

Descriptive Summary:

Creator:	James Edward Ferguson, Miriam Amanda Wallace Ferguson
Title:	Governors James E. and Miriam “Ma” Ferguson Collection
Inclusive Dates:	1914-1975, undated
Bulk Dates:	1917-1940, undated
Abstract:	The Ferguson Collection consists of manuscripts about James and Miriam Ferguson, Texas governors during the early 1900s. The collection contains correspondence, legal documents, literary productions, photographic materials, and scrapbook materials.
Accession #:	3795
Extent:	3.85 linear feet (5 document boxes and 1 oversized box)
Language:	Collection materials are in English.
Repository:	The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Biographical Note:

James Edward and Miriam Amanda Wallace Ferguson, “Ma” and “Pa” Ferguson to a generation of voters, dominated Texas state politics in the early 1900s. Both served as Texas governors during a time of expanding public education, voter intimidation, prohibition, and depression.

James Ferguson, born in 1871 in Bell County, Texas, received only rudimentary schooling, spending most of his time working the fields of his family’s farm. At age sixteen he left home and took any employment offered. By the time he came home and married Miriam Amanda Wallace in 1899, he had worked at farming, building railroad bridges, and law. Though he set up his own law practice in Belton, Texas, James continued pursuing other work, including banking, real estate, insurance, and politics.

Miriam Amanda Wallace Ferguson was born in 1875, also in Bell County, Texas. Unlike her eventual husband James Ferguson, she received quite a bit of schooling, graduating from Salado College and Baylor Female College in Belton. Marrying James in 1899, she helped raise their two daughters while he entered state politics.

After working up through several different Democratic gubernatorial campaigns in 1902, 1908, 1910, and 1912, James Ferguson ran as an anti-prohibitionist and a friend to tenant farmers, and won the Texas governor’s seat in 1915. Despite passing several laws of notable importance, a disagreement about Ferguson’s wishes to remove several professors at the University of Texas resulted in an investigation of his work as governor. When several questionable business dealings were turned up, the Senate impeached him and barred him from ever holding political office again. Though James resigned the governorship the day before the impeachment results were announced, the Senate’s decree against holding political office stood. James Ferguson never held political office again, though he ran for governor again in 1918, president of the United States in 1920, and a senate seat in 1922.

However, the Ferguson’s solution to James not holding office again was that Miriam would become the family politician. Miriam, known as “Ma” due to a campaign slogan, entered the race for Texas governor in 1924. She opposed the Klu Klux Klan, prohibition, and sought to clear the Ferguson name. Miriam won the governor’s seat, becoming the first female Texas governor and the second woman governor in United States history. Speeches from her campaign are preserved within this collection. Her

administration was marked by strife, due to a broken campaign promise to reduce state spending and her habit of granting unusually large numbers of pardons. She finished her first term in 1926, did not run in 1928, lost in 1930, and won a second term in 1932. Her administration in 1932-1934 did not attract controversy, even though she continued her pardoning ways and even proposed a state sales tax, which was not adopted. At the conclusion of her term in 1934, she would never again hold public office, despite running for governor in 1940. Several scrapbooks in this collection document Miriam’s terms as governor.

The Fergusons continued to wield political influence across the state even when not campaigning for or holding office. Correspondence from this collection indicates a working relationship with United States presidents Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson. After a generation of Texas politics where people were either for or against the Fergusons, James Ferguson died on 21 September 1944. Miriam continued on, enjoying private life with none of the publicity that came with her many political campaigns. Her eightieth birthday in 1955 was cause for a big celebration. A program from that birthday celebration can be found in this collection. Miriam, the first female governor of Texas, died on 25 June 1961.

Sources:

- Gould, Lewis L. “The University Becomes Politicized: The War with Jim Ferguson, 1915-1918.” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 86, 2 (October 1982): 255-276.
- Guzman, Jane Bock. “Yet Another Look at the Fergusons of Texas.” *East Texas Historical Journal* 44, 1 (2006): 40-48.
- Huddleston, John D. “Ferguson, Miriam Amanda Wallace [Ma].” *Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ffe06>. Accessed 30 September 2011.
- Sallee, Shelley. “‘The Woman of It’: Governor Miriam Ferguson’s 1924 Election.” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 100 (July 1996): 1-16.
- Steen, Ralph W. “Ferguson, James Edward.” *Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ffe05>. Accessed 30 September 2011.
- Texas State Library and Archives Commission. “Portraits of Texas Governors: The Politics of Personality: Part 1, 1915-1927: James E. Ferguson.” <https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/governors/personality/index.html#PaFerguson>. Accessed 30 September 2011.
- Texas State Library and Archives Commission. “Portraits of Texas Governors: The Politics of Personality: Part 1, 1915-1927: Miriam A. Ferguson.” <https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/governors/personality/index.html#MaFerguson>. Accessed 30 September 2011.

Scope and Content:

The Governors James E. and Miriam “Ma” Ferguson Collection was acquired in one gift from James G. Watt in 2011. The collection begins in 1914 and ends in 1975. These records include correspondence, legal, literary, photographic, scrapbook, and audio materials from the lives of James E. and Miriam Ferguson. Literary Productions is the largest series, with clippings, speeches, essays, and other printed materials relating to the

Fergusons. The scrapbooks series contains clippings and loose material relating to the Fergusons’ terms as governors, such as programs, certificates, and clippings.

Organization and Arrangement:

The collection prior to accessioning had never been processed. Some materials were grouped together by type, such as the photographic materials and scrapbooks, but everything else was completely unorganized. Currently the collection is arranged in five series: I. Correspondence, II. Legal Documents, III. Literary Productions, IV. Photographic Materials, V. Scrapbook Materials.

Restrictions: None.

Literary Rights Statement:

Unpublished materials authored or otherwise produced by the creator (s) of this collection are in the public domain. There are no restrictions on use. Copyright status for other collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

All requests for copying of materials must be submitted to The Texas Collection in writing. Please use the Request Form for Copying Materials sheet.

Index Terms:

- Ferguson, James Edward, 1871-1944.
- Ferguson, Miriam Amanda, 1875-1961.
- Governors--Texas.
- Governors--Texas--Election.
- Politicians--Texas.
- Politics--History.
- Texas--Politics and government.
- Texas--Politics and government—1865-1950.
- Women and Politics--History.

Related Materials: None.

Separated Materials: None.

Custodial History:

Acquisition:	Collection was acquired in one gift in 2011 from James G. Watt.
Citation:	Governors James E. and Miriam “Ma” Ferguson Collection, Accession #3795, Box #, Folder #, The Texas Collection, Baylor University.

Processing Information: Finding aid completed by Paul Fisher, 4 October 2011.

Container List:**Series I: Correspondence, 1917-1970, 4 folders.**

This series contains correspondence over a broad range of years, including both governor's terms. Notable letters include a letter from Woodrow Wilson, several letters enclosing essays, and a packet of headstone designs from A. Stasswender. The series is in average to good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
1	1	Correspondence	1917-1957
	2	Correspondence	1961
	3	Correspondence	1964
	4	Correspondence	1970

Series II: Legal Documents, 1961, 1 folder.

This series contains a resolution from the Texas Senate upon the death of Miriam Ferguson, and is in good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
1	5	Legal: Resolutions	1961

Series III: Literary Productions, 1917-1975, undated, (3 document boxes).

This series contains a variety of speeches, essays, genealogy materials, clippings, and other printed materials generated by and for the Fergusons. Notable materials in this series are the booklet of tickets to the Democratic National Convention, several speeches given by James and Miriam Ferguson, and an essay on Miriam's role as James' wife as she saw it. The series is in poor to good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
1	6	Literary: General	1955-1995, undated
	7	Literary: Speeches	1925
	8	Literary: Speeches	1940
	9	Literary: Speeches	undated
	10	Literary: Essays: "Jim Ferguson and the Dallas News": (1 of 2)	1966
2	1	Literary: Essays: "Jim Ferguson and the Dallas News": (2 of 2)	1966
	2	Literary: Essays: "It Was All Fun": (1 of 3)	1975

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
2	3	Literary: Essays: "It Was All Fun": (2 of 3)	1975
	4	Literary: Essays: "It Was All Fun": (3 of 3)	1975
	5	Literary: Essays: "The Real Helpmate"	undated
	6	Literary: Geneology Materials	1865-1866, undated
	7	Literary: Printed Materials: General	1944-1961, undated
	8	Literary: Printed Materials: Senate Journal	1917
	9	Literary: Tickets: Democratic National Convention	1928
	10	Literary: Clippings	August 1924
3	1	Literary: Clippings	October 1924-1933
	2	Literary: Clippings	1937-1953
	3	Literary: Clippings	1954-1958
	4	Literary: Clippings	1961
	5	Literary: Clippings: (1 of 2)	undated
	6	Literary: Clippings: (1 of 2)	undated
6 OVZ	1	Literary: Clippings: The Ferguson Forum	22 January 1925
	2	Literary: Clippings: The Ferguson Forum	7 August 1930

Series IV. Photographic Materials, 1933-1936, undated, 2 folders.

The photographic series contains photographs of James E. and Miriam Ferguson, plus other leading political figures of the time. Most photographs have the date on the back. In the oversized photograph envelopes are the pictures of Miriam Ferguson's inaugural ball. Series is in good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
3	7	Photographic: Photographs	1933-1934
	8	Photographic: Photographs	1934-1936, undated
6 OVZ	4	Photographic: Photographs: Oversized	1925-1926
	5	Photographic: Photographs: Oversized	1926-1933

Series V. Scrapbooks and Scrapbook Materials, 1914-1960, undated, 1.35 linear feet (3 document boxes).

This series contains 3 scrapbooks about the lives and political work that James E. and Miriam Ferguson did in the early 1900s. Documents in this series include letters, newspaper clippings, certificates, and other printed materials. Much of the resources were loose inside the scrapbooks. These were filed according to scrapbook source in this series. The series is in average to good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
3	9	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 1: Loose Materials: Pages 1-4	1915, undated
	10	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 1: Loose Materials: Pages 5-9	1931-1933, undated
	11	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 1: Loose Materials: Pages 12-16	1933-1934, undated
4	1	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 1: Loose Materials: Pages 17-19	1933-1946, undated
	2	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 1: Loose Materials: Pages 20-21	1932-1955, undated
	3	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 1: Loose Materials: Pages 21-22	1934-1956, undated
	4	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 1: Loose Materials: Pages 23: (1 of 2)	1932-1960, undated
	5	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 1: Loose Materials: Pages 23: (2 of 2)	1927-1960, undated
	6	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 2: Loose Materials: Pages 1-9	undated
	7	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 2: Loose Materials: Pages 10-15	undated
	8	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 2: Loose Materials: Pages 16-17	1944
	9	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 2: Loose Materials: Pages 18-22	1944-1945, undated
5	1	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 2: Loose Materials: Pages 24-26	1944-1945, undated
	2	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 2: Loose Materials: Pages 27-30	1947, undated
	3	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 2: Loose Materials: Pages 31-34	1952, undated
6 OVZ	6	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 2: Cover	undated
5	4	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 3: Pages: Pages cover-12	1924-1925, undated
	5	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 3: Pages: Pages 13-26	1914, undated

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
5	6	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 3: Pages: Pages 27-39	1915, undated
	7	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 3: Pages: Pages 40-53	1922, undated
	8	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 3: Loose Materials: Pages 3-46	1924, undated
	9	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 3: Loose Materials: Pages 54-55	1916-1924, undated
6 OVZ	3	Scrapbook: Scrapbook 3: Loose Materials: Oversized: Page 54: <i>San Antonio Express</i>	1916

Series V. Audio Recordings, 1940, 2 items.

Series contains two cassette tapes of James E. and Miriam Ferguson's speeches. These tapes were probably copied from an earlier recording, likely an early type of vinyl disc. This series is in good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
6 OVZ	7	Audio: Cassette Tapes: Speeches: (1 of 2)	1940
	8	Audio: Cassette Tapes: Speeches: (2 of 2)	1940

Notes:

These materials are one of a limited number of collections on the Fergusons, and one of only a couple on Miriam "Ma" Ferguson.

This collection primarily includes materials relating to the Ferguson's terms as governors. It does not contain many resources on James E. Ferguson's impeachment, various charges of political patronage, Prohibition pardons, and other charges of corruption.