



DALLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
"Remembering Dallas' past builds her future"

R. L. Thornton papers, 1941-1961, undated

Overview

Creator:	Thornton, Robert Lee
Title:	R.L. Thornton papers
Dates:	1941-1961, undated [bulk dates 1955-1957, 1959]
Abstract:	R. L. Thornton was a major figure in the civic life of Dallas during the early to mid-20th century, particularly through his involvement in the Mercantile National Bank, the State Fair of Texas, and in his role as mayor of the city. The R. L. Thornton papers reflects this through the archival and visual materials related to Thornton's role as mayor of Dallas and as president of the State Fair of Texas, and the visual materials that relate to Mercantile National Bank. The majority of the materials found within this collection are correspondence, although there are also reports, booklets, newspaper clippings, certificates, documents, photographs, and negatives.
Identification:	90.5, 90.4-12
Quantity:	15 boxes (14 under A.90.5, 1 under V.90.4-V.90.12),
Language:	Material is in English
Repository:	Dallas Historical Society

Biographical Note

R. L. Thornton was born near Hico, Texas, on August 10, 1880. After holding a variety of jobs in Dallas, Thornton became president of Stiles, Thornton and Lund in 1916. The company organized the Dallas County State Bank, which became the Mercantile National Bank during the Great Depression. Thornton served as president of the bank until 1947.(1)

Thornton was involved in the civic life of Dallas, serving as president of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce (1933-1936), a director of the Texas Centennial Exposition (1936), an original organizer of the influential Dallas Citizens Council, and as president of the State Fair of Texas (1945-1960). Thornton served as mayor of Dallas from 1953-1961, and his most notable accomplishments include the Forney Dam project, the expansion of Love Field Airport, and the

development of a new library, city hall, and the Dallas Memorial Auditorium. Thornton died on February 15, 1964, and a freeway in the city is named in his honor.(2)

Sources:

1. Joan Jenkins Perez, "THORNTON, ROBERT LEE," Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fth34>), accessed July 03, 2014.
 2. Joan Jenkins Perez, "THORNTON, ROBERT LEE," Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fth34>), accessed July 03, 2014.
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Scope and Contents Note

The R. L. Thornton papers contains the papers and records generated by Thornton during his time as mayor of Dallas and president of the State Fair of Texas, primarily for the years 1955-1957 and 1959. These materials deal mainly with the City of Dallas and the State Fair of Texas. The bulk of the material in the collection is correspondence, and there are also reports, booklets, newspaper clippings, programs, certificates, documents, photographs, and negatives.

There are five series in the collection: City of Dallas records, R. L. Thornton personal papers, State Fair of Texas records, museum objects, and visual materials.

The first series, City of Dallas records (1954-1961, undated), contains correspondence, reports, booklets, newspaper clippings, programs, certificates, and other documents related to Thornton's interactions with the city of Dallas.

The second series, R. L. Thornton personal papers (1955), contains correspondence and documents of a more personal nature generated by Thornton.

The third series, State Fair of Texas records (1955-1957), contains correspondence, booklets, newspaper clippings, and other documents related to Thornton's involvement with the State Fair of Texas while serving as president of the organization.

The fourth series, Visual Materials (1941-1959, undated), contains photographs, postcards, negatives, and a copperplate portrait of Thornton. Subject folders include advertisements, buildings, people, and Thornton himself. This series contains materials related to Thornton (both in his private life and when serving as mayor), the Mercantile National Bank, and the city of Dallas in general.

This collection offers insight into the areas of banking, the State Fair of Texas, R. L. Thornton's role as mayor of Dallas, and the history of Dallas.

The fifth series was removed from finding aid: museum objects, contains museum objects. However, they have not yet been located.

Arrangement of the Collection

The collection is organized into four series:

Series 1: City of Dallas records, 1954-1961, undated

Series 2: R. L. Thornton personal papers, 1955

Series 3: State Fair of Texas records, 1955-1957

Series 4: City of Dallas records, 1954-1961, undated

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research use.

Publication Rights:

Permission to publish materials must be obtained from the staff of the Dallas Historical Society.

Copyright Statement:

It is the responsibility of the user to obtain copyright authorization.

Sensitive Material Statement:

Manuscript collections and archival records may contain materials with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in this collection without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications for which the Dallas Historical Society assumes no responsibility.

Index Terms

This collection is indexed under the following terms.

Subjects (Persons)

Thornton, R. L. -- (Robert Lee)

Subjects (Organizations)

Mayors -- Texas -- Dallas.

City of Dallas

Mercantile National Bank

State Fair of Texas

Subjects

Cotton Bowl
Dallas Memorial Auditorium
Distinguished Texan Award
Forney Dam Project
Love Field Airport

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Collection of the Dallas Historical Society, R.L. Thornton papers.

Acquisition Information

Gift of Bank One, Texas National Association.

Processing Information

Duplicates and original housing materials were de-accessioned from the collection, although any duplicate items with written notes or other additional information on them were kept.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series 1: City of Dallas records, 1954-1961, undated 5.0 linear ft.

Series one contains correspondence, reports, booklets, newspaper clippings, programs, certificates, and other documents related to Thornton's interactions with the city of Dallas.

Box Folder

1	1	Annexations, 1955
	2-4	Auditorium, 1956-1959
	5	Auditorium, City Hall, and Library, 1955
	6-7	Boards and Commissions, 1955, 1959
	8	Budget, 1955-1956
	9-12	Capital improvements, 1955-1961
	13-15	City/County Civil Defense and Disaster Commission, 1955-1961
	16-17	City/County crime laboratory, 1955-1956

	18	City/County hospital, 1955
	19-20	City/County projects, 1955
	21-24	City Plan Commission, 1955-1959
Box	Folder	
2	25	City Water Works daily operations, 1956
	26	Committees, undated
	27	Corporation court, 1956
	29	Crime laboratory, 1955-1957
	30	Dallas Municipal reports, 1956
	31	Dallas/Fort Worth Municipal Industrial Commission, 1956
	32-33	Downtown rehabilitation, 1955-1956
	34	Election returns, 1955-1956
	35-38	Fire Department, 1955-1959
	39-43	General correspondence January-July, 1955-1956
Box	Folder	
3	44-53	General correspondence January-April, 1955
Box	Folder	
4	54-60	General correspondence January-October, 1956
Box	Folder	
5	61-68	General correspondence August-June, 1956-1957
Box	Folder	
6	69-76	General correspondence April-December, 1957
Box	Folder	
7	77	General correspondence October-December, 1957
	78-81	General correspondence January-December, 1959
	82-83	Greater Dallas County League of Municipalities, 1956-1957
	84-86	Health Center, 1955-1956
Box	Folder	
8	85	Health Center, 1955-1956
	86	Krick reports, 1955
	87-89	Legal, 1954-1957
	90-92	Library, 1956-1957, 1959
	93-95	Long Range Water Committee, 1957, 1959
Box	Folder	
9	96-99	Love Field Airport, 1955-1957, 1959
	100	Master Plan, 1957-1958
	101-103	Master Plan Committee, 1955-1956

	104	Park Department, 1959
	105	Parking Commission, 1955, undated
	106-108	Police and Fire Pension Board, 1955-1957
	109	Police Department, 1955
	110-112	Proclamations, greetings, introductions, etc., 1955-1956
Box	Folder	
10	113-119	Public utilities, 1955-1957, undated
Box	Folder	
11	120	Public utilities, 1959, undated
	121-123	Public Works, 1955-1957
	124	Re: Fluoridation, 1959
	125-127	Reservoir reports, 1955-1957
	128	Rockwall-Forney dam, 1958
	129	Statewide Water Committee, 1959
	130-131	Statistics, 1957-1958
	132	Tax rates, 1955
	133-134	Traffic Plan Committee, 1955-1956
	135	Transit Committee, 1955
Box	Folder	
12	136	Trinity Water Committee, 1959
	137	Water, 1955
	138-139	Water Committee, 1956
	140	West Dallas Revitalization Committee, 1959

Series 2: R.L. Thornton personal papers, 1955
2 folders

Box	Folder	
12	141-142	Personal correspondence, January-July, 1955

Series 3: State Fair of Texas records, 1955-1957

.75 linear ft.

Box Folder

12 143 Agriculture, 1955
144- Auditorium, 1955, 1957
145
146- Committees, 1955-1957
148
149- Cotton Bowl, 1955-1957
151

Box Folder

13 152- Directors, 1955-1957
154
155- Distinguished Texan Award, 1955-1956
156
157- Garden Center, 1955-1957
159
160- General correspondence, 1955-1957
164
165- Livestock, 1955-1956
166

Box Folder

14 167 Livestock, 1957
168- Musicals, 1955-1957
170
171 Religious Festival, 1955
172- Statistical, 1955-1957
174
175- Women's Building, 1955-1956
176

Series 4: Visual Materials, 1941-1959, undated

.15 linear ft.

Folder item

V.90.6. 1 Mercantile National Bank 33rd Anniversary Celebration, 1949
2 Mercantile National Bank 33rd Anniversary Broadcasts, 1949

3 Dallas SPCA Altitude Chamber, 1955
4 Painting of ballet dancers, 1955
5 Proposed Monorail Line for the State Fair, 1956
6 Dr. Pepper advertisement, undated
7 Excavation of Mercantile National Bank Building, 1941
8 Zoning map for the Downs on Hillcrest Addition, 1955
9 Parkway Motel in Livingston, Montana, 1955
10 Hudson's Big Country Store in Colgate, Oklahoma, 1955
11 Mary Hurley Hospital in Colgate, Oklahoma, 1955
12 Daltex Optical Building, 1955
13 Tivoli Amusement Park in Copenhagen, Denmark, 1956
14-19 Rendering plant, 1956
20 Tex Mex Co. Holiday Inn Hotel, 1957
21 Rogers Electric Supply Company, 1957
22 Mobil gas station, 1959
23 Gulf gas station, 1959
24 Sinclair gas station, 1959
25 Magnolia gas station, 1959
26 Turtle Creek development, 1959
27 Mercantile Bank Building, undated
28 First State Bank Building, undated
29 Stiles, Thornton and Lund Building, undated
30 Downtown buildings, undated
31 Mercantile National Bank – interior, undated
32 Mercantile National Bank - mosaic and glass, undated
33 Building Lobby, undated
34 Mercantile National Bank - executive foyer, undated
35 Aerial view of Dallas, undated
36 Aerial view of buildings at night, undated
37 Mercantile Motor Bank, undated
38 R. M. Whitford at Newman Hall, 1953
39 Spencer family photograph, 1955
40 Miss Alice in Daisyland, 1956
41 Fujiko Hagawa, undated
42 "The Chief", undated
43 People in an office, undated
44 Man approaching a building, undated
45 Man operating an IBM computer, undated

- 46 R. L. Thornton with military man, 1947
 - 47 Texas Research Foundation banquet, 1952
 - 48 Downtown auditorium, 1954
 - 49-58 Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkhram's visit, 1955
 - 59 R. L. Thornton with group, 1956
 - 60 Trip to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, 1956
 - 61 Completion of Central Expressway, 1956
 - 62 R. L. Thornton with maple syrup, 1957
 - 63 R. L. Thornton at a table, 1957
 - 64-66 Praetorian Mutual Building groundbreaking, 1959
 - 67 R. L. Thornton sitting on steps, undated
 - 68 Miss Continental Airlines – Dallas, undated
 - 69 Miss Continental Airlines - Los Angeles, undated
 - 70 Miss Continental Airlines – Dallas, undated
 - 71 Miss Continental Airlines - Los Angeles, undated
 - 72 Miss Continental Airlines - Los Angeles and Oakland, undated
 - 73 R. L. Thornton and table of fish, undated
 - 74 R. L. Thornton on a dock, undated
 - 75 R. L. Thornton with Braniff Airways, undated
 - 76 R. L. Thornton at a table, undated
 - 77 Braniff Office Building ground clearing ceremony, undated
 - 78 67th Annual Convention of the Texas Bankers Association, undated
 - 79 R. L. Thornton at a gathering, undated
 - 80 R. L. Thornton and the Governor, undated
 - 81 Young woman being crowned, undated
 - 82 R. L. Thornton tips his hat, undated
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