

*South Carolina Political Collections  
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University of South Carolina*

**Robert T. Ashmore**  
*(1904-1989)*

**Papers, 1914-2002**

**Volume:** 3.75 linear feet

**Processed:** 2003, updated by Laura Koser; 2007, additions by H.J. Hartsook

**Provenance:** Donated by Mrs. Nancy Vance Ashmore Cooper

**Citation Form:** Robert T. Ashmore Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, The University of South Carolina

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**Biographical Note:**

Robert T. Ashmore was born near Greenville on 22 February, 1904. Raised on a farm, he attended public schools in Greenville. After graduating, Ashmore entered Furman University, working his way through school with a number of jobs including agricultural work, retail, and occasional work as a substitute mail carrier. Graduating from the Law School in 1927, he was admitted to the bar in January 1928. Practicing law in Greenville, Ashmore was elected solicitor of the Greenville County Court in 1930 and served in that position until 1934. In 1936 he became solicitor of the Thirteenth Circuit Court of South Carolina. In 1942 he married Willie Vance "Billy" Linthicum [1907-2002] of Atlanta, Georgia. The couple has one daughter, Nancy Vance.

In 1942, Ashmore took official leave from his duties as solicitor in order to volunteer for Army Service. Serving with the Judge Advocate General's Corps, Ashmore attained the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1946. Leaving active duty in May of 1946 he joined the United State Army Reserve and was promoted to colonel in 1955. Following the War, Ashmore returned to service as solicitor of the Thirteenth Circuit Court. In 1947 he served as prosecutor in the well publicized trial of individuals involved in the Greenville lynching of Willie Earle.

Ashmore served as solicitor until 1953, when he was elected to fill the vacancy of the U.S. House of Representatives 4<sup>th</sup> District seat created by the death of Representative Joseph R. Bryson. Ashmore was re-elected in the next seven elections and served as Representative until January of 1969. Choosing not to run for re-election in 1968, Ashmore returned to Greenville to practice law. Between 1970 and 1973 he served as Chairman of the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments, the creation of which he had voted against while in the House. Ashmore died in Greenville on 5 October, 1989.

**Scope and Content Note:**

The Ashmore collection consists of 3.75 ft. of material, chiefly correspondence, speeches, and clippings of United States Congressman Robert T. Ashmore (1904-1989). Ashmore represented South Carolina's 4<sup>th</sup> District in the United States House of Representatives between 1953 and 1969. Also included are records of his campaigns for office, 1935-1970, and work with the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments, 1970-1985.

**General correspondence** includes both personal and public correspondence. Letters written home from Washington, D.C. reflect some private expressions of the pressures and frustrations of public service. "I'm still mad because I didn't get home this weekend and for July 4th. It was foolish to put so much mark on the docket for this time [season,] but the dumb leadership is trying to force Fed. Aid to Education, Civil Rights, etc. to a vote before we adjourn," he complained on 1 July 1956. "Just a few lines to let you know I expect to be home next weekend for Memorial Day," he wrote on 26 May 1957, "...but keep it quiet as I don't want to make any speeches." Correspondence written during World War II describes Ashmore's experiences during his tour of duty in the Army Judge Advocate General Corps.

**House of Representatives** papers include copies of legislation sponsored by Ashmore, committee records on contested elections, 1965-1968, and topical files on subjects including communism and civil rights. Also included is the text of his press release announcing his decision in 1968 not to seek another term in the House. "I have been continuously engaged in public service since 1930....It has not only been a great privilege but the highest honor of my life to have been the beneficiary of the confidence, trust, and faith of the voters on so many occasions....I am announcing my retirement at this time so that the people of the Fourth District may have more than ample time to consider and choose my successor....When I entered Congress in June 1953, we were engaged in the Korean War, then came the Cold War, the Cuban Crisis, the advent of the Space Age, and the Viet Nam War. Each of these will probably be known as a land-mark in the history of mankind. Such events have not only been exciting but turbulent and dangerous....I have seen too many people, and particularly Members of Congress, postpone retirement until it was too late to enjoy a few years during the twilight of life. This I want to avoid."

**Speeches** include two campaign speeches from 1954, relating the Congressman's pride in his work in the House and for the District. "I have constantly worked and voted to eliminate waste and extravagance in Federal Spending, and, as most of you know, I have vigorously opposed the policy of trying to win foreign friends with the American taxpayer's dollar," he wrote on 2 June 1954. Notes for another speech conclude with what surely was a favorite joke — A man's mother-in-law dies in California. The undertaker there wires the son-in-law in South Carolina asking how he wants the body handled. "Shall I embalm her, cremate her, or bury her?" The son-in-law responds immediately, "Do all three; take no chances" (4 March 1968).

**Audiovisual materials** include an audio tape containing a June 1966 CBS radio broadcast, *Capitol Cloakroom*, in which Ashmore is joined by fellow House Administration Committee member Charles E. Goodell to discuss a proposal from the President concerning campaign finance reform. Photographs from throughout Ashmore's private and political career are present. Of note are two photographs believed to have been taken in Greenville and showing President Lyndon B. Johnson on a campaign whistle-stop with Ashmore and South Carolina's senior senator, Olin D. Johnston.

Mrs. Ashmore is represented, under Family, with the texts of speeches she made in the 1960s, a memoir possibly compiled in the 1970s, and other materials.

**Timeline:**

- 1904        born Feb. 22, near Greenville
  - 1927        graduated from Furman Law School
  - 1928        entered into practice of law in Greenville
  - 1930-34     Solicitor, Greenville Co.
  - 1936-53     Solicitor, 13th judicial circuit
  - 1942        married Willie Vance "Billy" Linthicum
  - 1942-46     served in the U.S. Army, Judge Advocate General's Corps, Dec. 1946,
  - 1946, May   attained the rank of Lt. Colonel
  - 1953-69     elected to U.S. House from South Carolina's 4<sup>th</sup> District to fill the vacancy created  
by the death of Joseph R. Bryson, served June-Jan. 3, 1969, was not a candidate for  
reelection in 1968
  - 1969        resumed practice of law
  - 1970-73     Chair, South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments
- 

**Campaigns:**

- 1953        opposed by Robert C. Wasson, Charles C. Moore and three others
- 1954-60     unopposed in Democratic primaries
- 1962        opposed by Jim Workman
- 1964        opposed by Gordon Weathers
- 1966        unopposed in both primary and general elections

## **Collection Inventory**

General:

**Box 1**

1933-1955

1960-1989, n.d.

Baptist Church, 1941, n.d.

Biographical Data

Campaign Records:

1935-1950

1953

1954, 1956

1960-1962

1964-1968

1970, n.d.

Certificates and Awards

Correspondence:

General:

1934, 1939, 1940

1941:

April - September

October-December

1942

1943

1944

1945:

January

February

March

April

May

June-July

1949

1950, 1952, 1953

1954:

January – June

July – December

1955

1956

1957

1958-1959

1960-1965

1966-1989, n.d.

Patterson, Elizabeth, U.S. Representative 1987-1988

Earle, Willie, (Lynching) 1947-1990

Family:

Nancy Vance Ashmore

Willie Linthicum Ashmore:

General, 1914-2002

Speeches, 1961, 1965

Former Members of Congress, Association of  
Greenville

**Box 2**

House of Representatives:

General:

1953-1961

- 1962-1969
- n.d.
- Administrative Committee, Sub-committee on Elections, 1962-1968
- Civil Rights:
  - General
  - Act of 1963
- Communism
- Legislation:
  - General
  - Agriculture
  - Election Reform Act of 1967
  - Hatch Act, 1958-1968
  - Housing, 1966-1968
  - Labor, 1959-1967
  - National Traffic Safety Act, 1966
  - Post Offices
  - Relief Bills:
    - 1956-1964
    - 1965, 1968, n.d.
  - Safe Streets and Crime Control Act, 1967
  - Textiles, 1958-1963
- Voting Record
- Wilson Immigration case file
- South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments:
  - 1970-1973
  - 1974-1985, n.d.
- Speeches:
  - 1953
  - 1954-1955
  
  - 1956-1957
  - 1958-1959
  - 1960-1962
  - 1963-1964
  - 1965-1968, n.d.
- Audiovisual:
  - Photographs:
    - General:
      - 1936-1945
      - 1953-1959
      - 1960-1969
      - 1970-1980
      - n.d.
      - Berlin, 1964
      - Japan, 1965
      - Portraits
  - Recordings:
    - CBS Radio, Capitol Cloakroom, June 1966 [2 cassettes, 1 LP record]
    - Interviews conducted by Will Gravely with RTA re: Willie Earle Lynching, 1982, 1988 [with transcripts]
  - Scrapbook, Willie Vance Linthicum, 1921
  - Sketch, charcoal, 1959
- Clippings:
  - General:
    - 1936-c. 1952
    - 1953
    - 1954

**Box 3**

1955  
1956  
1957  
1958  
1959  
1960  
1961-1962  
1963-1964  
1965  
1966  
1967  
1968  
1969-1990  
n.d.

Topical:

Alford Hay Disputed Election, 1958

Campaigns:

1953  
1954  
1956  
1960  
1962  
1964-1966

Civil Rights, 1954-1967

Donaldson Air Force Base

Fouke Furs

Hartwell Dam

South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments

Bound Volumes (filed inside box):

Personal and Law Office Financial Record, 1930-1970

Congressional Directory, 1967