

A Guide to the  
Warren O. Johnson Collection

CIT 2050

## **Scope & Contents Note**

The materials in this collection reflect the subject's employment with the Florida Agricultural Weather Service. The collection contains correspondence, reports, and reference material created or used by the subject in his work. The collection also contains some ephemeral material and a few photos.

## **Dates**

1890s-1980s

## **Creator**

Warren O. Johnson (person)

## **Biographical Note**

Warren O. Johnson was born on a farm in Benson, Minnesota, in 1906. He was considered one of the outstanding agricultural forecasters in the nation. Earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Science, History, and English in 1928 from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, Johnson minored in meteorology. Johnson's professors advised him to pursue a career in weather forecasting. He took that advice. He was a forecaster for forty-two years, thirty-five of which were in Florida. He was the meteorologist in charge of the Federal-State Agricultural Weather Service.

Following a brief assignment as a U.S. Weather Bureau observer in Huron, South Dakota, Johnson was transferred to the bureau's headquarters in Washington, D.C. to work in the Hurricane Forecasting Center for the Eastern United States from Maine to Florida, including the Gulf of Mexico and the western Caribbean. While in Jacksonville, receiving advanced forecasting training, a forecasting and hurricane center was established there and Johnson was selected to assist in developing it.

In 1935 he transferred to Lakeland to take part in and help develop another newly-established weather program in the State of Florida – a joint Federal-State Agricultural Weather Service. His value to the hurricane forecasting section of the weather service and to the Federal-State Agricultural Weather Service resulted in him spending three years shuttling between forecasting hurricanes in the summer and freezes in the winter. He was called to hurricane forecasting in 1938, but Johnson returned to Lakeland and the agricultural weather service as meteorologist in charge. But his prowess as "one of the top forecasters" demanded his temporary duty in the Hurricane Tracking Center, by then located in Miami. Like any other thriving and successful business venture, the Federal-State Agricultural Weather Service expanded. It grew into a network of eight field stations and 400 temperature survey stations, and Johnson was required to remain in Lakeland year-round to administer the service. His accuracy in forecasting freezes was established during those years, and he is considered one of the outstanding weather forecasters in

the nation. He not only earned the respect of those in the citrus industry, but of those of cousin agricultural industries, including vegetable and cattle.

While at the agricultural weather service, Johnson was responsible for developing a widespread daily broadcast of frost warning bulletins carried statewide by a radio network. “Probably no individual associated with the citrus industry was better known to growers and production managers – especially during the cold months,” is the way Johnson was described by R.E. Norris. Not only was Johnson providing “unusual accuracy” in forecasting temperature minimums and duration of temperatures dangerous to citrus, he also assembled information and data regarding grove protection during periods of frost and developed data regarding prospective grove locations and the minimum temperatures the potential grove could expect.

From 1943 through 1970, he was in charge of the Lakeland office and responsible for the agricultural forecasts during the winter months. Johnson developed a daily broadcast of frost warning bulletins carried throughout the state by many radio stations. He established a teletype network that was made available to growers. He administered field districts and hundreds of temperature survey stations which helped depict minimum temperature characteristics of the state. He also compiled data on the effects of various temperatures on the growth of citrus and vegetables. That data became the basis for Florida, Texas, and California programs and protective measures to prevent agricultural damage.

Impending frost of the nature that occasionally settles over the state during peak winter harvesting months are not as feared by citrus men today as they once were, thanks to the life’s work of “Mr. Forecaster,” Warren O. Johnson. From 1943 until his retirement, Johnson was associated jointly with the Federal and State governments as the meteorologist in charge of the Federal-State Agricultural Weather Service. “I think that he had a better feel for what was going to occur on those cold nights than the meteorologists of today, even though they must have had at their command very sophisticated technology as compared to the Johnson Days,” wrote C.A. Root, vice-president of Lykes Brothers citrus division.

Many of the trails Johnson blazed into weather forecasting were particularly invaluable to the citrus industry by affording advance warning to growers when the mercury was expected to drop into hazardous temperature ranges. The teletype network and communications outlets to help growers keep tabs on developing weather conditions pioneered by Johnson are, for the most part, still in use today.

### **Conditions Governing Access**

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## **Extent**

5 inches

## **Arrangement**

The materials in this collection are arranged alphabetically and by ascending date.

## **Language of Materials**

English

## **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Materials were donated by the subject to Thomas Mack of the Florida Citrus Archives

## **Subject Headings**

Citrus juice industry—Florida

Weather forecasting--Florida

Meteorological services

Meteorology—Research

## **Note to Researchers**

This collection has been processed at a basic level in an effort to make this collection available in the shortest amount of time. Misfiled documents and other errors may be present.

## **Classifications**

CIT 2050 Warren O. Johnson Collection

## Administrative

Title: Warren O. Johnson Collection

Status: Completed

Author: Jeffrey Zines

Date: 2024

Description Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Language of Description: English

Script of Description: Latin

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	1	Bulletin—Florida Agricultural Experiment Station	1896
1	2	Clippings	Various
1	3	Correspondence	1960s-1980s
1	4	Ephemera	Various
1	5	Florida Cold Weather Review	1907-1917
1	6	Florida Histories	1950s
1	7	Forecasting	1960s
1	8	Maps	1894
1	9	NOAA Reference Material	1973
1	10	Norton, Grady—Hurricane Forecaster	1943-1989
1	11	Performance Ratings	1942-1965
1	12	Published Works	1958-1983
1	13	USDA Report	1937
1	14	Photos	n.d.