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Guide to the Merle T. Jenkins Papers, 1913-1974

Title

Merle T. Jenkins Papers (MSS Jenkins)

Dates

1913-1974 (inclusive)

1913-1958 (bulk)

Creator

Jenkins, Merle T.

Summary

The Merle T. Jenkins Papers consist of materials created and assembled by Jenkins that document his student years at Oregon Agricultural College and his career as an agronomist and developer of corn hybrids. The Papers include photographs, correspondence, publications, certificates, ephemera and artifacts. Jenkins graduated from Oregon Agricultural College in 1916.

Quantity

1 cubic foot, including 150 photographs (2 boxes, including 1 oversize box)

Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research.

Oregon State University Libraries, University Archives

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Finding aid prepared by Elizabeth Nielsen, 2009.

Biographical Note

Alumnus Merle T. Jenkins earned a BS in agronomy from Oregon Agricultural College in 1916. During his student years, he was a military cadet and member of the Osolito Club. Jenkins attended for three academic years from the fall of 1913 until June 1916, when he graduated. He served in the military during World War I and completed his MS and Ph.D. degrees at Iowa State University. As an agronomist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), he was internationally recognized for his development of hybrid corn. He assisted many countries with development of their own hybrid corn programs.

Jenkins retired from the USDA in 1958 as Head of the Corn and Sorghum Section in Beltsville, Maryland; and worked in his retirement for the Farmers Forage Research Cooperative, a seed foundation associated with Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana, until 1974.

Merle Truman Jenkins was born in Brookings, South Dakota, in 1895 and graduated from Jefferson High School in Portland, Oregon. He died in Medford, Oregon, in 1986.

Content Description

The Merle T. Jenkins Papers document the student years of Jenkins at Oregon Agricultural College and his career as an agronomist and developer of corn hybrids. The collection includes a photograph album and photographs; correspondence; certificates and diplomas; publications; ephemera; and artifacts.

The photograph album covers the period 1913-1918. It consists predominantly of images taken or assembled by Jenkins of his student years at Oregon Agricultural College; it also includes some images of his high school classmates in Portland, Oregon and his military service. The album includes images of an outing to Willamette Falls in Oregon City; several farms and farming families including the William Vaughn Ranch in Dayton, Harold Davis, and Mr. and Mrs. Sandstrom; and children, families, and dogs. Images of the Oregon Agricultural College campus, including the agricultural fields west of campus; the Willamette River at Corvallis; and the Osolito Club house are included in the album. Various student activities are depicted including an outing to Marys Peak, a baseball game, the women's field hockey team, cadets and military activities, and a May Day pageant. Candid snapshots with the captions "strip poker" and "before the nightshirt parade" are included. The album includes photographs of women students, as well as men, including a woman on hike in the woods. Numerous images of the Oregon coast and several photographs of Multnomah Falls are included. The album also includes a few newspaper clippings, Osolito Club dance cards and ephemeral items, and cadet uniform patches.

Other photographs in the collection include photographic prints of Jenkins at agricultural research conferences and international events, primarily during the 1940s and 1950s. Some of these images include his wife Ruth. The collection includes three panoramic prints; two are of his military unit during World War I. The third is of a 1932 Genetics Congress in Ithaca, New York.

The bulk of the paper records in the collection are two volumes of letters to Jenkins from colleagues in the United States and around the world on the occasions of his retirement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1958 and the Farmers Forage Research Cooperative in 1974. These letters describe his many accomplishments and the international impact of his career.

The collection also includes certificates and diplomas; a list of hybrid corn varieties; the book *Corn for the Northwest*, by George F. Will (1930); and ephemera and artifacts.

Preferred Citation

Merle T. Jenkins Papers, Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Custodial History

These materials were donated to the Crop and Soil Science Department by Jenkins' nieces and nephew.

Acquisition Information

The materials were transferred by the Crop and Soil Science Department in 2008.

Related Material

The Archives' holdings include many collections pertaining faculty and alumni agronomists and crop scientists, including [Floyd E. Bolton](#), [Gary Jolliff](#), [Warren E. Kronstad](#), [Kenneth A. Rykbost](#), and [Harry August Schoth](#). The [George L. Crookham Papers](#) include materials pertaining to the Crookham Company, a producer of hybrid sweet corn seed. The Archives' collections also include many photograph albums and scrapbooks assembled in the 1910s, including the [Irwin Betzel Collection](#), [A. Freeman Mason Scrapbook](#), [Leslie Miller Scrapbook](#), [Willetta Moore Photograph Album \(P 269\)](#), [Francis and Lois Wilson Neer Photograph Album \(P 206\)](#), and [Marshall S. Wright Photograph Album \(P 276\)](#). Extensive documentation of instruction, research, and extension programs in agronomy and crops at Oregon State are available in the Crop Science Department Records (RG 095).

Subjects

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the OSU Libraries Catalog. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons, or places should search the catalog (<http://oasis.oregonstate.edu>) using these headings.

Organizations

Farmers Forage Research Cooperative.
Oregon Agricultural College--Students.
United States. Dept. of Agriculture.

Topics

Agricultural development projects.
Agriculture--Oregon.
College students--Oregon--Corvallis.
Corn--Breeding.
Farm life--Oregon.
Hybrid corn.
Military education--Oregon--Corvallis.
Student activities--Oregon--Corvallis.

Geographical Names

Marys Peak (Or.)
Multnomah Falls (Or.)
Pacific Coast (Or.)

Forms of Materials in the Collection

Panoramic photographs.
Photograph albums.
Photographic prints.

Other Creators

Will, George F. (George Francis), 1884-1955.

Titles Within the Collection

Corn for the Northwest