaries, 1966

Russell, Gov. Donald S., Inauguration of, 1963

Photographs:

General

Russell, Gov. Donald S., Inauguration of, 1963