

South Carolina Political Collections
The University of South Carolina

Allard Henry Gasque
(1873-1938)
Papers, 1920-1938

- Volume:** 7 linear feet
- Processed:** 1988; arrangement revised 2009, by Debbie Davendonis Todd
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Biographical Note:

Allard Henry Gasque (1873-1938) represented South Carolina's Sixth Congressional District from 1923 until his death from heart disease just hours after the close of the final session of the Seventy-fifth Congress. As a member and later chairman of the Pension Committee, Gasque was a champion of America's veterans and their families. His final major piece of legislation provided pensions to veterans of the Spanish-American War. In addition to his work on behalf of veterans, Gasque served on the Interstate Commerce Committee.

Gasque was born near Hyman in what is now Florence County. Born into a farming family, Gasque became a teacher in country schools and later entered the University of South Carolina. Following graduation in 1901, Gasque became principal of Columbia's Waverly Graded School.

In 1902, he was elected superintendent of education for Florence County. Gasque became active in local and state politics and educational organizations, and served on the Democratic State Executive Committee from 1912-1920. In 1923, he resigned as superintendent to take his seat in Congress. On his work as a congressman, Gasque wrote to a friend on March 14, 1924, "The next time you hear anybody say a Congressman does not have anything to do, you can just deny that fact. It is the hardest work that I have undertook [*sic*]."

Gasque's political machinery and network of support continued to function long after his death. His wife, Elizabeth "Bessie" Hawley Gasque, was elected to fill Gasque's unexpired term in a special election and served from September, 1938 until January, 1939. His secretary, John Lanneau McMillan (1902-1979), was elected in 1938 to the Seventy-sixth Congress and represented the Sixth Congressional District from 1939 until 1972. McMillan's papers are also held by South Carolina Political Collections.



Scope and Content Note:

The collection consists of 7 linear feet of papers comprised chiefly of constituent correspondence. Study of the collection reveals a great deal about life in South Carolina during the Depression, particularly in regard to the politics of the time. The collection is arranged into two major series: Personal, including campaign, and Public. The Personal papers document Gasque's financial affairs, his family life, and activities and correspondence outside of his official role as a congressman. The campaign papers, 1928 to 1938, showcase the large numbers of Gasque supporters who reached out to him in the various elections. The topical papers are the most varied and provide insight into issues such as patronage, veteran's affairs, and post office politics.

Gasque's personal papers make clear that he shared in the troubles that many of his constituents faced as a large financial crisis towered over South Carolina and the United States. Correspondence between Gasque and various banks and creditors highlight his own personal financial hardships. Gasque tried as best he could to provide for his family and his letters reflect his efforts and love. On February 15, 1935, Gasque wrote to his son, Tommy, who was attending the Augusta Military Academy at Ft. Defiance, Virginia, "I was glad to get your letter and would have answered same earlier but have been so busy could not get to it. I am sending you \$2.00 and also the \$1.00 for collars. This about breaks me but of course you know your 'old pal' will give you anything he has if he can. With all my love, I am, Your Daddy."

Gasque also struggled with a series of heart troubles and various bouts with the flu. Get well letters poured in after Gasque suffered a heart attack in the spring of 1935. On May 11, 1935, attorney R.H. Singletary of Bishopville wrote to Gasque, "It is with profound regret that I learned through the papers of your illness and I wish to say to you that I hope for you a speedy and complete recovery that have been expressed by various of your friends in this community to me and they too join with me in hoping for you an early complete restoration of your health." The personal papers also highlight Gasque's club activities and correspondence between him and his many friends.

As a member of Congress from 1923 to 1938, Gasque participated in eight races for his seat in Congress. The campaign subseries is comprised of correspondence from six of those races. Letters of strategy, support, and hearty congratulations are typical of each election year. In the 1928 election, Gasque faced an opponent named Allen. With assistance from his brother, C.J., Gasque sought to clarify to a constituent the truth about Allen's war background. On August 25, 1928, C.J. wrote, "...and what I can gather he was supporting Allen on his War record. I presume you have found out what his War record is...as a matter of fact he only served about two months in the Students Training Camp at Wake Forest at about the time the Armistice was signed, yet he is leading a great many people to believe he actually fought in France." Throughout his races, Gasque always counted on support from his friends across the sixth district. That same August day, Gasque wrote to John Wheeler of Trio, "I feel sure if you will use a little extra effort in my behalf Tuesday that you will never regret it and if there is anything at any time that I can do for you, all you have to do is to command me." The campaign papers also provide a glimpse into Gasque's political accomplishments and key issues he focused on during his congressional tenure.

The public papers cover a wide range of issues from agriculture to public works projects. Incoming letters during the fall of 1928 and winter of 1929 relate the efforts of local farmers to combat the devastation caused by flooding. In 1930 Congress passed legislation to expand the Inland Waterway, now called the Intracoastal Waterway, through his district. Gasque considered his efforts and success in this matter one of his finest accomplishments. He wrote F.M. Brickman, April 9, 1930: "I am right proud of my achievement in getting the Inland Waterway route adopted....this is the biggest project, calling for the expenditure of more money, that no other member of Congress or the Senate from South Carolina has ever been able to get through, and I have done this practically alone."

Gasque’s congressional career spanned some of the most challenging economic times the country faced. Gasque blamed a number of the economic problems that his district, state, and the country faced on the Republican Party. On May 7, 1932, Gasque wrote to a constituent, “We are working and trying to bring the government out of the depth that the Republican Party has plunged us into. Of course, this will take time and study as to where cuts can be made without impairing the efficiency of the government.” Gasque fought hard for the common man and often made waves when fighting for the less fortunate. On April 1, 1933, Gasque wrote to a friend, “We are working like the dickens but of course we cannot always please everybody. We can’t please both the millionaires and the poor people by the same vote and it is my purpose to see that the poor get equal rights.”

UNOFFICIAL RETURNS, PRIMARY ELECTION TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 1934																																					
WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY.																																					
	Bethel	Black River	Bloomington	Cades	Cedar Swamp	Central	Edwards	Ebenzer	Greenville	Harmony	Hebron	Hemingway	Henry	Indiantown	Kingstree No. 1	Kingstree No. 2	Lane	Lennus	Midway	Millwood	Mt. Vernon	Morrisville	Muddy Creek	Nesmith	Oak Ridge	Perquimans	Poplar Hill	Salters	Sandy Bay	Singletary	Suttons	Trio	Workman	TOTAL			
For Congress																																					
Emerson L. Ard	4	6	6	94	20	16	61	65	101	17	13	161	41	31	187	76	10	13	22	7	7	25	69	23	39	8	34	37	26	96	2	12	29	0	1358		
E. S. C. Baker	5	24	20	32	11	4	11	22	84	29	24	15	8	10	105	37	36	1	6	10	5	1	60	12	3	9	11	4	13	5	3	12	21	4	657		
Allard H. Gasque	42	29	75	99	103	92	81	39	254	79	164	73	21	55	300	132	76	12	45	53	42	41	23	46	23	80	41	30	106	24	34	52	131	24	2521		
For Solicitor																																					
W. C. Davis	18	13	17	59	44	52	38	26	121	13	3	4	53	25	27	238	92	49	25	19	32	38	12	33	18	5	30	61	6	58	35	1	32	32	7	1363	
Frank H. McLeod	33	46	81	169	88	60	111	100	321	109	16	9	192	46	59	353	149	74	6	53	38	16	53	63	65	59	67	25	59	88	89	38	43	148	22	3092	
For State Senator																																					
W. T. Rowell	12	12	30	146	23	47	137	55	157	62	9	6	86	44	31	194	62	67	19	12	5	6	40	15	14	42	46	37	33	75	83	14	70	154	6	1932	
M. A. Shuler	39	47	68	82	112	65	18	71	292	63	10	6	163	27	66	397	181	55	12	61	65	48	26	82	67	22	51	49	30	70	42	25	5	25	23	2550	
For the House of Representatives																																					
P. O. Arrowsmith	26	25	71	103	35	71	91	20	174	79	19	66	14	19	268	100	48	19	46	56	25	40	11	46	46	39	52	1	60	66	5	41	94	17	1893		
W. C. Claiborne	13	12	22	13	0	12	20	15	71	7	12	20	0	12	176	69	23	4	1	28	20	9	18	24	1	2	1	2	1	23	51	2	30	54	16	781	
W. N. Clarkson	12	23	17	112	79	34	32	32	258	22	51	76	9	48	240	116	58	7	22	18	27	10	12	21	8	38	15	3	106	17	33	19	65	16	1656		
Geo. M. Graham	32	41	38	74	49	65	58	45	235	51	8	6	77	53	62	368	122	89	15	26	45	25	21	52	28	45	47	25	31	96	30	19	41	66	9	2172	
E. P. Kirby	31	20	16	118	43	27	33	49	164	26	167	52	21	16	113	43	13	12	15	13	30	5	21	6	19	72	41	14	33	73	5	17	28	9	1415		
W. A. Lowmire	6	23	26	55	50	28	8	72	108	6	38	113	32	27	122	41	30	6	45	19	16	20	69	34	7	21	33	28	31	62	6	36	31	7	1256		
John J. Snow	12	11	42	87	67	61	75	77	106	7	83	163	58	63	267	118	49	16	53	20	4	61	64	57	33	30	15	58	47	6	23	32	114	1	1985		
Louis E. Venters	11	22	59	83	29	38	53	53	102	91	12	6	146	22	32	150	79	57	14	13	9	15	30	37	37	23	23	68	63	29	81	20	11	76	3	1705	
For County Supervisor																																					
J. F. Brockinton	0	1	2	11	6	6	0	8	138	4	0	10	3	1	22	9	11	0	2	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	3	0	21	0	0	1	2	0	268		
L. S. Dennis	0	4	25	9	6	6	20	13	21	16	10	22	5	8	42	29	6	0	18	3	4	0	2	3	2	2	4	11	7	0	1	5	20	3	327		
J. P. Frierson	36	19	31	73	94	81	27	18	122	6	8	9	92	36	68	288	109	44	12	44	33	14	54	49	51	7	34	23	29	74	0	3	27	81	2	1775	
Delos D. McKenzie	15	35	41	131	32	19	122	86	161	97	10	12	125	26	20	243	94	62	19	9	34	33	13	40	20	56	61	56	30	45	127	30	43	68	24	2119	
For County Treasurer																																					
V. G. Arnette	13	10	22	210	13	7	37	11	15	14	165	40	19	12	125	56	10	8	9	5	4	2	5	13	6	65	22	7	30	80	38	3	13	11	1100		
J. Wesley Cook	32	25	75	14	114	100	91	75	56	95	25	195	49	82	396	160	56	20	61	56	22	65	77	65	57	25	40	96	84	3	1	60	144	12	2521		
Tom S. Rogan	6	24	4	4	9	5	35	38	371	15	12	14	4	2	75	26	56	3	3	9	27	0	16	4	2	8	24	0	28	39	0	13	26	6	908		
For County Auditor																																					
Donald Montgomery	51	59	101	228	136	112	163	124	442	124	20	2	249	72	96	596	242	122	31	73	70	53	67	98	82	65	98	86	96	142	122	39	76	183	29	4529	
Liquor Referendum																																					
Wet	48	45	87	162	76	85	76	297	95	131	51	70	397	146	92	23	55	58	25	56	28	49	53	78	69												
Dry	3	14	14	62	57	27	51	137	31	124	18	28	187	96	31	8	18	12	29	7	69	16	45	8	2												

The topical series is dominated by three sub-series, patronage, postal, and veteran’s affairs. Patronage is the largest sub-series, showcasing the scarcity of jobs from 1923-1938. Gasque’s office was inundated with job requests, particularly in 1935. On June 4, 1935, Gasque himself expressed his exasperation, “It is quite impossible to rest when I am at the office as we are rushed to death with work and people looking for jobs and positions.” Two months later on August 29, 1935, Clara Moore, a stenographer in Gasque’s office wrote: “Everything here is o.k. Plenty of job seekers right on but not quite as bad as a few days ago. The correspondence has not let up any so far but I am keeping up with it all anyway.” Through his efforts to assist his constituents, Gasque became linked to these individuals’ lives. Constituents expressed their gratitude to Gasque throughout their difficulties. On July 24, 1937, Mary D. Parnell wrote to Gasque: “This is to express my appreciation for the interest and cooperation furnished by you and your Staff concerning my recent furlough. Thanks to you, I am still employed... Needless to say my continued employment is no trivial matter to me and I shall do everything possible to justify your confidence.” Due to the volume of correspondence concerning patronage, this series is arranged by year, month, and then by week.

Much of Gasque's mail concerns the selection of local postmasters. Gasque fumed over the corrupt local Republican regime and his inability to influence patronage. Writing to A.P. Padgett of Hemingway, March 9, 1928, Gasque stated, "The methods used by the Republican Party in making these appointments in South Carolina are a shame and a disgrace to civilization, however they are in power and we can do nothing about it until we can get them out." On March 4, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a Democrat, came to the White House and Gasque could then play a role in the selection of local postmasters. He could select from among the three individuals scoring highest on a federal exam to fill any openings for these desirable, remunerative, and often hotly contested positions. Letters of recommendation and requests for consideration frequently discuss in detail the political ramifications of an appointment, documenting local political battles in such communities as McColl and Kingstree and illuminating Gasque's campaign machinery. For example, F.J. Watson, postmaster of Kingstree during the Hoover administration, had voted for Hoover in opposition to the nomination of Al Smith by the Democratic Party, though he did not consider himself a Republican. Hoping to retain his position under Roosevelt, Watson wrote Gasque, January 24, 1936, and explained the circumstances which had led him to support Hoover and his underlying loyalty to the Democratic Party. He concluded, "During the spring of 1932...I wanted to vote for Roosevelt, but I felt sure that in case I did I would be accused of doing so only to be able to say that I voted for the winning man in order to hold my job. Being sensitive on that point, I voted for Hoover." Variations of such stories appear throughout Gasque's constituent mail.

Veterans, their widows, and their children held a special place in Gasque's heart. Gasque worked tirelessly to see veterans and their families provided for. His letters reveal his work with Civil War widows, Mexican American War veterans, Indian wars veterans, Spanish American War veterans, and veterans of the First World War. Summing of the feelings of many of the war widows, a World War I widow wrote to Gasque on January 29, 1932: "I am writing you not only in the interest of myself but thousands of other widows who have been left penniless with little ones because their loved one gave their lives for their country either during War or after their return home from oversea[s]." Gasque supported a number of pieces of legislation to aid widows and their children, as well as assisted veterans with claiming their pensions. In 1933 Gasque faced criticism for his vote against Roosevelt's Economy Act. Designed to support Roosevelt's campaign pledge to balance the federal budget, the so-called "Economy bill" featured a significant reduction in veteran's benefits. Wattie McGirt of Darlington wrote to Gasque, May 19, 1933: "I have yet to see a single veteran who has criticized you for the stand you took and only a few disgruntled politicians and men who hate to see the veterans receive anything are the ones who have had anything to say and I feel sure after August 1, when no checks come in, for over half the veterans in your district, that they will realize that you are the best friend that they ever had."

COLLECTION INVENTORY

Personal:

Box 1

- General
- Campaign:
 - General
 - 1928-1938, Finance
 - 1928:
 - General
 - Constituent Support
 - Congratulations
 - 1930, Voting Record
 - 1932:
 - Constituent Support
 - Congratulations
 - 1933-1936, Constituent Support
 - 1934:
 - General
 - Election Results
 - 1938:
 - Constituent Support
 - McMillan, John
- Family
- Finances
- Get Well
- Invitations
- Memberships:
 - General
 - Dues
- Staff:
 - General
 - McMillan, John

Public, Topical:

- General:
 - 1920-1924
 - 1926-1938
 - n.d.
- Agriculture:
 - General
 - Cotton:
 - General
 - Legislation
 - Legislation
 - Petitions
 - Relief and Financial Assistance:
 - General
 - Weather Damage
 - Tobacco:
 - General
 - Legislation
 - Petitions
- Boy Scouts
- Bridges and Canals [see also Intercoastal Waterway]

Business
Commerce
Constituent Services:
 General
 Agriculture
 Bills and Reports
 Education
 Fish
 Landscape

 Relief and Loans
 Tours and Passes
 Treasury
Education
Electrification
Immigration
Intercoastal Waterway:
 General (2)
 Employment
 Petitions
Interstate Commerce Commission
Labor
Legislation
Lumber
Military:
 General
 Appointments
 Legislation
 Transfer and Discharge Requests
Neutrality
Parks
Patronage:
 General:
 1923-1929
 1930-1931
 1932
 1933, Feb. – July
 1934, Feb. – Nov.
 1935:
 Jan. – Apr.
 May:
 1-7
 8-17
 18-24
 25-31
 June:
 1-6

 7-11
 12-18
 19-25
 26-30
 July:
 1-7
 8-15
 16-25

Box2

Box 3

26-31
Aug.:
1-6
7-13
14-20
21-31
Sept.:
1-18
19-30
Oct. – Dec.
1936:
Jan.
Aug.
1937 (1 of 2)

1937 (2 of 2)
1938, Apr. - June
n.d.
Postal:
General
Carrier:
General
Allsbrook
Andrews
Blenheim
Conway
Darlington
Dovesville
Florence
Georgetown
Greeleyville
Hartsville
Hemingway
Johnsonville
Kingstree
Lake City
Lake View
Kingstree
Loris
McColl
Postmaster:
General
Allsbrook
Andrews
Bennettsville
Bishopville
Brookgreen
Brownsville
Clio
Conway
Darlington
Dillon
Florence (2)
Gurley
Hamlet, NC
Hamer

Box 4

Hartsville
Hemingway
Henry
Hyman
Johnsonville
Kingstree
Kollock
Lake City
Lamar
Latta

Longs
Loris
Marion
McColl
Mullins:
 General
 Martin, L.V.
Myrtle Beach
Nichols
Olanta
Timmons ville

Box 5

Railroad:
 General
 Railway Clerks

Pee Dee Fair

Postal Affairs:

 General
 Airmail
 Contracts
 Railroad
 Legislation
 Petitions and Maps
Personnel:
 General
 Carrier Work Increase
 Duties
 Reappointments:
 General
 Alford, Willie Case
 Blakely Case
 Dawsey, Maida Case
 Termination and Job Loss
 Transfers
 Wages and Leave

Post Offices:

 Adrian
 Allen
 Allsbrook
 Andrews
 Aynor
 Bannockburn
 Bayboro
 Bennettsville
 Bishopville
 Blenheim

Brownsville
Buckspout
Cades
Centenary
Cherry Grove
Clio
Conway
Coward

Darlington
Dillon
Dovesville
Dunvegan
Ebenezer
Effingham
Fair Bluff, NC
Florence
Galivant's Ferry
Georgetown
Greeleyville
Gresham
Gurley
Hamer
Hartsville
Hemingway
Henry
Horry
Hyman
Johnsonville
Kingstree
Kingsburg
Kollock
Lake City
Lake View
Lamar
Lane
Leo
Little River
Loris
Lydia
Marion
McColl
Middendorf
Mullins
Murrell's Inlet
Myrtle Beach
Nichols
Nixonville
Olanta
Pamplico
Plantersville
Poston
Scranton
Wampee

Box 6

Presidential Powers
Prohibition

Public Works
Railroads:
 Accident Investigation
 Retirement and Pension
 Service
Speaking Engagements
Social Security
Statehood
Tax Laws

Veterans Affairs:

Box 7

 General
 Bonus Bill
 Civil War
 Claims:
 1927-1935
 1937
 1938
 Economy Bill (2)
 Hospitals:
 Admittance
 Fulmer Bill
 Petitions
 HR 460
 Indian Wars
 Legislation, Miscellaneous
 Mexican-American War
 Spanish-American War:
 General
 Petitions
 World War [I]
 Widows:
 General
 Legislation, "Widows Pension Bill":
 1932 (3)
 1938
Weather
Works Progress Administration (WPA)