

# A Guide to the Southwestern Virginia, Inc. Collection , 1925-1937

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1925-1937

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A Collection in University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University AC 024  
University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University

## History

**Processed by:** Katherine Okie

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Southwestern Virginia, Inc. Collection , 1925-1937

**Subtitle:**

**Collection:** AC 024

**Author:** Katherine Okie, Spring 2013.

## Publication Statement

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## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid derived from MARC record, created by Kaitlin Scott, 7 July 2017

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Descriptive Summary

### Collection number

AC 024

### Language

English

### Abstract

The Southwestern Virginia, Inc. Collection contains information pertaining to that company in the form of Bylaws, Presidential Correspondence, letter to and from the Executive Secretary of the company, Boar of Directors meeting minutes, information on finances, timecards and receipts of the company, along with information of various other entities including the Roads and Goodwill Tour Committees and newspaper clippings pertaining to the above. For full collection inventory [click here](#)

### Physical Characteristics

9.0 Linear feet.

### Location

Boxes 1-6 located in compact shelving, Level 1. Oversize folders 7-8 located in map case in room 534.

### Repository

University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University

## Administrative Information

## **Access Restrictions**

An appointment for research is required. The collection is open for research. No interlibrary loan.

## **Use Restrictions**

There are no restrictions.

## **Acquisition Information**

John Preston McConnell Personal Papers

## **Processing Information**

Physical processing and finding aid by Katherine Okie, Spring 2013.

## **Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Southwestern Virginia, Inc. Collection, Appalachian Collection, McConnell Library, Radford University, Radford, VA. Southwestern Virginia, Inc. Collection , Accession # AC 024, University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University

## **Accruals**

No further accruals are expected.

## **Custodial History**

These papers were originally part of the John Preston McConnell Personal Papers Collection and were arranged into a separate collection in Spring 2013.

## **Biographical Information**

Southwest Virginia Inc. was a regional chamber of commerce with John Preston McConnell as its President.

## **Scope and Content**

Foundation and Administration papers consist of correspondence, reports, and official papers of Southwestern Virginia, Inc.'s officers and committees, 1925-1937. The Presidential Correspondence contains letters to and from the organization's president, John Preston McConnell. Prominent correspondents are the two Secretaries of SWVA Inc., Irving Lewis Speare and Homer K. Bowen. Frequent topics include administration; finances; promotion for the region and the organization; road projects; and SWVA Inc. meetings and celebrations. Executive Secretary papers contain the correspondence of Irving Lewis Speare (1925-July 1927) and Homer K. Bowen (August 1927-1937), much of it with John Preston McConnell. Letters most frequently cover the day-to-day administration of SWVA Inc., as well as plans for various projects that the organization undertook. The Board of Directors papers consist mostly of letters from John Preston McConnell and Secretaries Speare and Bowen to various board members; notifications for board meetings; correspondence about resignations and appointments; meeting minutes; addresses to the board; reports; and correspondence between members.

The Legislative Committee was authorized by the United States Chamber of Commerce to consider state and national legislative issues. Related papers consist of a handwritten list of committee members and correspondence between John Preston McConnel, Homer K. Bowen, and various Board members about committee appointments. The Broadcasting Committee papers consist of two letters between John Preston McConnell and Homer K. Bowen about the committee's purpose and a list of members. Papers of the Speaker's Bureau include speeches delivered by John Preston McConnell and others promoting Southwest Virginia and Southwestern Virginia, Inc.; and two letters about the Bureau and speeches given before it. Financial Papers include correspondence and records of membership quotas from the various areas of Southwest Virginia; letters asking for support; the official audit of books for August 1926-April 1927 and April 1927-July 1927; financial report for 1933-1934; and the proposed budget for 1926-1927. Receipts and Guests Lists include receipts for Southwestern Virginia, Inc. membership; receipts for organization expenses; and attendance lists for meetings and a 1927 dinner given by the organization. Time Cards are from 1927 recording the hours worked by Secretary Irving Lewis Spear and his assistant Minerva Allison.

Circular Letters are primarily from John Preston McConnell and are addressed to Board of Directors members, Executive Committee members, influential people of the region, and potential members of Southwest Virginia, Inc. The Monthly Letter was apparently a news bulletin and report regularly printed and distributed to members of the organization, although this folder contains only two copies of Vol. 1 No. 6. Papers related to the organization's official song consist of a letter from the composers Lillian Smith and Beverly T. Gilmer introducing the song to John Preston McConnell, and the lyrics to Call of Southwest Virginia. Project

Committee and Projects Papers include correspondence, literature, and reports about the various projects undertaken by Southwestern Virginia, Inc. Papers of the Dairy Development Committee include correspondence about appointments to the committee; correspondence about committee projects and accomplishments; a speech given by Harry Roberts about the importance of dairying in Southwest Virginia; a copy of the 1929 Report of the Dairying Development Committee to the Executive Committee and a detailed agricultural report for Southwest Virginia counties showing the acreage devoted to different crops and the yield produced, 1925-1926.

Papers of the Freight Rates Committee, formed to pursue better freight rates for Southwest Virginia farmers, include a copy of the official coal rates complaint the committee gave before the Interstate Commerce Commission against the Norfolk & Western Railway Company; and assorted correspondence pertaining to the legal case. The Fishburn-Chapman Controversy started when Homer K. Bowen made remarks during the coal rates case that were considered offensive by the Roanoke Times and Times-World Corporation. The subsequent correspondence trying to repair relations between Secretary Bowen and President McConnell of Southwestern Virginia, Inc., and Junius P. Fishburn and W. Powell Chapman of the Roanoke Times continued for four months, from February 17 to July 2, 1931. The Roads Committee dealt mainly with the allocation of road funds to various areas of Southwest Virginia. Papers consist mostly of correspondence between John Preston McConnell and committee members regarding committee meetings, fund allocation, and road routes.

Papers pertaining to the Good Will Tours organized by Southwestern Virginia, Inc. include correspondence about the tour organization; newspaper clippings, brochures, a press release, and other publicity materials; and a post-tour questionnaire filled out by dozens of attendees. The Highway Projects represented among the highway papers include Federal Highway No. 9, the Shenandoah-Smokey Mountain Parks Highway, Route 23, the Appalachian Way, the Appalachian Scenic Highway, the Lee Highway, the Black Bear Trail, and the Eastern National Parks-to-Parks Highway. Papers consist mostly of correspondence about routes, funds, and tourism; newspaper clippings; and literature. Included are many papers about opening celebration of the Lee Highway. See also the Newspapers and Oversized Documents folder and the Newspaper Clippings folder. John Preston McConnell became actively involved in the State and National Parks movement soon after the organization's founding. Included in his papers are leaflets and newspaper clippings about State Parks, a December 1925 issue of *The Outlook: An Illustrated Weekly of Current Life* with a feature about national parks in the Southern Appalachias; and correspondence with the State Commission on Conservation and Development and the National Conference on State Parks. See also the Newspapers and Oversized Documents folder and the Newspaper Clippings folder.

Southwestern Virginia, Inc. was active in promoting local festivals, including the Historical Pageant of 1926, the 1930 Dickenson County Celebration in Clintwood, Va.; the 1931 Smyth County Centennial in Marion, Va.; the 1937 Rhododendron Festival in Norton, Va.; and the White Top Mountain Festival in Abingdon, Va. They also directly organized several festivals, including the Annual All Southwestern Virginia Celebration that ran from 1930-1933; the Dogwood Festival of Bristol, Va., beginning in 1935; and the 1934 Historical Pageant of Progress, in President McConnell's words "by far the most stupendous undertaking during the life of Southwestern Virginia, Incorporated." Papers for each include correspondence about planning, invitations, and post-celebration reflections; and festival programs. See also the Newspapers and Oversized Documents folder and the Newspaper Clippings folder. Papers pertaining to the Mountain Empire Magazine include the initial publication contract between Southwestern Virginia, Inc. and the News Publishing Company, and correspondence between John Preston McConnell, the publishers, and interested citizens. Other correspondence covers projects including the development of local heritage syllabi for public schools; the promotion of industrial potential surveys for Southwest Virginia counties conducted by Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 1929; the placement and content of Virginia Historical Highway Markers; the involvement of local service clubs; natural resource development; meetings with the Boards of Supervisors in Southwest Virginia Counties; and promotion of a Biological Station at Mountain Lake.

Publicity papers include Pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and press releases promoting the organization and accomplishments of Southwestern Virginia, Inc.; correspondence and contracts related to the organization's publicity; letters from John Preston McConnell to people outside the region promoting Southwest Virginia and Southwestern Virginia, Inc.; and literature about regional attractions such as Giant Caverns in Narrows, The Appalachian Hotel, and the town of Pulaski. Biographies include brief articles about local figures and topics. See also the Newspapers and Oversized Documents folder and the Newspaper Clippings folder. Miscellaneous Items include literature about the Roanoke Booster Club, Historic Land Marks of Virginia, and Bank of America; Leaflets about Transportation and Business; a directory of nation-wide Chamber of Commerce members and presidents; and several photographs of a parade float. See also the Newspapers and Oversized Documents folder and the Newspaper Clippings folder.

## Arrangement

Box 1: Foundation and Administration

Box 2: Administration

Box 3: Administration

Box 4: Administration and Project Committees

Box 5: Project Committees and Projects

Box 6: Projects, Publicity, and Miscellaneous

Oversize Box 1: Newspapers and Oversized Documents

Oversize Box 2: Newspaper Clippings

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