

*South Carolina Political Collections
University of South Carolina Libraries*

Edgar L. and Ann B. Morris

(1911-1975 & 1917-2006)

Papers, 1950-2006

Volume: 1.25 linear feet

Processed: 2006 by Herb Hartsook

Provenance: Donated by the family of Edgar and Ann Morris

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Biographical Note:

Edgar and Ann Morris were key leaders in the growth of the Republican Party in South Carolina in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1950s Edgar L. Morris split his time between Washington, D.C., where he operated a wholesale electrical goods business and served as a District Welfare Commissioner, and Pickens, where his mother lived. Ann Scott Barnett Morris was a graduate of Converse College. They had four children, Diana, Edgar, Jr., W.D., and Beronica.

In 1950, Morris was named Chairman of the state Republican Party and became involved in an effort to renew the Party as something more than a patronage organization and provide South Carolina with a viable alternative to the Democratic Party, which had dominated the state since the end of Reconstruction. This occurred at a time when many South Carolinians felt like the national Democratic Party was becoming too liberal for their tastes, the great majority still voted a straight Democratic ticket for state and local offices.

In 1956, the Morrises worked to elect Dwight D. Eisenhower president. In 1960, they worked for the Nixon campaign. In 1961, they helped elected Charlie Boineau to the South Carolina House, the first Republican state legislator since Reconstruction. Ann Morris was elected President of the Richland County Republican Women's Club in 1962 and 1963. In 1964, her effective service was recognized and she was nominated to serve as Republican National Committeewoman. She wrote potential supporters, "[T]he only way we can become an effective vote-getting organization is to supply our fellow South Carolinians with a Party that will represent their views at all levels of government. The selection and fielding of well qualified candidates for State and local positions, backed by a sound and well organized precinct system, is the secret of our ultimate success."

In 1967, Mrs. Morris was named chair of the Committee on Call for the 1968 Republican National Convention. The State newspaper, 30 Aug. 1967, quoted Morris as saying, "It is an indication of sincerity of the national party in establishing a firm two-party system in the South." The Committee sets the time and place of the convention, and supervises apportionment, election and accreditation of delegates.

In 1968, Mrs. Morris was dismissed as National Committeewoman during the Party's state convention. An article by the Columbia Record's H. Harrison Jenkins, April, 1968, took the Party to task. "With callous contempt for the conscience of contemporary conservatism, Birchers and racists led the fight to dethrone Mrs. Morris and succeeded, with careless calumny.... Wholesome Republicanism in South Carolina suffered in the defeat of Mrs. Morris." Mrs. Morris remained active in the South Carolina Federation of Republican Women and was awarded the Order of the Palmetto by Governor James B. Edwards.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of 1.25 ft. of papers, 1950 to 2006, chiefly 1950 to 1962, documenting the leadership of Edgar and Ann Morris in the South Carolina Republican Party.

Extensive papers and news clippings, 1950 to 1954, document the struggle for control of the Party by two competing factions, one led by Morris and the other led by D.F. Merrill. Both men

claimed to lead the legitimate state Republican Party. The controversy arose in 1950 when the Morris group was certified by the Secretary of State, but challenged by Merrill. Merrill charged that the Morris faction was wrongfully chartered since it had failed to meet the requirements of a recently passed election law requiring a state convention be held before a group could be chartered. Court records, correspondence with figures such as National Committeeman J. Bates Gerald, Charleston attorney Gerald Hartzog, and Party Vice-chairman Hans Koebig document the controversy. A five-page report of 2 April 1954, from Morris, addressed to Leonard Hall, Chair of the Republican National Committee, provides details on the state's 1954 Republican Convention. "It is the consensus of opinion among the people of our State that they want two-party politics, but they are not going to join the Republican Party so long as it is embroiled in litigation which is motivated by the desire of the Gerald-Messervy-Merrill Group aspirations in their grab for power."

Filed under 1963 is a publication by Rogers C. Dunn of the Dunn Survey titled, *The People vs. The Bi-Party Liberal Movement, A Graphic Exposition*. This 39-page publication presents a graphic analysis of presidential and congressional voting, 1932 to 1962.

Other correspondents include Barry Goldwater, who wrote shortly after his defeat for president, 4 Dec. 1964, "We now know that there are about twenty-seven million people in this country who feel strongly enough about the concentration of power in government, fiscal irresponsibility, and dangerous foreign policy to have voted their feelings. Our problem, as I see it, is to retain that hard core and add to it by enticing back into the Party those Republicans who did not vote for the ticket, who did not vote at all, or who voted for the opposition.... I do not think at this time that I or any other Republican could have won against the machinery of the federal government." Morris' response, 6 Jan. 1965, details what he felt went well and what went poorly in the campaign. "Overall, it was my feeling that the campaign lacked 'feeling' or 'communication.' Politics is a personal matter, almost akin to religion, and since we are seeking votes – the individual voter, his city, his section and his State must feel an identity with the candidate and his views."

A 1965 report prepared for the South Carolina Republican Party by Mrs. Morris and others is titled *Go Party 1964: Election Analysis*, and presents a detailed and sophisticated analysis of the Republican effort in the 1964 campaign and the future potential of the Party. A publication by the Republican National Committee, c.1967, titled *The 1966 Elections: A Summary Report with Supporting Tables*, provides an analysis of the 1966 elections with a vision toward the 1968 contests. *The Case of the Goldwater Delegates*, 1966, by Bernard Cosman of the University of Alabama, studies the development of the Republican Party leadership in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina by analyzing the delegates and alternates each state sent to the 1964 National Convention.

The 1971 folder contains the published *History of the South Carolina Federation of Republican Women, 1961-1971*, by Dolores R. Ellis.

The 2001 folder contains a four page history of the Richland County Republican Party written by Mrs. Morris. In it, she notes that Mr. Morris' grandfather, A.M. Morris of Pickens County became a Republican shortly after the end of World War II and that Edgar Morris "followed suit and associated with a group of men in Columbia who shared his beliefs."

Among the undated material [n.d.] are two versions of the *Republican Women's Leadership Manual*, published by the National Federation of Republican Women; *The Do's and Don'ts of Political Entertainment*, published by the Republican National Committee

Collection Inventory

Papers:

1950

1951

1952

1953:

 General

 Presidential Inaugural

1954

1956-1957

1957, Presidential Inaugural

1959

1960:

 General

Manual for Poll Watchers [S.C.]

1961:

 General

 Presidential Inaugural

1962:

 General

 Rules of the South Carolina Republican Party

1963-1965

1966-1969, General

1968, Republican National Convention

1969, Presidential Inaugural

1970-1971

1989, Republican State Convention

2001, n.d.

Clippings