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Summary Information
Creator Sumners, Hatton William (1875-1962)
Extent (quantity/size) 3 document boxes
1 flat box (12 inch width)
Language English
Abstract The Hatton Sumners Papers are a supplemental collection to the larger collection of Sumners Papers housed by the Dallas Historical Society. This collection consists of correspondence and personal materials, including photographs.


Administrative Information
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Preferred Citation When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is:
Hatton Sumners Papers, Accession #91, Box #, Folder #, Baylor Collections of Political Materials, W. R. Poage Legislative Library, Baylor University.

Processing Information Described by Malcolm Foley and released on 2016-09-20.

Scope and Content
The Hatton Sumners papers provide a supplement to the major collection of his papers housed at the Dallas Historical Society in the Hall of State in Fair Park. The papers have been divided into five series: I. Hatton Correspondence, II. Personal, III. Photos, IV. Kate Sumners’ Correspondence (Mrs. Willis J. Davis), and V. Historical Items. While individually, the documents may seem insignificant, collectively, they provide insight into the private, family life of a public figure. Of special interest is the close relationship these letters show between Hatton, his sister Kate, and their mother.

The 79 letters in the Hatton Correspondence series are largely handwritten and each of them directly concerns Hatton Sumners, either as writer or as recipient. While the earliest letter is dated 1898 from Hatton to his parents, the bulk of the letters are from 1911 to 1926, the year Mother Sumners died. The letters document the routine daily events of an upper class Southern household in correspondence with Sumners, a U.S. Congressman in Washington, D. C. This series is organized and distributed among four categories of recipients: General (acquaintances and friends, including William Howard Taft), Hatton & Parents, Hatton & Kate, and Other Family Correspondence (where the precise recipient is unclear).
The Personal series represents an assortment of items that Sumners saved. These have been organized into 12 folders which include biographical articles, speeches, Sumners' will, an itinerary and appointment book, bank statements, tax receipts, and a number of other items which, taken collectively, add personal pieces to the larger biographical story.

The Photos series has fifty photographs representing the Sumners family and significant events in Congressman Sumners' life. They include two early studio portraits taken before Sumners became a public figure, a couple of official congressional portraits, several special events photos, and numerous candid snapshots of relatives. There are also photographs present in the Oversize series.

The majority of items in the Kate Sumners series are letters between Kate and Willis written shortly after their marriage in 1917, while Willis was on the road, or while Kate was visiting her parents in Dallas between 1917 and 1919, as well as letters between Kate and her mother from 1914-1919. Following the death of Kate's father, her mother moved to Georgia to live with her. The next large segment of correspondence includes sympathy cards and letters written to Kate following the death of Willis in November, 1963. In addition to letters, these papers contain the condolence pages from Willis' funeral, a lock of brown hair tied with red ribbon, letters dealing with the Legg family genealogy, 1894-1932, and Kate's class notes for Logic in 1905.

Administrative/Biographical History
Hatton William Sumners, the second of three children of William A. and Anna Elizabeth (Walker) Sumners, was born in Lincoln County, Tennessee, on May 30, 1875. Sumners grew up on a farm in Boon's Hill, Lincoln County until 1894 when his family moved to Dallas County, Texas, and settled in Garland. Lacking money to pursue his education but desiring to study law, Sumners approached the Dallas city attorney, Alfred P. Wozencraft, for help. Sumners was hired by the McLaurin and Wozencraft firm and permitted to sleep in the law offices and study law on his own time. Sumners passed the Texas bar examination in 1897.

In 1912, Sumners, a Democrat, was elected to a new at-large seat in the United States House of Representatives and was the first of the 132 freshmen congressmen in the Sixty-third Congress to get a bill through the House. Sumners’ bill made Dallas a port of entry for customs. In 1919 Sumners was appointed to the House Committee on the Judiciary, rose to the chairmanship in 1932, and served in this position until his retirement in 1946. In the years of his chairmanship, much of his attention was directed toward his career-long battle to limit the federal bureaucracy and its effect on the people's responsibility for their government. Along with Sam Rayburn, Sumners was regarded as one of the most powerful men in Congress.

In 1924, Sumners became acquainted with Supreme Court Chief Justice William H. Taft, and their work on a bill amending the judicial code, popularly known as "the Judges Bill," resulted in its passage. Sumners appeared before the Supreme Court several times on behalf of the legislative branch including the Pocket Veto Case of 1928, the McCracken Contempt Case of 1934, and the Municipal Bankruptcy Act Case of 1936. Sumners served three times as manager of impeachment proceedings before the Senate in the cases of federal judges George W. English, Harold Louderback, and Halsted L. Ritter. In 1934, at the request of the resident commissioner of the Philippine Islands and the urging of President Franklin Roosevelt, Sumners drafted a constitution for the Philippine Islands. As a result of these and other activities, he developed a reputation as an authority on constitutional law.

Following his retirement from Congress, Sumners served as Director of Research in Law and Government of the Southwestern Legal Foundation and lived at the Lawyers' Inn on the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas. The Hatton W. Sumners Foundation, established in 1949, still awards loans, scholarships, and funding for worthy educational endeavors. Many organizations, including the YMCA, the Red Cross, and Munger Place Methodist Church, his local church, also benefited from his generosity. He was a member of numerous professional and civic organizations as well. He never married. Sumners received an honorary Doctor of Law from Southern Methodist University and the American Bar Association Gold Medal. He wrote The Private Citizen and His Democracy (1959). Sumners died on April 19, 1962, and after services in the Highland Park Methodist Church in Dallas was buried in the K. P. Cemetery in Garland.

Related Resources
Related citations

Archival Arrangement
The Hatton Sumners Papers are divided into six series including: Hatton Correspondence, Personal, Photos, Kate Sumners Correspondence (Mrs. Willis J. Davis), Historical Items, and Oversize. The correspondence has been organized by recipient primarily and by date secondarily.
Series 1: Hatton Correspondence. 1898-1962, undated

Administrative/Biographical History
This series contains the correspondence dealing directly with Hatton Sumners. It contains letters between Hatton and his parents, sister Kate, and friends/acquaintances. Notably, within the General correspondence, there are two letters from William Howard Taft. The series is in average condition.

Item List
Box 1. Folder 1. General, undated
Box 1. Folder 2. General, 1914-1925
Box 1. Folder 3. General, 1927-1932
Box 1. Folder 4. General, 1938-1962
Box 1. Folder 5. Hatton & Parents, undated
Box 1. Folder 6. Hatton & Parents, 1898-1911
Box 1. Folder 8. Hatton & Parents, 1922-1925
Box 1. Folder 9. Hatton & Parents, 1926
Box 1. Folder 10. Hatton & Kate, undated
Box 1. Folder 11. Hatton & Kate, 1918 April – 1925 March
Box 1. Folder 12. Hatton & Kate, 1925 October-December
Box 1. Folder 13. Hatton & Kate, 1926
Box 1. Folder 14. Hatton & Kate, 1927
Box 1. Folder 15. Hatton & Kate, 1928-1932
Box 1. Folder 16. Hatton & Kate, 1948
Box 1. Folder 17. Other Family Correspondence, 1911

Series 2: Personal. 1883-1962, undated

Administrative/Biographical History
This series contains a number of Hatton's personal materials including articles about himself, some of his speeches, an itinerary and appointment book, some materials from the Southwestern Legal Foundation which he founded, his will, tax receipts, and bank statements. The series is in average condition.

Item List
Box 1. Folder 18. Congressional Statements, Accolades, & Speeches, 1940-1962
Box 1. Folder 20. Itinerary & Appointment Book, 1946, undated
Box 1. Folder 21. Will, 1905
Box 1. Folder 22. Southwestern Legal Foundation, 1951-1961
Box 1. Folder 23. Tax Receipts, 1883-1928
Box 1. Folder 24. Checks to Sam Rayburn, 1914
Box 1. Folder 25. Loan Note, 1906
Box 1. Folder 26. Life Insurance Policy, 1915
Box 1. Folder 27. Bank Statements, 1911-1914
Box 1. Folder 28. Warranty Deed, 1903
Box 1. Folder 29. Personal Member Pass, 1944

Series 3: Photos. 1900-1961, undated

Administrative/Biographical History
This series contains a number of photos kept by Sumners of himself, his mother, his sister, and other individuals. The series is in good condition.

Item List
Box 2. Folder 1. Babies, undated
Box 2. Folder 2. Sumners Portraits, 1900-1961
Box 2. Folder 3. Sumners with Others, undated
Box 2. Folder 4. Hatton Sumners Presenting Awards, undated
Box 2. Folder 5. Kate Sumners Wedding, 1917
Box 2. Folder 6. Kate Sumners, 1917
Series 4: Kate Sumners' Correspondence (Mrs. Willis J. Davis). 1914-1963, undated

Administrative/Biographical History
This series contains correspondence concerning Kate Sumners apart from her brother Hatton. The letters tend to be between Kate and her mother, her husband Willis, and other friends and acquaintances.

Item List
Box 2. Folder 13. Kate & Mother, 1914 May
Box 2. Folder 14. Kate & Mother, 1915 January
Box 2. Folder 15. Kate & Mother, 1915 February 1-10
Box 2. Folder 16. Kate & Mother, 1915 February 16-27
Box 2. Folder 17. Kate & Mother, 1915 March 1-1919 February 28
Box 2. Folder 18. Kate & Willis, 1917 November 11-1919 May 17
Box 2. Folder 19. Kate & Willis, 1919 May 19-May 26
Box 2. Folder 20. Kate & Willis, 1919 May 29-June 7
Box 2. Folder 21. Kate & Willis, 1919 August 22-25
Box 2. Folder 22. Kate & Willis, 1919 August 26-29
Box 3. Folder 1. Other, undated
Box 3. Folder 2. Other, 1915 January 27-1948 January 24
Box 3. Folder 3. Other, 1948 October 26-1950 March 22
Box 3. Folder 4. Other, 1950 December 8-1963 July 6
Box 3. Folder 5. Sympathy Cards (Willis' Death), 1963 November 25-30
Box 3. Folder 6. Sympathy Cards (Willis' Death), 1963 December 1-8

Series 5: Historical Items. 1894-1963, undated

Administrative/Biographical History
A few items are placed in this series which do not fit into the other categories. These items include Kate Sumners' Logic notes, programs and information about Willis Davis' funeral, postcards, a program from the Atlanta Civilian Club, a lock of hair, and the Davis-Legg family genealogy.

Item List
Box 3. Folder 7. Items from the Funeral of Willis Davis, 1963 November
Box 3. Folder 8. Program for Atlanta Civilian Club, 1948 November 19
Box 3. Folder 9. Cards and Envelopes, undated
Box 3. Folder 10. Short Article by Kate, 1951 January 19
Box 3. Folder 11. Davis-Legg Family Genealogy, 1894 April 13-1932 Feb 24
Box 3. Folder 12. Davis Lock of Hair, undated
Box 3. Folder 13. Kate Sumners' Logic Notebook, 1905

Series 6: Oversize. 1917-1963, undated

Administrative/Biographical History
The Oversize series contains 4 large portraits: one of Hatton, one of Kate on her wedding day, and two large family portraits. The portraits are in good condition.

Item List
Box 4. Folder 1. Hatton Sumners (portrait), undated
Box 4. Folder 2. Kate Sumners in Wedding Dress, 1917
Box 4. Folder 3. Family Photos, undated