

C Whitton, Rex M. (1898-1981), Papers, 1920, 1951-1967, 1981
3917 3.25 linear feet

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INTRODUCTION

Papers of Rex M. Whitton, of Jackson County, Missouri, Chief Engineer of the Missouri State Highway Department and Federal Highway Administrator under presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. The papers consist of speeches, correspondence, newspaper and magazine articles, photographs, and miscellaneous material relating to his position and activities as Federal Highway Administrator.

DONOR INFORMATION

The Rex M. Whitton Papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by his son Rex M. Whitton, Jr., on March 27, 1992 (SHS Accession No. 2891).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Rex M. Whitton was born on August 7, 1898, in Jackson County, Missouri. He graduated from the University of Missouri in 1920 with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering.

He began his forty year career with the Missouri State Highway Department May 1, 1920, as a member of a survey party. Whitton held various positions with the department until his appointment as Chief Engineer on July 23, 1951.

Whitton was nominated by President Kennedy to the post of Federal Highway Administrator of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads, in 1961, and he served in this capacity until 1966. During those years he was responsible for major highway activities. Principal among these were the programs of federal highway aid to the states which provided for the construction of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways and for the improvement of the main highways, secondary roads, and urban arterials included in the federal-aid road systems. The Bureau of Public Roads also cooperated with other federal agencies in constructing roads on federal lands; provided foreign governments with technical assistance and advice in highway planning, engineering, and administration; and conducted programs in highway safety, planning, and research and development.

Whitton was very active in professional associations. His work was recognized by numerous awards, including national awards in the highway field and an award from the International Road Federation. He was also active in both civic and religious affairs.

Whitton married Callie Maud Lowe on April 19, 1925. They had one son, Rex M. Whitton, Jr., and three grandchildren. Rex M. Whitton died on July 7, 1981.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Rex M. Whitton Papers consist of speeches, correspondence, photographs, and miscellaneous material. They primarily document Whitton's work as Federal Highway Administrator from 1960 to 1966. The collection's strength lies in the correspondence from presidents Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson, and from Lady Bird Johnson. The papers are arranged into four series: **Biographical**, **Writings**, **Correspondence**, and **Miscellaneous**.

The **Biographical** series contains obituaries of Rex Whitton arranged in alphabetical order

by name of publication, as well as awards and certificates, also in alphabetical order. Numerous newspaper and magazine articles, mainly covering his federal career, are arranged in chronological order and then alphabetical order by title of publication. Photographs capture ribbon cuttings and social programs primarily in 1964. Also included is a copy of *Shamrock*, a “publication by the engineers of the University of Missouri, published every St. Patrick’s Day,” from 1920, the year of Whitton’s graduation.

The **Writing** series is comprised of magazine articles, arranged in chronological order, written by Whitton, and his speeches, bound in chronological order and dating from 1961 to 1966.

The **Correspondence** series contains six bound volumes of letters congratulating Mr. Whitton on his appointments. One, arranged alphabetically by author, pertains to his state appointment and five, also arranged alphabetically by author, recognize his federal appointment. Loose correspondence from Whitton’s days in Washington, D.C., in alphabetical order by author, is probably more significant for who wrote the letters than for their content. A scrapbook compiled by various subordinate federal departments under his jurisdiction and presented to him on the occasion of his retirement in 1966 rounds out this series.

The **Miscellaneous** series includes invitations and programs from numerous social events, some of which took place in foreign countries, during Whitton’s days as Federal Highway Administrator. Two folders from the 1961 and 1964 inaugurations complete this series. Included are such unique items as the bus passes from the trips to the inaugurations and the ticket stubs for admission.

FOLDER LIST

Biographical Series

- f. 1 Rex M. Whitton biographical sketches, 1963, 1966; obituaries, 1981
- f. 2 Awards and certificates
- f. 3 *Shamrock*, 1920
- f. 4 Photographs, 1964
- f. 5 Newspaper clippings, 1961-1981
- f. 6-9 Magazine articles about Whitton, n.d., 1952, 1961-1967

Writings Series

- f. 10 Magazine articles authored by Whitton, 1955-1965
- f. 11 Speeches, 1961
- f. 12 Speeches, 1962
- f. 13 Speeches, 1963
- f. 14 Speeches, 1964
- f. 15 Speeches, 1965
- f. 16 Speeches, 1966

Correspondence Series

- f. 17 Congratulatory letters, 1951
- f. 18 Congratulatory letters, 1960-1961/A-D

- f. 19 Congratulatory letters, 1960-1961/E-F
- f. 20 Congratulatory letters, 1960-1961/I-O
- f. 21 Congratulatory letters, 1960-1961/P-S
- f. 22 Congratulatory letters, 1960-1961/T-Z
- f. 23 General correspondence, 1961-1966
- f. 24 Scrapbook, 1966

Miscellaneous Series

- f. 25-27 Invitations 1961-1967, n.d.
- f. 28 Programs, 1961-1967
- f. 29 Inauguration and related items, 1961-1963
- f. 30 Inauguration, 1965

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