

Guide to the Leroy Stevens Papers

Descriptive Summary:

Creator: Leroy Stevens, 1897-1972

Title: Leroy Stevens Papers

Dates: 1930-1972 (bulk 1954-1963)

Quantity: 1.8 linear feet

Abstract: Newspaper clippings, photographs, certificates, correspondence, and ephemera.

Accession: 00-09-358 ; 358-2000

Biographical Note:

Leroy Stevens (1897-1972) was born in the Union Church community in south Mobile County. He began his long career with the county in 1913 at the age of 16, working as a laborer. He steadily rose through the ranks, becoming superintendent of roads in 1931. In 1942, he was elected to office for the first time, winning a seat on the Mobile County Board of Revenue and Road Commissioners (changed to Mobile County Commission in 1957). Stevens would serve seven consecutive terms on the commission, winning re-election every four years from 1946 to 1968. During this time, he also served as commission president from 1954 to 1969. There would be only one month during that 15-year period where he was not president, having been ousted in December 1957 due to a dispute over a new vehicle for the county sheriff. The issue was solved and he resumed his spot as chairman at the end of January 1958. He retired from service at the end of his last term in 1972. During his tenure, the county built an extensive system of new roads, completed the bridge to Dauphin Island (1955), opened Municipal Park (1957), constructed a new county courthouse (1959), and built the new Mobile General Hospital (1966). Stevens decided not to seek re-election in February 1972, and died two months later from complications resulting from surgery for an abdominal aneurysm.

Scope and Contents:

The collection consists mainly of photocopied newspaper clippings about events and projects during Stevens' career, dating mainly from 1954 to 1963. Also included are numerous photographs depicting groundbreakings, competitions, commissioners, and other items. There is a collection of correspondence, approximately 50 pieces, consisting mainly of congratulatory letters from public officials, business leaders, and private citizens dating as early as 1930 and as late as 1964. There are also sample election ballots, Stevens' official candidacy announcement for 1950, typed copies of television and radio advertisements, invitations to the inaugurations and inaugural balls for presidents Kennedy and Johnson, magazine articles about Stevens, and a commendation from the Alabama State Senate. Of note in the collection is a letter written to Stevens by U.S. Representative and longtime Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn in regards to a request by Stevens to appoint a James G. Chambers as a U.S. Marshal. In addition, there are two photos of Stevens and others with First Lady Lady Bird Johnson, and several photos of Stevens and others with U.S. Representative from Alabama's First District Frank Boykin. For more on county courthouses, see the Virginia Lott Collection.

Arrangement:

Majority of collection arranged chronologically with the exception of the newspaper clippings, which are arranged by topic.

Access Restrictions:

This material is open to research.

Preferred Citation:

Leroy Stevens Papers, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL.

Content List:

Box 1

1. Biographical information on Stevens through newspaper clippings (1960-1972)
2. Newspaper clippings – new courthouse (1954-1959)
3. Newspaper clippings – elections (1942-1960)
4. Newspaper clippings – events (1952-1963)
5. Newspaper clippings – miscellaneous (1954-1957)
6. Newspaper clippings – miscellaneous projects (youth center, county jail, education, hospitals, parks, mental health, cemeteries, microfilming of records, other) (1952-1972)
7. Newspaper clippings – roads and bridges (1953-1963)
8. Newspaper clippings – Commission meetings (1952-1972)
9. State senate resolution (1969)

Box 2

- 1-2. Various photographs (Stevens with groups of other people [including Lady Bird Johnson and Frank Boykin], at competitions, groundbreaking, check presentations, parades, etc.)
3. Certificates (Isle Dauphin Country Club membership [1967]; official state commissions to serve on county commission from governors Frank Dixon [1942], Chauncey Sparks [1946], and John Patterson [1960]; trustee certificate from Sixth District Tuberculosis Hospital [Nov. 1954-Oct. 1959]; certificate of participation in Regional Goals Forum [March 1972])
4. Correspondence, 1930, 1942, 1954 (mostly of congratulatory letters from public officials, business leaders, and private citizens upon re-election(s); also some replies from Stevens)
5. Correspondence, 1958-1961, 1964 (letter from Sam Rayburn; also more congratulatory letters; obituary for a Frank Leatherbury; invitation to a party in Stevens' honor; and other items)
6. Election material (1957 and 1964)
7. Ephemera (Johnson inauguration banner, Washington D.C. postcards, Stevens' campaign ribbon)
8. Various publications – includes articles on Stevens and the commission in the July 1947 issue of *Port of Mobile News*; July 1958 and Aug. 1970 editions of Mr. County Commissioner; Oct. 1959 and Dec. 1960 editions of *The Tablet*, Mobile General Hospital; and the May 21, 1955 program for Mobile's Armed Forces Day celebration.
9. Inauguration and inaugural ball invitations (1961 and 1965).

Box 3

Various photographs of Stevens.

Unidentified photograph (possibly of Stevens' wife and daughter).

Group photograph at Jack Dempsey's Restaurant in New York City (n.d.).

Group photograph at Copacabana in New York City (n.d.).

Photograph of Red Leatherbury, Waterman Steamship.

Photocopy of *Mobile Press Register* Sunday Magazine (March 22, 1959) – article on the new county courthouse.

Copy of *Mobile Press Register*, Section D (April 30, 1959) – entire section about opening of the new county courthouse and guide to services available there.