

Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse
Department of Special Collections

Finding Aid - Franklin A. Coffman papers (P2011.10)

Generated by Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections on July 30, 2021
Language of description: English

Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections
506 Hale Library
1117 Mid-Campus Drive North
Manhattan
Kansas
United States
Telephone: (785) 532-7456
[Email: libsc@ksu.edu](mailto:libsc@ksu.edu)
<http://www.lib.k-state.edu/special-collections>
<https://findingaids.lib.k-state.edu/franklin-a-coffman-papers>

Franklin A. Coffman papers

Table of contents

Summary information	3
Administrative history / Biographical sketch	3
Scope and content	5
Notes	6
Access points	7
Series descriptions	7
323, Series 1: Biographical, 1910-1977	7
359, Series 2: Correspondence, 1914-1980	8
360, Series 3: Genealogy, undated	8
361, Series 4: Legal Documents, 1919-1977	8
362, Series 5: Literary Works, 1933-1973	8
363, Series 6: Awards and Honors, 1912-1965	9
364, Series 7: Printed Materials, 1918-1972	9
365, Series 8: Photographs, 1915-1975	9
366, Series 9: Scrapbooks and Albums, 1896-1962	10
367, Series 10: Oversize, 1919-1941	10
368, Series 11: Artifacts, undated, 1914-1936	11

Summary information

Repository:	Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections
Title:	Franklin A. Coffman papers
Reference code:	P2011.10
Archon Collection ID [alternative]:	36
Date:	1884-1978 (date of creation)
Physical description:	13.50 Linear Feet, 15.00 Boxes
Physical location:	Pre-fire 2018: Stack H:R21/S3/Sf5-7; Boxes 1-15, 13.50 Linear Feet
Physical location:	G: 21/10/1
Physical location:	G: 21/10/2
Physical location:	G: 21/10/2
Physical location:	G: 21/10/1
Physical location:	G: 21/10/2
Physical location:	G: 21/11/2
Physical location:	G: 21/10/1
Language:	English
Language:	Latin
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

Chronology

1892 December 30, born in Jewell, Kansas

1908 Passed grade school exams

1914 June 18, graduated from Kansas State Agricultural College with a bachelor of science degree in agronomy

1914-1916 Worked as station superintendent, Philippine Bureau of Agriculture

1916-1917 Attended graduate school and worked as a student instructor in botany and plant physiology, Kansas State College

1918-1924 Worked for the United States Department of Agriculture, Akron, Colorado
1919 June 18, married Alta Johnson
1922 Received master of science in agronomy, plant breeding major, plant physiology minor, from Kansas State Agricultural College
1923 April 23, daughter Alice Winifred Coffman born
1924-1963 Worked for the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service
1926 April 25, Elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science
1949 October 26, elected Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy
1950-1962 Served as secretary of the National Oat Conference
1962 Received the Superior Service Award from the United States Department of Agriculture, December 31, retired
1966 Received Distinguished Service in Agriculture Award from Kansas State University
1976 December 20, died in Prince George County, Maryland, buried in Columbia Gardens Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia

1977 *Oat History, Identification and Classification* published
K-State alumnus Franklin A. Coffman was a noted agronomist who specialized in oat experimentation and research. He was born in Jewell, Kansas in 1892 to Rachel and Ernest Coffman. Both parents attended Kansas State Agricultural College. Coffman entered the sub-freshman class at Kansas State Agricultural College in 1908. In 1911, he entered the freshman class. He majored in Agronomy and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree in 1914. Six of Coffman's siblings graduated from Kansas State Agricultural College.

From 1914-1916, Coffman worked for the Philippine Bureau of Agriculture as the station superintendent in charge of corn. He returned to Kansas and began studies for a master's degree, but did not complete the program at that time. He moved to Akron, Colorado to work for the United States Department of Agriculture. In 1922, Coffman completed his Master of Science in Agriculture at Kansas State Agricultural College, as a plant breeding major, plant physiology minor.

Upon graduation, Coffman continued to work for the United States Department of Agriculture where he remained employed until his retirement in 1962. The positions he held at the United States Department of Agriculture increased in importance and responsibility as Coffman built a reputation for his work in oat experimentation and research. In 1957, he became the principal agronomist in charge of winter oats and was responsible for 120 experiment stations in 44 states.

Throughout his career, Coffman published approximately 200 articles and several books. He edited the book *Oats and Oat Improvement* and wrote five of the book's 15 chapters.

Upon his retirement in 1962, Coffman received the Superior Service Award from the United States Department of Agriculture. In 1966, he received the Distinguished Service in Agriculture Award from Kansas State University. After retirement, Coffman continued his involvement in oat research. The book *Oat History, Identification and Classification*, was published in 1977, a year after he died.

Coffman married Alta Johnson in 1919 and had a daughter, Alice Winifred, in 1923. He had two grandsons. Coffman was an accomplished photographer and poet. Many of his poems were published in the Washington Post. Coffman was an avid sportsman and made many trips to western states and national parks. He was also a genealogist and did extensive research on both sides of his family.

Custodial history

The Morse Department of Special Collections acquired the Coffman papers through a gift from John T. Spike, grandson of Franklin A. Coffman. They were shipped to Kansas from the Texas home of his mother, Alice Coffman Spike. It received accession number P2011.10.

Scope and content

The Franklin A. Coffman papers contain letters, autobiographical materials, paternal and maternal family genealogies, legal documents, literary works, awards and honors, printed materials, photographs, scrapbooks and photograph albums, and artifacts.

Personal correspondence is mainly amongst family members though there is a letter from J. Edgar Hoover regarding a poem Coffman published. Business correspondence is sparse. Coffman received a bound volume of congratulatory letters upon his retirement. The letters provide the best account of Coffman's work with the United States Department of Agriculture within the collection. Many describe interactions with Coffman during field work and visits to experiment stations across the country. There is no official governmental correspondence in the collection documenting Coffman's work.

Coffman handwrote autobiographical accounts of his life during his later years. These accounts are mainly of his childhood, college days and work in the Philippines. The accounts covering the years Coffman spent in the Philippines are extensive. They provide many details and impressions about the native people. The accounts also cover his travels to other Asian countries while based in the Philippines. Coffman spent years gathering genealogical information from relatives and researching his ancestors. He traced his father's Coffman ancestors back to 1737 and his mother's Bayle ancestors back to 1796. There are notes, different versions of family trees, and extensive narrative written by Coffman describing the lives of his ancestors.

Legal documents are sparse.

Coffman was a prolific poet. There are clippings of poetry published in the Washington Post. Some poems were published without his name. Others have his initials, F.A.C., including two series of poems compiled in notebooks. There are also unpublished poems.

There are certificates for scholarly and service awards and honors, and the registration certificate for the Marion Oat. There are not certificates for all the awards and honors listed on Coffman's resume.

There are just a few United States Department of Agriculture's bulletins and farmer's Bulletins that Coffman authored or co-authored. The vast majority of Coffman's published research is not part of the collection.

One of Coffman's hobbies was photography. There are hundreds of photographs documenting his personal and professional lives. Subjects are wide-ranging. Coffman signed some of his photographs, mainly what he referred to as the "salon prints." There are photographs taken by others including professional portraits and candid photographs of Coffman at various ages. Many photographs are undated and unidentified.

There are seven scrapbooks containing photographs and memorabilia. 1) Photographs and memorabilia document a 10 day automobile trip to eastern cities and New England that Coffman took with his wife and daughter in 1936. Expenses totaled \$110.96.

2) "The Farm" album contains photographs of family members, neighbors, friends, crops, farmhouse interiors and exteriors, Rocky Ford School, and Rocky Ford dam and mill. The album is dated 1913 and some photographs are identified. There are also approximately 56 photographs of Manhattan and Kansas

State Agricultural College. The subjects are the campus, buildings, classmates, lake recreation, train depot, street car, and a railroad bridge. Some photos are identified and dated 1914.

3) This photo album with narrative is titled "The Many Faces of F.A.C." and is written by "A Couple of Norths and Shanghai Louis Kao." It was compiled in 1962 and contains photographs of Coffman in various locations.

4) The album has photographs of Coffman's family and ancestors (earliest date 1884), Sunday school class, the First Baptist Church in 1902, Kansas State Agricultural College, and Manhattan. There is extensive Kansas State Agricultural College memorabilia including a cadet corps certificate, 1908 fall term schedule, invitations, commencement programs, band programs, banquet programs, clippings and a baseball ticket. The album also has correspondence and drawings. The album has memorabilia from Coffman's transit back to the United States on the Shino Maru including menus and passenger list. There are photographs of the transit and memorabilia from a Hong Kong visit en route. There are photographs of Kansas State Agricultural College, Oklahoma A&M and Akron, Colorado. 1916.

5) The Philippines album contains photographs of Coffman's trip across the western United States to board the S.S. Manchuria for transit to the Philippines. Coffman photographed the Golden Gate Park, the Panama Pacific International Exhibition grounds, onboard ship recreation, Honolulu, Tokyo, Nagasaki, the Philippines' countryside, Filipinos' daily activities, Philippine experiment stations, cultural activities, villages, Coffman's office and co-workers, YMCA sports, Viscayia (German naval ship), Hong Kong, Shanghai, Kobe, Yamaa, Yokahoma, the voyage back to the United States on the Shino Maru (not to be confused with the Shinyo Maru), Honolulu experiment station, Universal Film City, and the San Diego Exposition. 1914-1916.

6) The photographs and memorabilia in this album are compiled in honor of Coffman's brother, Will, who died in 1920. It contains drawings, report cards, class schedule and photographs of Kansas State Agricultural College, Manhattan, University of Kansas, and Will's travels. Loose commencement programs from Kansas State Agricultural College, 1913-1915, are with the album.

7) The album contains photographs from Coffman's days in Akron and his travels to Amarillo, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Arlington, New York, Philadelphia and Mount Vernon from 1919-1922. There is memorabilia from Washington, D.C., New York including a Metropolitan Opera House program and a Hippodrome souvenir book, Coffman's wedding and showers, and a program from the American Society of Agronomy 1922 meeting. Morrill, Kansas, Twin Oaks, Estes Park, county fairs, and Manhattan are also subjects of photographs. Alta Johnson's School Girl Days: A Memory Book from Washington County High School, 1914, is boxed with the scrapbooks.

The most notable artifacts are four cameras, presumably used by Coffman: Univex Model A, 1933; No. 1-A Kodak Junior Model A, 1914; No. 2 Folding Autographic Brownie, circa 1915-1916; Kodak Six-16 camera and leather case, circa 1932-1936.

Notes

Title notes

Immediate source of acquisition

Acquisition Source: John T. Spike

Acquisition Method: Donation.

Acquisition Date: 20110820

Arrangement

The Franklin A. Coffman papers are arranged in 11 series: 1) Biographical, 2) Correspondence, 3) Genealogy, 4) Legal documents, 5) Literary works, 6) Awards and honors, 7) Printed materials, 8) Photographs, 9) Scrapbooks and photograph albums, 10) Oversize 11) Artifacts

Restrictions on access

No access restrictions: All materials are open for research.

Conditions governing use

The researcher assumes full responsibility for observing all copyright, property, and libel laws as they apply.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
-

Access points

- Kansas State University history (subject)
 - Kansas life and culture (subject)
-

Series descriptions

Series 323: Series 1: Biographical

Date: 1910-1977 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

Ten folders in box one. In his late 70s or early 80s, Coffman wrote accounts of his childhood, college days, service in the Philippines, early years as an agronomist for the USDA, and travels. His descriptions of his work in the Philippines, 1914-1916, as well as the journey there and back and his travels throughout Asia are extensive. There is also a resume.

Publication status:

Published

Series 359: Series 2: Correspondence

Date: 1914-1980 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

Two boxes. Box 1 contains eight folders of incoming and outgoing correspondence, both personal and business. Of note is a letter from J. Edgar Hoover commenting favorably on one of Coffman's poems published in the Washington Post and a letter to Alta Coffman from Richard Nixon. There are letters from colleagues and acquaintances congratulating Coffman on his retirement. Box 2 contains a bound book of letters from Colleagues and acquaintances congratulating Coffman on his retirement.

Publication status:

Published

Series 360: Series 3: Genealogy

Date: undated (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

Three folders in Box 3 contain narrative accounts of the Coffman family history. There are also numerous variations of family trees. Lineage dates back to 1603.

Publication status:

Published

Series 361: Series 4: Legal Documents

Date: 1919-1977 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

Two folders in Box 3. Marriage license, real estate documentation.

Publication status:

Published

Series 362: Series 5: Literary Works

Date: 1933-1973 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

Eight folders in Box 3. Contains Coffman's poems published in the Washington Post. Some poems are unsigned, others signed. Of note are those in the series *Songs of a Servant*, unsigned and published between 1933-1936 and *Parade of States*, 1933-1934, unsigned. There are poems for all states except Kansas which Coffman said he removed. There are numerous unpublished poems. Also included are short stories by wife Alta Coffman and an article by Robert T. Spike, son-in-law.

Publication status:

Published

Series 363: Series 6: Awards and Honors

Date: 1912-1965 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

Five folders in Box 3. There are certificates for membership in honor societies, professional associations, and service awards. Of note is the registration certificate for the Marion Oat, 1932.

Publication status:

Published

Series 364: Series 7: Printed Materials

Date: 1918-1972 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

Twelve folders in Box 3. Materials of significance are works authored by Coffman including: an article Coffman published in the Kansas City Daily Drover, 1946; two of his journal articles from 1945-1947; a USDA circular, 1941; USDA Farmers Bulletins, and a 1941-1947 on Grow Disease-Resistant Oats. There is a 1914 map of Washington County, Colorado and a 1916 Otis Farms brochure. Of note to K-Staters, is the 1972 News Letter highlighting achievements of the Class of 1914.

Publication status:

Published

Series 365: Series 8: Photographs

Date: 1915-1975 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

There are 22 folders in Box 4. Subjects include: agriculture, animals, business functions, candid photographs of Coffman, portraits of Coffman, immediate family, extended family and friends, co-

workers. Most pertinent to Coffman's work as an agronomist are the agriculture photographs of crops, farms, field work, farm equipment, and experiment stations. Many of the extended family and friends photographs are unidentified and undated. Many of the locations are unidentified and undated. There are some dated photographs and some signed by Coffman. There are 27 folders in Box 5. Subjects include Coffman's birthplace and residences (exterior and interior shots), vacations and work in Midwestern and western states, and Washington, D.C. There are a significant number of photographs of Washington, D.C. Most of the photographs are undated. Some are signed by Coffman. There are 14 folders in Box 6. Three folders contain photographs from vacations to Idaho and Wyoming including many from Yellowstone National Park taken from 1924-1940. There are two folders with photographs of Japan and the Philippines. Two folders contain negatives of Asia taken during Coffman's stint in the Philippines and one contains negatives of California from 1916 taken upon Coffman's return to the United States.

Publication status:

Published

Series 366: Series 9: Scrapbooks and Albums

Date: 1896-1962 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

There are five boxes, 7-11, containing seven scrapbooks in this series. Descriptions of what each scrapbook contains are in the Scope and Content notes. The scrapbooks are not in chronological order. Box 7 contains: scrapbook 1 "The Farm; scrapbook 2, the 1936 automobile trip; and scrapbook 3, "The Many Faces of F.A.C." photograph album, and Alta Johnson's School Girl Days Memory Book. Box 8 contains scrapbook 4, a very thick fragile scrapbook with a variety of photos and memorabilia. Box 9 contains scrapbook 5, the Philippines trip scrapbook. Box 10 contains scrapbook 6, Will Coffman. Box 11 contains scrapbook 7, 1919.

Publication status:

Published

Series 367: Series 10: Oversize

Date: 1919-1941 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

Box 12 contains a DAR certificate (Alta Coffman), a Phi Kappa Phi honor society certificate (Franklin A. Coffman), a commencement program and a diploma (Alta Coffman).

Publication status:

Published

Series 368: Series 11: Artifacts

Date: undated, 1914-1936 (date of creation)

Note [generalNote]:

Box 13 contains four antique cameras, 1914-1936. Box 14 contains an American flag, tin cookie cutters, a hand cabbage chopper, a K.S.A.C. pin, a Jiffy Pal! fishing tool, and arrowheads. Box 15 contains handmade wooden furniture for a doll house.

Publication status:

Published