



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

Gaston Family papers

Finding aid

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Gaston, William Henry

Title: Gaston Family papers

Dates: 1830s-1990, undated

Quantity: 11 Boxes (10 under A.90.4, 1 under V.90.4-V.90.12), five Library items, Periodicals, 1 Museum Object; 4.22 linear ft.

Abstract: W. H. Gaston was a key figure in the early development of the city of Dallas, especially in the areas of banking, real estate, and in his involvement with the State Fair of Texas. The Gaston Family Collection contains the papers and records of members of the Gaston Family, and, in particular, those of W. H. Gaston. The types of materials found within the collection include property records, financial documents, legal documents, correspondence, newspaper clippings, printed materials, books, and visual materials.

Identification: A.90.4, M.90.5, L.90.3, P.90.4, V.90.5

Language: The materials are in English.

Repository: Dallas Historical Society

Biographical Sketch

W. H. Gaston was born on October 25, 1840, near Prairie Bluff, Alabama. He served as a captain in the First Texas Infantry regiment of Hood's Texas Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia, during the Civil War. After being discharged in 1865, Gaston returned to Texas to farm. He moved to Dallas in 1868 and formed the only operating bank in the city with A. C. Camp that same year, funding it with \$20,000 of his own gold. The bank went through a variety of mergers and changes throughout the century, operating under such names as National Exchange Bank, Gaston National Bank, Commonwealth National Bank, and Mercantile National Bank, before finally merging with City National Bank on December 31, 1929, to become First National Bank of Dallas, which was recognized as one of the "top 100 financial institutions in America" at the time.

W. H. Gaston's most notable achievement was his involvement in the development of the State Fair of Texas. When the fair was initially organized in 1886, Gaston spent \$16,000 on eighty acres of land which he then gave to the organization in exchange for stock. As of 1904, Gaston had spent \$35,000 of his own money in ensuring the continuation of the organization, and he also served as its president seven times. Gaston wrote that he "never sought notoriety for what [he] [had] done to keep the Fair alive,"

and he felt that he “[could] afford to rest with the consolation that [I] have helped to donate to the State of Texas one of the grandest Fairs in the United States.”

W. H. Gaston died of pneumonia on January 24, 1927, and in his obituary’s he was described as “the ‘Discoverer’ of East Dallas” and “one of Dallas’ first millionaires and city builders.” His business activities included banking, real estate, the exchange industry, the railroad industry, and electric utilities. In another notable instance, Gaston gave Texas & Pacific Railroads right of way through 400 acres of his land in order to induce an East-West line through Dallas, which helped spur the development of the city. Fair Park Auditorium was originally considering being named after him, and his efforts for the city of Dallas led to the naming of a street and park in his honor.

Sources:

Robert W. Glover, "GASTON, WILLIAM HENRY," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fga63>), accessed June 24, 2014.

Scope and Contents Note

The Gaston Family Collection contains the papers and records of members of the Gaston family, mainly those of W. H. Gaston. The types of materials found within the collection include property records (such as abstracts of title, deeds, contracts, maps, plats, and surveys), financial documents (such as statements, promissory notes, checks, accounts, and receipts), legal documents, correspondence, newspaper clippings, printed materials, and certificates (such as membership, stock, and amnesty).

There are seven series in the collection: Property Records, Gaston Records, Printed Materials, Library, Museum, Periodicals, and Visual Materials.

The first series, Property Records (1848-1926, Undated), is divided into two sub-series: Records and People.

The first sub-series, Records (1848-1926, Undated), contains abstracts of title, contracts of lease and sale, deeds, maps, plats, mining claims, property status forms, releases, statements, surveys, transfers, trustee’s sales, vendor’s lien, and vendor’s lien notes. These records correspond with W. H. Gaston’s involvement in real estate.

The second sub-series, People (1885-1922, Undated), contains a mixture of the types of property records found in the first sub-series that were able to be arranged in the context of how they were originally stored.

The second series, Gaston Records (1830s-1990, Undated), contains correspondence, promissory notes, account statements, agreements, certificates, bills of cost, contracts, receipts, legal documents, memorandums, booklets, tax forms, and materials related to

an addition at Exposition Park, the First National Bank of Dallas, Gaston Park, the Jefferson Davis Monument Fund, and the State Fair of Texas. These records expound upon W. H. Gaston's business and civic activity, especially in the areas of banking and real estate.

The third series, Printed Materials (1896-1929, Undated), contains a biographical notebook of W. H. Gaston and R. K. Gaston, the statement of facts concerning *J. E. Orem vs. M. K. & T. Ry. Co. of Texas*, a National Exchange Bank deposit book and a property booklet belonging to W. H. Gaston, booklets related to Fair Park Auditorium and the Adolphus Hotel, and a short story that relates an unidentified author's experiences during the Civil War.

The fourth series, Library (1907-1971), contains five books: "The Journal of a Grandfather," by W. E. H. Gramp; "American Red Cross Textbook on Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick;" "A History of the Texas Rangers Association;" "Narrative of the Captivity of William Biggs Among the Kickapoo Indians in Illinois in 1878," by William Biggs; and "Memories of the Lost Cause and Ten Years in South America," by J. M. Polk.

The fifth series, Museum Objects (1902), contains the top section of a golden medal, from an envelope inscribed "Captain W. H. Gaston, member of Hood's Texas Brigade, The Southwest National Bank Dallas, Texas."

The sixth series, Periodicals, contains periodicals, although they have not yet been located.

The seventh series, Visual Materials (Undated), contains photographs and postcards depicting such subjects as W. H. Gaston's home, W. H. Gaston and others on a hunting trip, the "Elite Restaurant" in Dallas, the Dallas Shakespeare Club, and Bishop A. C. Garrett.

This collection offers insight into the areas of banking, real estate, the State Fair of Texas, W. H. Gaston's life, and the history of Dallas.

Arrangement

The collection is separated into 7 series:

- Series 1: Property Records
 - Sub-series 1: Records
 - Sub-series 2: People
- Series 2: Gaston Records
- Series 3: Printed Materials
- Series 4: Library
- Series 5: Museum Objects

Series 6: Periodicals
Series 7: Visual Materials

Each series is arranged in alphabetical order, and then chronologically within each subject folder, unless otherwise noted.

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

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

Subjects (Persons):

Gaston, William H., 1840-1927. [lcnaf]

Gaston, Robert G., [local]

Camp, A. C., [local]

Blaylock, Louis. [local]

Subjects (Organizations):

First National Bank in Dallas. [local]

National Exchange Bank, (Dallas, Tex.) [lcnaf]

Gaston & Ayres, (Dallas, Tex.) [lcnaf]

Security National Bank (Dallas, Tex.) [local]

Texas & Pacific Railway. [lcnaf]

Subjects:

State Fair of Texas--History. [lcnaf]

Confederate War Memorial. [lcnaf]

Places:

Fair Park (Dallas, Tex.) [lcnaf]

Exposition Park. [local]

Gaston Park. [local]

Document Types: [655]

Printed materials. [att]

Periodicals. [aat]

Visual materials. [aat]

Three-dimensional. [aat]

Administrative Information**Preferred Citation**

Collection of the Dallas Historical Society, Gaston Family papers.

Acquisition Information:

Gift of Gertrude Gaston.

Processing Information:

Collection/Papers/Records processed by Joseph Denton, June 24, 2014.

Description of Series**Series 1: Property Records, 1848-1926, undated**Sub-series 1: Records

Box #	Folder #	Title/Description	Date
1-4	1-60	Abstract of Title, Folder 58, An attached note states that "these abstracts show grants from Sam Houston to John Grigsby."	1908-1918, 1925-1926, undated
4	61	Contracts of lease	1883-1925
4	62	Contracts of sale	1904-1913
4	63-64	Deeds - A through E, Arranged alphabetically, by the last name of the person in receipt of the material being deeded.	1856-1915

4-5	65-71	Deeds – Gaston, Arranged alphabetically, by the last name of the person in receipt of the material being deeded.	1864-1923
5	72	Deeds -- Gaston and Associates.	1873-1920
5	73-77	Deeds – G through W, Arranged alphabetically, by the last name of the person in receipt of the material being deeded.	1866-1916
5	78	Deeds -- Incomplete	1876, undated
5	79	Maps & plats	1913, 1926, undated
5	80	Mining claims	1884, undated
5	81	Property status forms	1889-1892
5	82	Releases	1881-1914
5	83	Statements	1901-1922
5	84	Surveys	1902, undated
5	85	Transfers	1875-1897
5	86	Trustee's sale	1890, 1903
5	87	Vendor's lien	1887-1918
5	88	Vendor's lien notes	1890-1914

Series 1: Property Records, 1848-1926, undated

Sub-series 2: People

Box #	Folder #	Title/Description	Date
5	89	Bray	1886-1908
5	90	Burcum, Frank	1918, undated
5	91	Carson, J. L.	1901-1902
5	92	Cole and Poyner	1889-1897
5	93	Douglas, J. N.	1902-1903
5	94	Findley, J. W.	1888-1890
5	95	Gilbert, J. A.	1904-1905
5	96	Guthrie, Oklahoma	1889-1891, undated
5	97	Henzler, Frank	1890, 1898
5	98	Jack J. Wellorn	1879-1890
5	99	Kirkgard, S.	1906
6	100	Lagow	1890-1913, undated
6	101	Moberly, A. f.	1910

6	102	Moody Brothers	1897-1905, undated
6	103	Reeves, Frank	1894-1895
6	104	Sarah Perry Survey	1885-1911, undated
6	105	Scott, J. B.	1887-1897
6	106	Thevenet	1889-1890, undated
6	107	Tompkins, R. V.	1891, 1893
6	108	Wright, G. C.	1913-1922, undated

Series 2: Gaston records, 1830-1990, undated

Box #	Folder #	Title/Description	Date
6	109	Accounts and invoices	1830s, 1896- 1921, undated
6	110	Agreements	1873-1911, undated
6	111	Amazon Fire Insurance Company	1913-1914
6	112-115	Ayres, H. C. – Notes	1900-1913
6	116	Bill of costs	1876-1906
6	117	Certificates	1874, 1883, 1921
6	118	Checks	1876-1904
6	119	Citizens State Bank and Trust Company	1914-1915, undated
6	120	Coleman, L. – Estate papers	1855-1884, undated
6	121	Contracts	1878-1920
6	122	Correspondence, Fair Park Auditorium considered being named after Gaston; Bronze bust of Gaston in the vestibule of the auditorium.	1856-1925, 1971, undated
7	123-125	Correspondence – Gaston, Folder 123, Contains genealogical information for W. H. Gaston.	1873-1926, undated
7	126	Daugherty, J. S.	1855-1908, undated
7	127	Documents, Includes the separation sheet for a medal that was filed under M.90.5.1	1883-1914, undated
7	128-129	Envelopes	undated
7	130	Exposition Park addition	1889-1906

7	131-133	First National Bank in Dallas, 75 th Anniversary, annual reports, correspondence. Folder 133, Gaston formed Gaston and Camp with A.D. Camp, with \$20k of his own gold	1950, 1952, 1986
7-8	134-137	First National Bank in Dallas, Documents, history, mergers.	1898-1980, undated
8	138-139	First National Bank in Dallas, News releases, newspapers.	1956, 1968- 1984, undated
8	140-143	Fishburn, S. A., Accounts, political activity. Folder 142, mainly a letter-writing campaign against Joe Bailey and Bailey-ism.	1918-1920
8	144	<i>Gaston and Ayres</i> articles of association.	1900, undated
8	145	Gaston Park	1915
8	146	Gaston, R. K., Includes the deed to the first piece of land R. K. Gaston acquired in Texas in 1849, and his amnesty certificate from the United States Government following the end of the Civil War.	1849-1875, undated
8	147	Gaston, W. H.—Obituaries	1927
8	148	Legal documents	1876-1903
8	149	Legal documents –Gaston	1870-1922, undated
8	150	Memorandums	1872-1903
9	151	Monument Fund, Information on people involved in the Confederate War Memorial and a list of people who donated.	1890, undated
9	152	Newspaper clippings, Gaston and land donation to State Fair; Gaston spends of \$35k on fair; Exchange Bank formed by Gaston and Camp; President of State Fair in 1902; The discoverer of East Dallas; Gaston gives Texas and Pacific Railroads right of way through 400 acres of his land.	1912-1990, undated
9	153-155	Notes	1871-1923, undated
9	156	Receipts of payment	1872-1924, undated
9	157	State Fair of Texas, Includes a letter which details W. H. Gaston's involvement in the formation of the State Fair,	1886-1936, undated

		used as advocacy for naming a new building on the grounds after him.	
9	158	Stock certificates	1875-1906
9	159	Tax documents	1893-1921, undated
9	160-167	Tax receipts	1870-1916
9	168	Tax receipts, J. M. Patterson lot	1893-1901
9	169	Vermillion, W. R.	1910-1913, undated

Series 3: Printed materials, 1896-1929, undated

Box #	Folder #	Title/Description	Date
10	170	Biographical notebook, Pertaining to the lives of W. H. Gaston and R. K. Gaston, Annie Lone Gaston Reeves started the first bank in Dallas,	Undated
10	171	J. E. Orem v. M.K. and T. Ry. Co. of Texas	1909
10	172	National Exchange Bank Deposit book	1896-1899
10	173	Property booklet, Contains detailed information about various properties of land related to W. H. Gaston.	undated
10	174	"Souvenir Brochure of Dallas" booklet, Fair Park Auditorium.	1929
10	175	"Texas Under Six Flags" booklet, Adolphus Hotel.	undated
10	176	"Virginia Hospitality"	undated

Series 4: Library, 1907-1971

	Item #	Title/Description	Date
	L.90.3.1	<i>The Journal of a Grandfather</i>	1912
	L.90.3.2	<i>American Red Cross Textbook of Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick.</i>	1933
	L.90.3.3	<i>A History of the Texas Rangers Association,</i> W. H. Gaston was an honorary member of the association.	1909
	L.90.3.4	<i>Narrative of the Captivity of William Briggs Among the Kickapoo Indians in Illinois in 1878</i>	1971
	L.90.3.5	<i>Memories of the Lost Cause and Ten Years in South America</i>	1907

Series 5: Museum objects, 1902

Item #	Title/Description	Date
M.90.5.1	The top section of a medal, no ribbon attached	1902

Series 6: Periodicals, undated

Item #	Title/Description	Date
P.90.4	Periodical	undated

Series 7: Visual Material, undated

Item #	Title/Description	Date
V.90.5.1	Two men on a street	undated
V.90.5.2	Opening of Dallas-Oak Cliff Viaduct	undated
V.90.5.3	Bishop in front of the chapel	undated
V.90.5.4	On the hunting trail	undated
V.90.5.5	Portrait of Bishop A.C. Garrett	undated
V.90.5.6	In camp on a Gaston hunt	undated
V.90.5.7	The "Gaston-Hunters" in East Texas	undated
V.90.5.8	Dallas Shakespeare Club	undated
V.90.5.9-12	"The Elite" restaurant in Dallas	undated
V.90.5.13-18	W. H. Gaston's home	undated