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Retrospect

News from the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections at Winthrop University

July, 2014

Volume 10, Number 2

Manuscript Collection Spotlight-Martha Thomas Fitzgerald Papers

By Andrew Johnston, Asst. Dir. of Archives and Special Collections



MARTHA THOMAS
FITZGERALD PAPERS, 1909-
1981, n.d. [Accession 273]

Martha Thomas Fitzgerald [1895-1981], a 1916 Winthrop graduate, was a prominent South Carolina educator and politician. She was Rural School Supervisor and Director of Elementary Education at the South Carolina Department of Education from 1920 to 1947.

In 1950 Mrs. Fitzgerald ran for a seat in the S. C. House of Representatives. She became the first woman elected to the South Carolina House in a general election.

The collection consists of biographical data, correspondence, minutes, newspaper clippings, memoranda, reports, and photographs. The collection pertains to Mrs. Fitzgerald's work with the S.C. Department of Education. Her rural school papers include photographs and information pertaining to rural schools throughout the state.

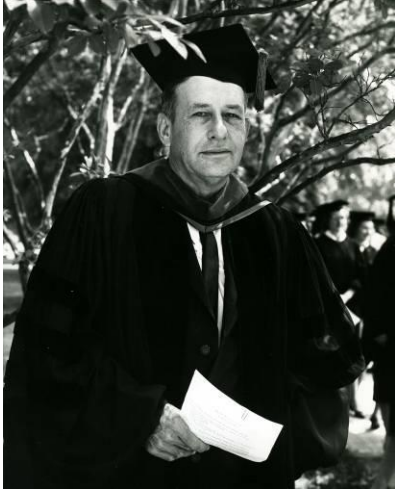
The collection also includes information on her work in the S. C. House of Representatives, and her work with various civic organizations such as the Altrusa Club, the League of Women Voters, the Daughters of American Colonists, United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), Business and Professional Women's Club (BPW), Delta Kappa Gamma, South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Salvation Army. There is also information on the Status of Women Commission, Council on Aging, agriculture, Queens College, University of South Carolina, Winthrop University, Columbia University, public health, South Carolina history, City of Columbia, S. C. and Richland County, S. C. Correspondents include Strom Thurmond and three letters from Senator John F. Kennedy.

For more information on Mrs. Fitzgerald or the photographs and information pertaining to rural schools, contact Gina White, Dir. of Archives and Special Collections at (803) 323-2334 or archives@winthrop.edu.

Archives Summer Hours

The Pettus Archives summer hours are 8:00-5:30 Monday-Thursday and 8:00-noon Friday through August 1. The hours are 8:30-5:00 Monday-Friday (appointments needed for Friday afternoon) for the remainder of August. The Archives will be open two more Saturdays this summer—July 19 and August 2—from 9:00-1:00.

Quote of the Quarter



“I think that most of us would agree that an educational institution can never be static. Either it goes forward or slips backward but never stands still.”

President Charles Davis from a speech given in 1961

For more information concerning the *Quote of the Quarter* please contact Gina White at (803) 323-2334 or whitegp@winthrop.edu.

Photographs of the Quarter

By Brittany Pigford, Archivist

With Memorial Day not long behind us it may be of interest that Winthrop has ties to not one but two ships used for wartime operations—a Liberty ship, the *S.S. David B. Johnson*, named for Winthrop’s founder and first president, David Bancroft Johnson and a Victory Ship, the *S.S. Winthrop Victory* named for Winthrop University.



Mrs. D.B Johnson
Christening the ship,
January 13, 1944



Launching of S.S. D.B. Johnson 1944

Liberty Ships were emergency cargo vessels that were designed for wartime needs and service. They were named for deceased Americans that made outstanding contributions to the history and progress of the United States. The idea to name a ship for Johnson was recommended by Rock Hill’s Junior Chamber of Commerce to James P. Richards, member of the U.S. House of Representatives and then suggested to the Maritime commission. Mrs. Mai Rutledge Johnson, D.B Johnson’s widow and Winthrop Alumna Class of 1898 went to Brunswick, Georgia to christen the ship on January 13, 1944.

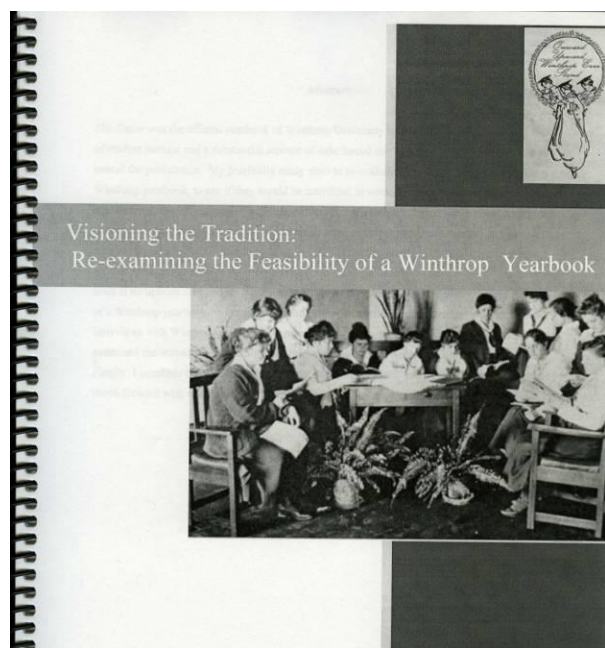
During WWII “Old David B” as the ship was called by its crew, was a valuable vessel that delivered much needed supplies to American allies in Europe. It went to ports in Boston, New York, England and Russia, to name a few. There was something else that travelled with the crew beside supplies for the troops, a copy of Winthrop’s yearbook, the *Tatler*, was presented to the crew at the

ship's launching. The crew passed time by taking votes on which two girls they would want to be deserted on an island with, and many hoped to one day visit Winthrop and see some of those pretty Winthrop girls. The S. S. David B Johnson was scrapped in 1968 but in 1978 Winthrop President, Charles Vail and Senator Strom Thurmond were able to secure the ship builder's plate for Winthrop, where it resides in the Pettus Archives today.

For more photographs of Winthrop's past, check out our postings on the Dacus Library blog at [History Through the Lens](#).

New Collection Spotlight

By Kaitlin Burdette, Archivist



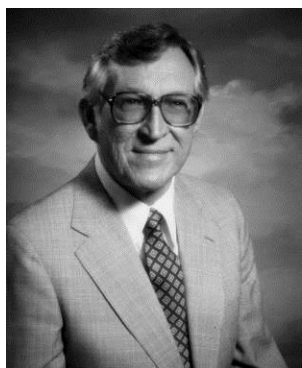
A recently added highlight to our Winthrop collection is *Visioning the Tradition: Re-examining the Feasibility of a Winthrop Yearbook*. The work of one of Winthrop's motivated young minds, Mr. Alex Muller; the feasibility study explores the options and interest in re-instating Winthrop's yearbook. Muller examines student, as well as faculty and staff, opinions about creating and purchasing a yearbook in new, more efficient formats such as a digital yearbook or a printed by demand option. Among those Muller interviewed is Gina White, Director of Archives, who explains the research value of a yearbook, "...past issues of *The Tatler* that are stored in the Archives are used more than any other resource, whether it's from relatives trying to conduct research into family histories or historians trying to understand what life was like

at Winthrop in the past." (Pg. 10) Mr. Muller's feasibility study is not only a wonderful example of student work, but also a wonderful example of how a student's new ideas could possibly revitalize and restore Winthrop traditions.

For more new collection highlights, visit our postings on the Dacus Library blog at [Archives Collections Spotlight](#). You can also find out more about [Winthrop Records](#) or the [Digitized Collection](#) by clicking on these links to pages on our website.

The Eugene Barnwell Papers Are Now Available For Research

by Steve Blankenship, Graduate Pettus Intern



The late Eugene Barnwell, a York native, served as its mayor from 1982 to 1991. A talented spiritual singer and devoted public servant, he won high acclaim before audiences and political forums alike. The collection, recently processed and made more accessible, highlights his works and vividly tells of career experiences in a half-century of public administration, beginning with the City of Alexandria, Virginia and concluding with his service to the town of York.

From his research on the council-manager form of government, Eugene Barnwell explored the conflict of authority between councils and city managers. As a scholar on municipal government, he maintained that city managers should be subject to the wishes of council, a stance met with controversial challenges from various managers who thought otherwise. The researcher will find Barnwell's principles

unique in addressing issues with similar settings, such as boards of trustees or volunteer directors. Intended for publication, his research remains unfinished.

Eugene Barnwell, the citizen, was best known for his unselfish charity, as evidenced by hundreds of letters of appreciation and commendations on file. Known for his baritone voice, his talents were in demand for Sunday worship services. He once joked that “to turn them down, was to turn down a church dinner that came with it.” Barnwell received his musical education as a graduate of the distinguished Westminster School of Music in Princeton, NJ, performing once with his choir at Carnegie Hall alongside violinist Albert Einstein, and working with Walt Disney Studios in a contribution to the movie “Fantasia.”

For more information concerning the Barnwell Papers, contact the Pettus Archives at (803) 323-2334 or archives@winthrop.edu.

Organizing the Winthrop Board of Trustees Minutes: A Personal Account

by Katelin Tough, Graduate Student Intern

Graduate student Katelin Tough arranged and described an addition to the Winthrop BOT minutes this summer. The following are her thoughts on and discoveries in the collection.



The Board of Trustees minutes holds Winthrop University’s rich history as the school improved and changed along with the students it enrolled. The actions of the BOT’s various members, both easy and difficult, are what make Winthrop’s wheels turn. An addition to the existing collection, the minutes dating from 1959 to 2011 shed light on the difficult job of running a university. The school went through many changes as it expanded and improved. The enrollment of Winthrop continued to grow throughout the decades slowly working up to what we see today.

Some of the issues the Board faced over the years include integration, co-education, enrollment decline, demolition of buildings, construction of new buildings, renovation and remodeling of campus structures, naming or re-naming new and existing buildings and prohibiting student activities like rooftop sunbathing and strict regulations of alcohol on campus (early 1970s).

The issues and arguments of the Board are similar to the ones we still hear about in our current legislation—tuition increases, plans for new buildings, snow cancellations, scholarships, and, of course, a Winthrop football team.

Throughout the 1970s and 80s there were concerns over students crossing the street on Oakland Avenue because of increased traffic. Board members knew there was potential for accidents to occur and worked extensively with the City of Rock Hill and the SC DOT. Eventually, after many suggestions including a tunnel and a pedestrian bridge, crosswalks with audio and visual signals were installed on two sections of Oakland Avenue and later on Charlotte Avenue.

The Board faced several crises such as Hurricane Hugo in 1989. The hurricane damaged sidewalks, trees and structures and disrupted power and telephone service for several days.

Winthrop’s commitment to excellence shines in these minutes as the school went from college status to university status in 1992. That same year Winthrop would be named *Barron’s Best Buys in College Education* and recognized in *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the top 15 regional universities in the South.

A surprising former rule, from the point of view of a current student, was the concept of permission slips for students to leave school grounds in the 1960s. The parents may or may not give permission for their daughter to leave campus grounds and travel to surrounding towns. Students

were put on probation if they violated those rules of travel. Students were required to sign out to leave campus to keep track of all students for their own safety since in those days we had no cell phones for students to check in with. The campus is now a place where students have the freedom to come and go with the safety provided by Campus Police, emergency stations and the WU alert app as well as other safety measures.

As a Winthrop student it was very educational and fun for me to see the university as it is now and through this collection see how it got there. The time and effort the Board of Trustees members logged to make the school the best it can be is incredible. The members of the Board of Trustees have always worked hard to keep Winthrop University running smoothly and through this collection of minutes everyone can glimpse the steps taken in their hard work. The respect they show for each other is evident in this collection especially during sad times when they honor former or current members of the board and school that have passed away. All this information and more can be found in the meeting minutes of the Winthrop Board of Trustees collection.

Through the Casement—Window on Winthrop's Past

By Gina White, Dir. of Archives and Special Collections



The Funniest Thing I Ever Saw DeBe Do

By C. Virginia Harrison

In 1926 the Winthrop alumnae who were living in Atlanta, Georgia were asked to write a brief essay on *The Funniest Thing I Ever Saw DeBe Do*. Miss C. Virginia Harrison, non-graduate member of the Class of 1914, wrote the following which gives the reader a different perspective on the personality of Winthrop's revered founder and first president, David Bancroft Johnson.

“Upon leaving Winthrop College—years ago, it was my intention to leave behind me all themes and essays, but it seems that someone has reverted to the Winthrop habit of having essays. I am glad a subject was assigned for had it not been, I am sure I would have followed the line of least resistance and written an essay on Columbia [Theological] Seminary with which I am now associated.

As funny as the subject may seem, it is a very hard one for me, for there was never a greener freshman and to speak honestly, I was scared of Dr. Johnson—even too scared to call him DeBe. Naturally, I never saw much fun in anything he did. It wasn't funny to hear him make his usual announcements at chapel; it wasn't funny to see him in the halls; it wasn't funny to have him visit the infirmary just as I was having my throat swabbed; it certainly wasn't funny to have to report to him for pulling four little violets to put into a letter to express what I could not express with pen.

It was fun though to go to Washington with him for [Woodrow] [Wilson's inauguration](#) [March 4, 1913]. I saw him from a different angle—saw that he was just as human as anybody. Somehow, I forgot about him being Dr. Johnson—the President of Winthrop College. I never thought Dr. Johnson would be caught coming in at 1:00 o'clock at night, but he was and the funny thing was we had just beat him in. To get to his room, he had to climb two flights of stairs and pass through three long halls which were lined with cots. It sounded so fatherly to hear his admonitions that we get quiet and go to sleep. I had expected him to have a night watchman there and have all lights out at 10:00 o'clock. I might add that I believe DeBe could say some of the funniest things he ever saw were in those corridors at Washington.

But, one event in that trip to Washington stands out above all others. Just picture DeBe at the theater, in the balcony, enjoying [The Pink Lady](#). So proud were we of our President that we wanted to do something for him and prevailed on him to go with us on a certain night. We reserved one section of the balcony. When we arrived at the theater there was a wild scramble to sit by DeBe. I wasn't in the scramble for I hadn't progressed that far. Dr. Johnson had the seat nearest the center of the section. This was one of my first shows and I was enjoying it to the fullest, feeling sure that everyone was thrilled over that beautiful waltz. When the show was about half over, I looked back to see if Dr. Johnson was really enjoying the party—he was, for he was sleeping soundly but not quietly. It had never occurred to me that he ever slept. His part of the entertainment was a surprise but was enjoyed fully. As I looked at him, I thought of those lines of [Robert Burns](#):

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!"

[From *To A Louse, On Seeing One on a Lady's Bonnet at Church*, 1786]

Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow
C. Virginia Harrison
17 Poplar St. Atlanta, Ga.

For information on the Archives' collections and holdings, how to donate historical material, or how you can help, contact:

Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections
Telephone: (803) 323-2334
E-Mail: archives@winthrop.edu Website: www.winthrop.edu/dacus/archives/
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