

Newsroom

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Papers of Jenkins County's Walter Harrison now available in Henderson Library at Georgia Southern University

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Walter Harrison (1899-1895) of Millen in Jenkins County was in many ways a man larger than life. His papers, now available through special collections at Georgia Southern University's Zach S. Henderson Library, illuminate a large and important part of the history of his times.

Harrison was Mayor of Millen, editor of *The Millen News*, a state legislator, and for more than 30 years, a member of the national board of directors of the

Rural Electrification Administration. His extensive papers reflect the relationships he formed over his lifetime with U.S. Senators George, Nunn, Russell, and Talmadge; both Governors Talmadge, as well as Griffin, Sanders, Harris (and fellow-Millenite Melvin E. Thompson), and various members of Congress, mayors, and commissioners from around the state.

Harrison became involved in the Rural Electrification Administration as soon as it began in Georgia in 1936, at a time when the idea of providing electric power for all rural areas seemed unthinkable. "A lot of folks thought we were selling lightning rods," he recalled in later years. Only 1 percent of Georgia farms had electricity, and it was not in the interest of private power companies to extend their lines to remote and lightly populated regions. By the time Harrison retired in 1975, 99 percent of rural households had power and 95 percent had telephones. Going far beyond the local and state level, he served on the board of directors of the national REA organization for more than 30 years and as president twice.

The first series of Harrison's papers, "Local and Personal," cover his activities as an important citizen of Millen, Jenkins County, and Georgia. He was mayor of Millen from 1930-1950, and during those years and later, he was involved with local organizations such as the American Legion, the Board of Health, the Boy Scouts, the Chamber of Commerce, the City Council, the County Commission, the Georgia Baby Chick Association, the Georgia Forestry Association, the hospital, the library, the Red Cross, and many other groups. For decades he was editor of the Millen News. On a statewide level, he served in the State Senate for eight years and in the House for 14.

The collection also contains lengthy records of the aspects of the Walter Harrison Company in Millen: loans, insurance and real estate. Other series cover his long involvement with the Methodist Church and Rotary International, on local, state and national levels.

To learn more or to view this special collection, contact the Zach S. Henderson Library Special Collections Department at 912-478-5029 or view the Web site at <http://library.georgiasouthern.edu/specialcollections/manu/index/wwharrison.html>.