
Finding aid for the Coulter Dry Goods Company records 0008

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Title: Coulter Dry Goods Company records

Collection number: 0008

Contributing Institution: USC Libraries Special Collections

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 4.0 Linear feet6 boxes

Date: circa 1870s-1960s

Abstract: Family history of B. F. Coulter, photographs, business correspondence, clippings; photographs of window and counter displays. The family business was founded in 1878 in Los Angeles and flourished until the 1960s.

Historical note

B. F. Coulter was one of the earliest merchants in Los Angeles. The Coulter Dry Goods Company business dates from 1878 and later was called Coulter's. Coulter was an ordained minister and founded the Broadway Christian Church. The business was continued by B.F. Coulter's son-in-law, R. P. McReynolds, and his son, James McReynolds.

CLOTHING FOUR GENERATIONS

Adventures in Business Vol. V October 31, 1947 No. 14

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back to Coulter's Dry Goods Collection

Whether one is a spellbound tourist or a resident ordinarily indifferent to movieland glamour, a tour of the fashionable Wilshire district of Los Angeles proves an electrifying experience.

Conspicuous among the smart shops is the splendid five-floor Coulter Dry Goods Co. at 5600 Wilshire Blvd. Let us leave our sedan in the spacious park and stroll through the store's broad aisles between fascinating displays.

Would you suspect that this ultra-modern 144 x 176-foot emporium had its humble beginnings in a little 18 x 50 foot shop? Truly, when B. F. Coulter first opened his simple shop in 1878 Los Angeles was just emerging from the Mexican pueblo chrysalis and unfolding its wings as a brisk modern city.

Mr. Coulter started in the place in town suitable for store purposes. Since then the company has thrilled and clothed four generations of Los Angeles womanhood --- maids, clerks, skilled operators, professional women, co-eds, debutantes, and matrons. Coulter's ever has been a store where ladies of fashion and refinement could shop with ease and grace.

At all times Coulter's has led the mercantile development of Southern California --- ever since Mr. Coulter first opened his doors with merchandise worth a thousand dollars on display.

Invariably Coulter's has supplied the best merchandise and adhered to its basic principles of TRUTH, HONESTY and FAIR DEALING.

Constantly Coulter's has grown. Briefly, here are traced the movements and expansions:

1878. The first store (18 x 50 feet) is established at Temple and Spring Streets --- the present site of downtown Federal and Postal buildings.

1879. Larger quarters (20 x 110 feet) are taken in the Baker Block, 332 N. Main St.

1885. Coulter's pioneers to Hollenbeck Hotel Block on Spring Street south of Second; a 60 x 140-foot store.

1892. The firm is incorporated with B. F. Coulter as president and his son Frank (who has been with the firm since 1878) as vice president and general manager.

1898. The company leads city-expansion by moving into a 120-foot frontage on Broadway south of Third Street.

1906. The firm moves into its own three-floor building on Broadway between Second and Third.

1917. The company building takes four floors and occupies a quarter city block at Olive and Seventh Streets.

1928. The Golden Anniversary is celebrated.

1938. Coulter's moves to its present edifice in The Miracle Mile on fashionable Wilshire Boulevard.

Control of ownership and management has always been vested in the immediate family. The three presidents have been B. F. Coulter, his widow (who was his second wife), and his son-in-law, R. P. McReynolds, M.D. The latter married Mr. Coulter's only daughter, Frances--the child of his second marriage. Frank was a son by Mr. Coulter's first marriage.

Before coming West Mr. Coulter sold dry goods in Tennessee. His first western venture was a hardware store. Later he invested in the Coulter Woolen Mills on Figueroa near Fifth (whose waterpowered machinery wove native wool into blankets to be distributed coast to coast) and the Arrowhead Hot Springs Hotel Co. Coulter gave the Arrowhead region its name.

As an ordained minister, Mr. Coulter was founder, pastor, and chief benefactor of the Broadway Church of Christ. He also established thirteen missions.

In spite of its seventy years, the Coulter Dry Goods Co. is not a store of yesterdays. It is a store of tomorrows. It grows, expands, and serves the public with increasingly greater usefulness.

Scope and Content

This collection includes correspondence, clippings, photographs, family history regarding B. F. Coulter, and the history of a family-owned enterprise (including family portraits, store window displays).

Conditions Governing Access

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. Advance notice required for access.

Preferred Citation

[Box/folder# or item name], Coulter Dry Goods Company records, Collection no. 0008, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

Conditions Governing Use

None.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Coulter Dry Goods Company (Los Angeles, Calif.). -- Archives

Coulter, B. F., (Benjamin F.), 1832-1911 -- Archives

Clippings

Correspondence

Display of merchandise--Archival resources

Los Angeles (Calif.)--Archival resources

Los Angeles (Calif.)--History--Archival resources

Photographs

Realia

Retail trade--California--Los Angeles--Archival resources

Stores, retail--California--Los Angeles--Archival resources

Several business letters from various years. Mementos & Business souvenirs.

Scope and Content

Frances Coulter, daughter of founder, appeared on all company checks around the turn of the century.

Box 1	Approx. 25-30 letters to John L. Cooke, Window Display Manager, Coulter's 1920-1935
Box 1	Social invitations, wedding, dinner, etc.
Box 1	Thomas Evans Estate
Box 1	Miscellaneous Correspondence
Box 1	Family Newspaper Clippings: all dates
Box 1	Magazine and Newspaper Clippings: Window Displays
Box 1	Broadway Christian Church
Box 1	Family History and Biography

Photographs**Scope and Content**Coulter's Dept. Store-7th & Olive, 1926

Broadway between. 4th & 5th, circa 1900

Spring Street- looking North from 8th St., circa 1900

Main Street Post Office, 1892

North of Broadway from 3rd St.

2nd & Broadway- looking south at 2nd St. can see old City Hall on the left, circa 1890

Opening first electric railway line in Los Angeles, 1886

Temple St. cable railway, circa 1885

Broadway Church decorated for Frances Coulter / R.R. Reynolds wedding, 1908

North on Main from below 2nd St., 1884

Diamond Jubilee display picture, 1953

Southern Pacific Depot & Spring St. Railway, circa 1880

Coulter's Dept. store window - display of Colorfast linings, 5/1/23

Coulter's Dept. store window - display of Fall 1923 dresses

McCall's Pattern Dept. 4/24/23

Spring Opening 1923 (6 various images)

Coulter's Dept. store window - display of Fall 1923 dresses, hats, jewelry, and other miscellaneous items

Men's cut silk neckties, 5/1/23

Men's cut silk bow ties, Fall 1923 (1 of 2)

Nemo Corset Week 1924

Kenwood blankets, 1923, 1925, & 1930 (6 images)

Omar Pearls, 1923 & 1928 (3 images)

Notions dressmakers and supplies, 9/22/23

A mannequin with a white silk jacket and dress, circa 1920

L.A. buildings-Coulter Dept. Store - former site

L.A. buildings-Dept Stores- old Coulter Store (Broadway between 2nd & 3rd)

Holeproof Hosiery, 1925 to 1931 (16 images)

Display of various roll of ribbons (1 of 2)

Jantzen's swimsuit collections, 1930 (1 of 2)

Display of Due Sheer Hose 6/21/30

Display of crib and other baby accessories, circa 1930

Holeproof EXX: The new silk hose for men, circa 1930

Phoenix Sox: A style to meet the preference of every man, 5/12/30

Arrow Trump Shirts, 1928 & 1930 (6 images)

Arrow Aistone Shirts 1929

Ballroom dresses 1929

Sleeveless dresses, Fall 1929

Men's Grad underwear and shorts, June 1929

A picture of Col. Lindoergh on display, circa 1928

Luxite silk lingerie, 3/12/28 (1 of 2)

Horse riding wear and accessories, 1928 (1 of 2)

Grayco Gray's men collections, 1927 & 1928 (2 images)

Diamond Jubilee Display Picture, 1953 of various dresses (13 images)

Dresses with wool coats, circa 1920

Kayser's silk gloves display, 5/16/19

Swimming suits "Knit to Fit", circa 1925

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- Box 2 **Memorial to B.F. Coulter from his employees**
 Scope and Content
 6 parchment pages, bound in suede leather encased in cloth bound box, accompanied by two letters: one-from Mrs. A. Coulter to employees Committee-two, from committee to Mrs. Coulter.
- Box 2 **Two program of dedication, Sunday March 20, 1927, Arlington Avenue Christian Church 1927 March 20**
- Box 2 **Four address delivered at the funeral of B.F. Coulter L.A., CA. 1911 October 9**
Box 2 **Fifteen sermon of B.F. Coulter, Broadway Christian Church 1909 January 3**
Box 2 **B.F. Coulter "Adventures in business", Oct. 31, 1947, vol. V no. 14 1947 October 31**
 Scope and Content
 4 copies. Transcript of article can be accessed here:
 <http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/arc/findingaids/coulter/adventure.html>
- Box 2 **Coulter Dry Goods Co. 50th Anniversary folders, 1878-1928, Oct. 22-Nov. 5 1878-1928**
 Scope and Content
 13 copies
- Box 2 **Justice McReynolds dedication**
Box 2 **75th Anniversary folders**
 Scope and Content
 11 copies.
- Box 2 **California Stylist magazine, May 1955 issue 1955 May**
Box 2 **The Holy Bible of John C. McReynolds and Ellen M. McReynolds**
Box 2 **The Pastor's Record for study, work, appointments, and choir**
Box 2 **Framed miniature of B.F. Coulter**
Box 2 **Directory of Christian Church in Los Angeles**
Box 2 **B.F. Coulter Dry Goods notebook**
Box 2 **Pocket-size New Testament and the Psalms**
Box 2 **Pocket-size New Testament**
Box 2 **Glass paper-weight, picture of B.F. Coulter**
Box 2, Box 2 **Coulter's 75th Anniversary buttons**
 Scope and Content
 3 buttons
- Box 2, Box 2 **A picture of B.F. Coulter in platinum and carbons**
Box 2 **Red leather vest wallets**
 Scope and Content
 Two wallets.
- Box 3 **B.F. Coulter's family album**
Box 3 **Frances C. Coulter (about 5 or 6 years old)**
Box 4 **City resolutions to Coulter's Dry Goods**
 Scope and Content
 Two resolutions.
- Box 4 **Folio of Historical papers and old newspapers**
Box 4 **Scrapbook**
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Box 4

Photo of [Hollenbeck Hotel](#) , south-west corner of Second and Spring Streets, built in 1884

Scope and Content

In 1885 B.F. Coulter opened a 60 x 140 foot store in this building.