When Fritz Hollings was elected governor of South Carolina in 1959, he inaugurated a new proactive style of governing. While South Carolina remained a state which was very much controlled by the legislature, Hollings and his immediate successors, Donald Russell, Robert McNair, John West, James Edwards, and Richard Riley, were active leaders in charting the government of the state.

The personal papers of each of these former governors are collected at the South Caroliniana Library’s Modern Political Collections Division. The Russell Collection was recently opened to research, and an 18-month project arranging and describing the McNair Collection is nearing completion. Both of these rich collections should excite great interest among generations of scholars.

**Donald S. Russell**

Donald S. Russell (1906–1998) was remarkable in many ways. He achieved great success in each of a number of roles: attorney, president of the University of South Carolina, governor of the state, United States senator, and jurist. His career is also significant for its duration. Russell first became prominent as a member of the Roosevelt Administration during World War II. He remained an active member of the federal judiciary until his final illness at the age of 92, half a century later. In an
oral history interview conducted with Judge Russell late in his life, at a time when most men and women are eager to dwell on their past achievements, Russell was inspirational in his focus on the cases currently before him and his excitement over issues and cases he might deal with in the future.

The Russell Papers consist of 23.75 linear feet of records, 1929 to 1998, arranged in five major series: Public Papers, Personal Papers, Speeches, Audiovisual Materials, and Clippings. Public Papers documents Russell’s service at the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, and as United States assistant secretary of state, governor, and United States senator. The bulk of the public materials pertain to Russell’s Senate service and demonstrate his commitment to his constituents, as well as his significant work on the Post Office and Civil Service Committee and the Agriculture and Forestry Committee.

Russell’s Personal Papers series documents his interests in business, finance, charity, education, and Foreign Service, and demonstrates readily that his personal activities rival his public work in contributing to the welfare of the state. He was particularly devoted to the well-being of children and the disabled and to education. The Library’s University Archives Division administers Russell’s official records as president of the University (1952–1957). These materials will be the subject of an exhibit to be mounted in 2002 showcasing Russell and his many contributions to the University.

Robert E. McNair

Robert E. McNair (1923-2007) provided South Carolina with strong progressive leadership as a member of the South Carolina House (1951–1962), where he chaired both the Labor, Commerce and Industry, and Judiciary committees; as Lieutenant Governor (1963–1965); and as Governor, (1965–1971). After leaving office, he developed the McNair Law Firm into a statewide and ultimately a regional presence.

The McNair Collection is quite large, consisting of approximately 131 linear feet of papers which document McNair’s distinguished career of public
service and his campaigns for office. The gubernatorial papers form the collection’s largest and most important series. Lt. Governor McNair became governor in April 1965 when then-governor Donald Russell stepped down to accept appointment as United States senator following Olin D. Johnston’s death. In 1966, the popular McNair was elected to serve a full term as governor.

The collection provides detailed information on, and great insights into, the critical issues with which McNair dealt as governor, ranging from adult education to youth services. McNair’s accomplishments as governor include the relatively peaceful integration of South Carolina schools; important advances in education; notable improvement in coordination and cooperation among state agencies, commissions, and bureaus; involvement of the public in planning and decision-making; a new emphasis on tourism, including the creation of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism; and continued aggressive industrial recruitment.

Readers interested in a more detailed analysis of McNair’s important role in South Carolina’s history can look forward to the publication of a biography by USC political scientist and administrator, Blease Graham, and former McNair staff member and current director of the South Carolina Executive Institute, Philip Grose Jr.

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