

MSS. Collection #55

**Richardson-Vicks Collection, 1862-1979 [bulk ca. 1900-1940].
2 boxes (35 folders), ca. 160 items.**

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

The Richardson-Vicks Collection consists primarily of materials relating to Vick Chemical Co. and its predecessors, as well as a smaller number of items pertaining to the Richardson family. Vick Chemical was founded by Lunsford Richardson II and is best known for the cold salve called Vicks VapoRub. The company stayed in the family until it was acquired by Proctor & Gamble in 1985. The collection includes photographs, advertisements, books, pamphlets, and financial materials. Researchers interested in business history, Vick Chemical Co. history and operations, Greensboro history, advertising, the pharmaceutical industry, and the Richardson family will find this collection useful.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into seven series by subject or document type. The series are: **Correspondence**, 1893-1906; **Legal**, 1947; **Photographs**, ca. 1870-1955; **Printed Material**, 1862-1979; **Richardson-Vicks**, 1890s-1900s; **S.S. Lunsford Richardson**, 1944; and **Vick Chemical Co.**, 1911-1944.

Provenance: The bulk of this collection was loaned to the museum by Smith Richardson Jr. in 1987 and assigned accession number 1987.48.57. The loan was converted to a gift by his son, Peter Richardson, in 2016. Many of these materials were formerly on exhibit at the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro.

The collection also contains individual items acquired from other sources. They include the booklet entitled "Don't try to join this club" (1970.28.8; 4:9), a Vicks comic book (2020.70.1; 7:1), a pamphlet containing "Directions for using Vicks VapoRub" (2017.8.2; 7:4), a pamphlet about the "Vicks Plan for Better Control of Colds" (2015.12.1; 7:1), and materials relating to clinical studies of that plan (2019.53.4; 7:2). One copy of "The Story of Blix and Blee" was purchased (2014.1.2; 7:1).

Processing: Archivist J. Stephen Catlett began processing this collection, and the arrangement and finding aid were completed by Archives Assistant Christine A. Dumoulin in June 2004. The collection was reorganized and the finding aid was revised by Archivist Elise Allison in November 2016.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The Richardson Family has a long history in Greensboro and was involved in both civic and business ventures.

Lunsford Richardson II (1854-1919) was born in Johnson County and grew up on the family plantation, Parker Heights. He graduated with honors from Davidson College and married Mary Lynn Smith on August 28, 1884. Richardson began in the pharmaceutical industry early, first owning a drug store in Selma, North Carolina, before moving to Greensboro. In 1891, he and John Fariss bought the W.C. Porter drug store. At that time, he began inventing remedies for colds, and in 1894 Vicks Magic Salve, a cure for croup, was introduced. With a desire to start his own company, he sold his share in Richardson & Fariss to his partner in 1898 and created the Lunsford Richardson Wholesale Drug Company. The company became Vick's Family Remedies in 1905 and evolved into the Vick Chemical Co. by 1911, dropping all other products and keeping the newly named "Vicks VapoRub." Lunsford would continue to play an active role in the family business, enlisting the help of his two sons. He passed away in 1919, leaving the company to Smith and Lunsford Jr.

Henry Smith Richardson (1885-1972) was the first of five children born to Lunsford and Mary Richardson. Smith worked early on in his father's drug store, washing bottles and delivering pills and tonics to customers. He became a traveling salesman around the age of 14. After spending time at Davidson College and the U.S. Naval Academy, Richardson took a position in New York City as a nighttime railroad office worker, conductor, and eventually, a salesman. In 1907, he headed for home in Greensboro to become the sales manager for the Vick Company. Through his salesmanship, he touted the wonders of Vicks VapoRub and eventually recommended the change in company name to the Vick Chemical Company. He was also responsible for the success of international sales to South America and Europe.

Smith was also interested in business management and developing stable, productive companies that would withstand economic hardship and change. His dream of an institution to develop "creative leadership" was realized in 1970 with the establishment of the Center for Creative Leadership. The Smith Richardson Foundation provided the initial underpinning of the center and continues to generously support it. Smith passed away in 1972.

Lunsford Richardson Jr. (1891-1953), known as "Lump," was also involved in the family business. He attended public schools, was a student at Davidson College, and studied at Eastman's Business College in Poughkeepsie, NY. He first worked for Vick Chemical in 1913 as an office manager and assistant sales and advertising manager. By 1917, he was made a partner. He served as president from 1929 until 1938, when he joined the board of directors, eventually chairing it.

Lump was also involved in civic activities, supporting the L. Richardson Memorial Hospital and serving on the Board of Trustees at Davidson College. During World War I, he served as an enlisted man in Naval Aviation. Prior to his death, he was the director in the National Re-Insurance Company in New York and was formerly vice president of Richardson Realty Co. He died in 1953 of a heart attack.

Biographical Sources: The following sources were used in compiling the biographical note: the booklets *H. Smith Richardson: Ideas into Action* (4:4) and *The Early History of Richardson-Merrill* (4:2), a biography of Lunsford Richardson II by Laurinda Carlson (GHM Vertical File), the [Smith Richardson Foundation](#) website, the [Center for Creative Leadership](#) website, and

finding aids for the [Henry Smith Richardson Papers](#) and [Richardson-Vicks, Inc., Records](#) in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The types of materials in this collection include correspondence, photographs, company and family histories, and printed materials such as books, pamphlets and advertisements. The bulk of the items relate to the Vick Chemical Co., including its operations and corporate history. The family materials are mostly related to Lunsford Richardson and his two sons, H. Smith and Lunsford Richardson Jr.

The Vick Chemical Co. records show how the company evolved as a corporation and provide a glimpse into different aspects of its operations. Advertising includes photographs of billboards promoting Vicks VapoRub and an image of a drugstore with several Vicks products displayed on the counter as a pharmacist speaks with a customer (3:1). Printed advertisements include cardboard counter ads, a coupon for a free sample of Vicks VapoRub, and a complimentary notebook given out by the company (7:1). A book from 1906 presents an abstract on histology and bacteriology (4:1) and two memorandum books belonging to Lunsford Richardson contain recipes that he presumably developed (5:3). Materials related to operations include an album showing the various company buildings (3:7), a photograph of a men's volleyball game with the Milton St. plant in the background (3:2), and factory interiors showing mixing kettles and labeling machines (3:6).

The family materials, though less voluminous, consist of photographs and printed materials. The photographs include an image of H. Smith Richardson and his brother Lunsford Jr. as children, a portrait of the Richardson women circa 1900 (3:3), and a Smith family photo album (3:4). Also included is interesting litigation pertaining to a lawsuit brought on by several benevolent agencies accusing the Richardson family of defrauding the Presbyterian Church; they were eventually found innocent (2:1). Other items are an 1861 sermon given by the Reverend J. Henry Smith (4:10) and a 1909 Greensboro High School annual (4:6).

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Correspondence. 2 folders (2 items). 1893-1906.

This series contains a two-sided letter on L. Richardson Drug Co. letterhead (1906; 1:1). A form letter on the front is from Justice Drug Co. and thanks individuals or companies for their business, while the back contains a letter written to the sister of an unidentified Justice Drug Co. employee. Also included in this series is a brief letter from Smith Richardson to his mother in Selma, North Carolina (1:2). Written on November 2, 1893, the letter discusses events at school, such as being sent to chapel for kicking a paper ball as he marched.

2. Legal. 1 folder (3 items). 1947.

The items in this series pertain to a lawsuit that was filed against the Richardson family and a trust fund. The family was sued by four benevolent agencies accusing them of defrauding their

Presbyterian church. There is a resolution which cleared the family name of any wrong-doing, as well as two publications with information pertaining to the suit.

3. Photographs. 9 folders (ca. 60 items). ca. 1870-1955.

This series contains images relating to the Vick Chemical Co. and the Smith/Richardson families. The Vick Chemical images are of various advertising campaigns and business operations. Items of interest show advertising on a train station wall in West Union, Iowa, and several roadside billboards touting Vicks products for croup and cold relief (3:1). Older photos of company operations show women hand pouring the product into jars and men loading and unloading boxes of Vicks products onto their cars. Other photos show a more modern plant, including mixing kettles and labeling machines, the boxing room with the "Endless Belt System," and W.J. Mulligan running cartons of Vicks VapoRub through a sealing machine (3:6).

The family photos show members of the Richardson and Smith families, the Richardson children, and an interior and exterior of a house, possibly the Richardson home (3:3-4). A photo album contains tintypes and albumen prints of distant Smith family relatives, Egbert Watson Smith and Hay Watson Smith as children, and Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, as well as Mary Lynn Smith's calling card. Some of the more interesting portraits include a photo of Smith Richardson holding the 1 billionth jar of Vicks VapoRub produced, the Vick Chemical Co. men's baseball team, and Lunsford Richardson with the ladies of the Vicks plant (3:8).

4. Printed Material. 12 folders (14 items). 1862-1979.

The printed materials consist of books, pamphlets, news clippings, and a high school annual. Several books relate the history of the Vicks company and its owners. *The Early History of Richardson-Merrill* tells the history of Lunsford Richardson, the Smiths early life, and Vick Chemical Co., which eventually merged with the Merrill Company (4:2). Also included are Mary Kelly Watson Smith's reminiscences about her mammy, Bibby Mosby (4:11), and *The Love that Never Failed*, an account about her life that includes transcripts of some of her letters to family members (4:5). Finally, a pamphlet contains a sermon delivered by the Rev. J. Henry Smith, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, on December 5, 1861 (4:10).

5. Richardson-Vicks. 3 folders (4 items). 1890s-1900s.

This series contains materials relating to Lunsford Richardson, the Richardson & Fariss drug store and the L. Richardson Drug Co. Two memorandum books (5:3) that apparently belonged to Lunsford Richardson contain recipes, including those for Vicks Croup Salve, Red Cross Drops, Chill Tonic, Toothache Drops, and Godfrey's Cordial. Also contained in this series are a receipt to G. Will Armfield from John B. Fariss (1898; 5:1), successor to Richardson & Fariss, and an order book used by salesman R.R. Hill to keep track of orders and sales (ca. 1900; 5:2).

6. S.S. *Lunsford Richardson*. 2 folders (2 items). 1944.

This series contains two items relating to the commission and the maiden voyage of the S.S. *Lunsford Richardson*. A photograph shows the ship at anchor in New York Harbor in October 1944 (9:1), and a scrapbook details all of the events around its christening and send off (9:2).

7. Vick Chemical Co. 6 folders (ca. 75 items). 1911-1944.

Vick's Family Remedies was founded by Lunsford Richardson II in 1905 and became the Vick Chemical Co. in 1911. The earliest item in this series is a check made payable in 1911 to the Vicks Family Remedy Co. (7:4). A group of advertisements used to promote VapoRub range from broadsides, cardboard counter ads and wax bags with the Vicks logo on them, to the story of two pixies called Blix and Blee, a coupon for a free sample, and a comic book (7:1). Multiple product brochures from varying years provide a brief history of the company and instructions for using Vicks Nose & Throat Drops, Vicks VapoRub and Vicks Vatronol. Some VapoRub brochures also describe the product's contents, how it works, and alternative uses for skin, muscle and tissue inflammation, and even for animals. One brochure contains two paragraphs in German, Italian, Swedish, Hungarian and Hebrew (7:5). Another example of Vicks international reach is a 1928 letter from export manager Hugh D. McKay in Spanish, with a translation. The letter appoints an agent to Bolivia and discusses the fiscal year 1928-1929 advertising campaign there (7:3). A publication order is accompanied by a 1928 summer schedule for advertising Vicks products (7:6). Also included in this series are materials relating to clinical studies on the Vicks "plan for better control of colds in the home" (7:2).

FOLDER LISTING

Series	Folder	Contents	
1	1	Correspondence	-- Justice Drug Co. (L. Richardson Drug Co. letterhead; 1906)
		“	-- Richardson, J. Henry Smith to his mother (November 2, 1893)
2	1	Legal	-- Litigation -- Richardson Family Trust Fund (1947)
3	1	Photographs	-- Advertising (ca. 1910s-1930s)
	2	“	-- Buildings (ca. 1910s-1920s)
	3	“	-- Family
	4	“	-- Family -- Photo Album (ca. 1870s)
	5	“	-- First Presbyterian Church (early 1940s)
	6	“	-- Operations (ca. 1910s-1920s)
	7	“	-- Operations -- “Home of Vicks” (ca. 1920)
	8	“	-- Portraits (ca. 1885-1955)
	9	“	-- Products
4	1	Printed Material	-- Book -- <i>The Creed of Presbyterians</i> (1931)
	2	“	-- Book -- <i>The Early History of Richardson-Merrill</i> (1975)
	3	“	-- Book -- <i>Histology</i> (1906)
	4	“	-- Book -- <i>H. Smith Richardson: Ideas into Action</i> (1979)
	5	“	-- Book -- <i>The Love that Never Failed</i> (1928)
	6	“	-- Greensboro High School Annual (1909)
	7	“	-- Magazine -- <i>Liberty</i> (December 14, 1940)
	8	“	-- News clippings (1946, 1953)
	9	“	-- Pamphlet -- “Don’t try to join this club” (Smith Richardson; n.d.)
	10	“	-- Pamphlet -- “A Sermon Delivered...” (Rev. J. Henry Smith; 1862)
	11	“	-- Pamphlet -- “Some Meagre Recollections of Mammy” (Mrs. J. Henry Smith; 1927)
	12	“	-- Pamphlet -- “The Women of Greensboro, 1861-1865” (Mrs. J. Henry Smith; 1919)
5	1	Richardson-Vicks	-- Financial -- Receipt (1898)
	2	“	-- Order book (ca. 1900)
	3	“	-- Recipe books (1890s-1900s)
6	1	<i>S.S. Lunsford Richardson</i>	-- Photograph (1944)
	2	“	-- Scrapbook (1944)
7	1	Vick Chemical Co.	-- Advertisements (ca. 1920s-1938)
	2	“	-- Clinical studies (late 1930s)
	3	“	-- Correspondence (1928)
	4	“	-- Financial (1911, 1924)
	5	“	-- Product information (ca. 1918-1944)
	6	“	-- Publication orders (1927-1928)

Index to the Richardson-Vicks Collection (1862-1979)

Note: The numbers following the name/subject entry -- e.g. 1:1 -- indicate in which Series#:Folder# (or, if no ":", Series only) that name/topic can be found.

Advertising: 3:1, 7:1, 7:3, 7:6

Bolivia: 7:3

Carlson, Laurinda Richardson: 3:3

Carlson, Mary Lynn: 3:3

Eure, Mrs. N.L.: 7:2

Fariss, John B.: 5:1

First Presbyterian Church: 3:5, 4:10

Greensboro High School (Annual): 4:6

Hall, Dr. James K.: 3:8

Hines, Richard: 7:2

Jackson, Stonewall: 3:4

Justice Drug Co.: 1:1, 3:2

L. Richardson Drug Co.: 1:1, 5:2, 5:3

Lee, Robert E.: 3:4

McKay, Hugh D.: 7:3

Miles, S.S.: 3:2

Mosby, Bibby: 4:11

Preyer, William Y.: 3:8

Prickett, Lynn Richardson: 3:3

Richardson Civic Center: 3:5

Richardson, H. Smith: 3:3, 3:8, 4:2, 4:4, 4:9

Richardson, Lunsford Jr.: 3:3

Richardson, Lunsford Sr.: 3:8, 5:3

Richardson, Mary Lynn Smith: 3:3, 3:4

Richardson & Fariss: 5:1, 5:3

Scales, Gov. Alfred Moore: 3:8

Scales, Mrs. Alfred Moore (Kate): 3:8

Smith, Egbert Watson: 3:3, 3:4, 4:1

Smith, Hay Watson: 3:4

Smith, Rev. J. Henry: 3:3, 4:5, 4:10

Smith, Mary Kelly Watson: 3:3, 4:5, 4:12

S.S. *Lunsford Richardson*: 6:1-2

Vick Chemical Co.:

Advertising: 3:1, 7:1, 7:3, 7:6

Buildings: 3:2, 3:7

Financial: 7:4

History: 4:2, 4:4, 7:5

Operations: 3:6-7, 5:2, 5:3, 7:1-6

Products: 3:9, 7:1-6

Wicker & Rierson: 3:2