

OVERTON BROOKS PAPERS

Mss. 2492, 2520

Inventory

Compiled by
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Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

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Proper acknowledgement of LLMVC materials must be made in any resulting writing or publications. The correct form of citation for this manuscript group is given on the summary page. Copies of scholarly publications based on research in the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections are welcomed.

SUMMARY

Size.	23.5 linear ft.; 36 volumes
Geographic locations	Louisiana; Washington DC
Inclusive dates.	1897-1961
Bulk dates.	1936-1961
Language	English
Summary.	Personal papers include correspondence, photographs, speeches, display items and printed materials from Brooks' service as United States Congressman from Louisiana's Fourth Congressional District. The collection reflects the Congressman's interest in military affairs, water-related issues, such as flooding and levees, and the development of America's role in aerospace. Also contained in the collection are materials from his WW I enlistment, family life and funeral.
Restrictions on access.	Access to vault materials and artifacts is restricted; use facsimiles available in the collection.
Related collections.	Overton Brooks miscellany, Mss. 2521.
Copyright.	Physical rights are retained by the LSU Libraries. Copyright of the original materials is retained by the creators, or their descendants, of the materials in accordance with the U.S. copyright law.
Citation.	Overton Brooks Papers, Mss. 2492, 2520, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries Special Collections, Baton Rouge, La.
Stack Location.	Range 35, 50:81, P:15, OS:B, Vault:3

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Thomas Overton Brooks was born on December 21, 1897 in Baton Rouge, the capital of Louisiana. He attended public school and entered Louisiana State University. His education was interrupted when he volunteered for combat duty during World War I. He received an honorable discharge after serving in France, Belgium and Germany. After leaving the military service, Brooks returned to LSU and received a B.A. on June 12, 1922 and a law degree (with honors) on June 11, 1923. He passed the bar exam and opened a law office in Shreveport, Louisiana where he was active in the Shreveport community. He was a member of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, the Masonic Fraternity and a number of veterans' organizations including the American Legion.

In 1936, Brooks was elected to serve his first term in Congress as representative of the Fourth Congressional District. He served in that office for twenty-five years, until his death on September 16, 1961. During his tenure, he was involved in the affairs of the Armed Services, federal flood control and aerospace programs. Brooks was the ranking chair of the Armed Services Committee. He was the first chairman of the newly created Committee on Science and Astronautics in 1959, becoming the first congressman from Louisiana to head a major committee in over 50 years. He was reappointed in 1961. His political support for the position was bipartisan. Shortly before his death, a private industrial firm named him "Space Congressman of the Year."

He was married to the former Mollie Meriwether, and they had one daughter, Laura Anne Brooks.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Brooks Papers date from 1898-1961. The bulk of the collection dates from 1936-1961. It consists of Brooks' personal and professional papers such as correspondence, speeches, printed materials, newspaper clippings and photographs reflecting his involvement with the armed services, aerospace and local Louisiana issues such as flooding. Correspondence includes letters home when Brooks served in Europe during World War I, patriotic defense of America, and his varied congressional interests and responsibilities. Photographs are comprehensive from childhood to death. The collection has many portraits of political and military figures. A large number of images depict Brooks visiting military bases in the United States, Europe and Asia during his tenure as a member of the Armed Services Committee as well as his promotion of the Space Program when he was chairman of the Science and Astronautics Committee. There are family pictures of Brooks with his wife, Mollie Meriwether, his daughter, Laura Anne, and other members of his family and friends. Manuscript volumes include travel diaries, scrapbooks and picture albums representing his work in Louisiana and Washington, D.C. The collection also includes pamphlets, certificates, memorabilia and campaign items that mirror his personal and professional life.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I. Correspondence 1918-1970, undated

Early correspondence includes letters written to family and friends during Overton Brooks' service in the military during World War I. State-side letters originate from Jackson Barracks in New Orleans, Camp Jackson, South Carolina, and Camp Stuart, Virginia (July-September 1918). Brooks was sent to France in early October 1918 and correspondence discusses camp life and the devastation the war has caused in that country (October-December 1918). Following the armistice, Brooks was sent to Baumbach, Germany and letters discuss his service as a teacher and librarian. Brooks served his remaining time in Germany (January-August 1919). Brooks returned to the United States and was discharged from the military in August 1919. Following his military service, Brooks completed his education and started a legal practice in Shreveport.

After his election to Congress in 1936, letters concern his political constituency and his congressional activities, especially his interests in the military and space programs as well as water-related issues. A number of letters pertain to the Congressman's death and funeral. Vault items include correspondence and signatures of U.S. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy, Eleanor Roosevelt, Senator Lyndon Johnson, autographs of the first American astronauts, and postal covers of important military events.

Series II. Speeches 1916-1961, undated

Speeches are arranged chronologically and topics often reflect the travel and activities of Overton Brooks. Speeches which predate Brooks' political career are included and appear to be related to his school work (1916) and involvement in the community and organizations including the Kiwanis Club, the Louisiana Federation of Labor, and the American Legion (1924-1935). An earlier speech is attributed to Brooks' uncle, Senator John H. Overton (September 1934).

The bulk of speeches originate from Brooks' campaigns for Congress and his political career (1936-1961). A wide variety of topics are represented and speeches generally relate to Brooks' work as a congressman, the committees he served on, and the interests of his constituents. The main topics include foreign policy and military affairs, including a number of speeches which reported on what Brooks learned during his many official tours of Europe and Southeast Asia. Flood control and the needs of his constituents in Louisiana. Agriculture policies and the changes wrought by ceasing war time measures. Later speeches reflect Brooks' involvement in the space program. Radio addresses, political stump speeches, and addresses from congressional debates and committees are included as well as eulogies and memorials. Some speeches are handwritten and many have personal notes.

Series III. Congressional Trips 1944-1957

Materials in Congressional Trips include such items as pamphlets, newspaper clippings, itineraries, speeches, emblems, economic and political assessments of European

countries, personal notes, and reports on foreign policy. Brooks traveled to Europe, the Far East, the South Pacific, the Soviet Union and Hawaii. In 1944, Brooks traveled to the European Theater of Operations under the auspices of the House Military Affairs Committee. Destinations included England, France, Germany, and Italy. In fall of 1947, Brooks traveled to Europe. Brooks kept a travel diary (volume 1) along with extensive handwritten notes and transcriptions detailing conditions of the people, infrastructure, and economy in post-war England and Germany.

In 1951, Brooks traveled to France as part of the Congressional Subcommittee on Foreign Aid. While on this trip Brooks also traveled to Germany, Norway, and the border with Czechoslovakia. A travel diary is included as well as discussions of the tensions at the border with Czechoslovakia, communist activity in Norway, and the French elections. Newspaper clippings documenting the trip are from French and Dutch language newspapers. In 1952, Brooks traveled to Hawaii, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines as part of a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee tasked with assessing construction projects. Materials include itineraries, a description of a visit to a hospital in Japan, extensive notes of Brooks' experiences in Korea, and newspaper clippings documenting the trip.

In September 1955, Brooks again returned to Europe. Two travel diaries (volumes 2 and 3) include notes, partially in shorthand, taken by Brooks during his travels. Destinations included locations in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Yugoslavia, Germany, Finland, and the Soviet Union. Brooks discusses economic conditions and the cost of goods like cars and food. A separate travel diary (volume 2) was kept for the Russian portion of the journey and a typed reminiscence is included as well. In his notes and the reminiscence, Brooks remarks on his feeling of being under constant scrutiny and gives his observations on the clothing and appearance of the people he met as well as the cost of goods. Brooks describes a trip to Red Square which includes a detailed description of the Mausoleum of Lenin and Stalin. Postcards, plane tickets, and ephemera from the trip are included as well. The final two travel diaries (volumes 4 and 5) include notes from an additional trip through Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East taken in the fall of 1957. European destinations include France, Germany, Italy, and Denmark. Brooks also travels to Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, and Libya.

[Note: photographs from many of these trips are included in the photographs series as well as the photograph albums; newspaper clippings can also be found in the scrapbooks.]

Series IV. Printed Materials 1918-1970, undated

Printed materials are wide ranging. They include pamphlets, magazines, certificates, diplomas, journals, the Congressional Record, government bulletins and instructional brochures, newspaper clippings, reports, and maps. Also found is a presidential appointment (1951). **Includes both regular and oversize materials.**

Series V. Photographs 1898-1961, undated

Photographs include personal/family pictures dating from the Congressman's youth in 1897 to his death in 1961. Many are of his wife and daughter. Congressional images

relate to military matters, the space program, water-related issues and his political life. A number of pictures highlight congressional trips to Europe, Asia, the South Pacific and different parts of the United States. There are a number of portraits of important military and political figures as well as images of Mr. Brooks. Also includes a photograph of President Dwight Eisenhower (undated).

Series VI. Manuscript Volumes 1918-1961, undated

Manuscript Volumes contain pictures, news clippings, burial albums, correspondence, personal notes and scrapbooks. They cover politics, congressional interests such as the military, the space program, water-related issues and personal observations.

Series VII. Display Items 1914-1961, undated

Display Items reflect Brooks's professional and personal interests. The artifacts include such things as plaques, groundbreaking shovels, medals, a gavel, ribbon-cutting scissors, German belt buckles, Vanguard Satellite, a Chinese dagger, and White House ink pens.

Series VIII. Audio/Visual 1947-1959

Audio/visual items consist of a tape of a Brooks' speech on "Face the Nation" and a film of the groundbreaking ceremonies for the Shreveport Veteran's Administration Hospital.

INDEX TERMS

1. Aviation

papers of U.S. Congressman include references to military aviation during and after World War II, establishment of air bases, activities of House Armed Services Committee, and early development of U.S. space program

2. Barksdale Air Force Base

letters, newspaper clippings, imprints, photographs, and other items pertaining to establishment and development of Barksdale Air Force Base

3. civil rights 1950s-1961

speeches, clippings, correspondence, and manuscript volumes of former U.S. Congressman pertaining to integration and other civil rights programs

4. Eisenhower, Dwight D. 1956-1960

letters from and references to – see Vault

5. flood control

correspondence, speeches, newspaper clippings and other items from the papers of a former U.S. Congressman pertaining to flood control projects in Louisiana, particularly in the central and northern parts of the state.

6. Johnson, Lyndon B. 1960-1961

letters from and references to – see Vault

7. Kennedy, John F. 1960-1961

letters from and references to – see Vault

8. political campaigns 1936-1960

speeches, correspondence, clippings, photographs and other items pertaining to Louisiana and U.S. national political campaigns.

9. politics 1936-1961

papers of former Louisiana congressman pertain to his career in the U.S. House of Representatives and to various aspects of state and national politics during that time

10. Roosevelt, Eleanor

letters from – see Vault

11. Roosevelt, Franklin D. 1940

letter from October 26, 1940 (Vault); also references to Roosevelt and his policies in collection – see Vault

12. Space and Astronautics Committee 1959-1961
correspondence, speeches, newspaper clippings and photographs pertain to his congressional involvement
13. Shepard, Alan B., Jr. 1961
letter from – see Vault
14. Stephenson, Adlai E. 1956
comments on views of – Memorandum Book, Ms. Vol. #7
15. travel 1947-1957
diaries, photographs, and other items pertaining to official trips made by former U.S. Congressman in Europe, North Africa, and the Far East
16. Truman, Harry S. 1947-1959
letters from – see Vault
17. World War II
correspondence, speeches, clippings and other items pertaining to U.S. military participation in World War II, civilian mobilization, establishment of military bases, veterans' affairs, and postwar military establishment.

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders per box</u>	<u>Contents</u>
Series I. Correspondence 1918-1970, undated			
35:67	1a	7	Personal correspondence and writings of Brooks, World War I reminiscences, (1918-1932)
	1b	11	Congressional and personal correspondence and writings of Brooks, campaign literature (1937-1951)
	2a	8	Political and congressional correspondence, office memos, congressional bill introduced by Brooks, congressional resolution, invitations, ground water evaluation, press release, voting record of Brooks, campaign literature, Taiwanese postcards (1952-1959)
	2b	4	Campaign correspondence, campaign announcement, congressional newsletters (1960-August 1961)
35:68	3a	7	Funeral items: address lists, sympathy cards, telegrams, correspondence (Sept. 9, 1961-Sept. 16, 1961)
	3b	3	Funeral items: letter of sympathy, telegrams, sympathy cards (Sept. 17, 1961-Sept. 24, 1961)
	4a	8	Funeral items: sympathy cards, letters of sympathy, MEMORIAL ADDRESS SUPREME COURT, STATE of LOUISIANA (Sept. 25, 1961-Dec. 1961)
	4b	5	Correspondence, business cards, campaign literature, invitations, humor, parity formula, speech outlines, sympathy notes, Louisiana State Bar memorial speech (1962-1970, undated)
Vault:3	2	4	Correspondence (1940-1961, undated), postal covers (1959-1961), certificate (1951), presidential signature (undated). Access restricted. Please use copies in box 1b, folder 10-11
Vault-21		1	Appointment of Overton Brooks signed by Harry Truman (1951)
Series II. Speeches 1916-1961, undated			
35:69	5a	12	Speeches (1916-1944)
	5b	4	Speeches (1945-1946)
	6a	9	Speeches (1947-1954)
	6b	4	Speeches (1947-1954)
35:70	7a	8	Speeches (1956-July 1958)
	7b	4	Speeches (August 1958-March 1959)
	8a	7	Speeches (April 1959-circa1960)

<u>Stack</u>		<u>Folders</u>	<u>Contents</u>
<u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>per box</u>	
35:70	8b	3	Speeches (1960)
35:71	9	8	Speeches (July 1960-1961, undated)
	10	7	Speeches (undated)
Series III. Congressional Trips 1944-1957			
35:71	11a	10	Congressional trips, 1944-1952
P:15	17	Vol. 1	Diary-Travel, August 23-September 19, 1947
35:71	11b	5	Congressional trips, 1952-1955
	17	Vol. 2	Diary-Travel, September 10-October 15, 1955
		Vol. 3	Diary-Travel, September 19-October 9, 1955
		Vol. 4	Diary-Travel, August 28-September 14, 1957
		Vol. 5	Diary-Travel, September 16, 1957
Series IV. Printed Materials 1918-1970, undated			
35:72	12a	9	Congressional Record (1945-1955)
	12b	4	Congressional Record (1956-1957)
	13a	10	Congressional Record (1958-1960)
	13b	3	Congressional Record (1961)
	14a	7	Newspaper clippings, magazine articles (1919-1959)
35:73	14b	4	Newspaper clippings, printed materials (1960-1965, undated)
	15a	5	Pamphlets (1917-1959)
	15b	2	Pamphlets (1960-1962, undated)
35:74	16	2	Periodicals (1920-1961)
			Certificates (1919-1961, undated)
35:76	21	--	7 items, Maps (1918-1945, undated)
OS:B	1	6	Certificates, newspaper, maps and other printed materials (1915-1961, undated)
Series V. Photographs 1898-1961, undated			
35:74	18a	15	Photographs: portraits, WW I, LSU cadets, family, Congressional, WW II (1898-1939)
	18b	14	Photographs: congressional, WW II, family, travel, military (1940-1947)
	18c	28	Photographs: congressional, ground- breaking, travel, military (1948-August 1952)
	18d	24	Photographs: congressional, travel, military, flooding (September 1952-June 1957)
35:75	18e	23	Photographs: congressional, military, VA hospital dedication, conventions, meetings (July 1957-1958)
	18f	21	Photographs: congressional, military, travel, meetings, portrait (1959, 1950s)

**BROOKS (OVERTON) PAPERS
1897-1961**

**Mss. 2492, 2520
LSU LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders per box</u>	<u>Contents</u>
35:75	18g	8	Miscellaneous (photographs and other items removed from Boxes 18A-F): military and congressional pictures, X-15 budget
	19a	28	Photographs: congressional, military, meetings, NASA, portraits, KKK, awards (1960)
	19b	41	Photographs: congressional, military, awards, photographic plate, parade float, NASA, banquets, funeral (July 1960-1961, undated)
	19c	27	Photographs: congressional, military, meetings, banquet, travel, family (undated)
	19d	35	Photographs: congressional, military, portraits, awards, meetings, NASA (undated)
35:76	19e	22	Photographs: (photographs removed from Boxes 19A-D): congressional, military, family, portraits (undated)
35:77		27	Photographs: state and national government, military, and portraits (1936-1961, undated)
Vault-3	1		Autographed presidential photographs, Harry Truman (2). (1949, undated). Access restricted. Please use copies in box 1b, folder 10.
OS:B		oversize folder 1	Photographs: presidential class; National Convention of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress (1944-1961)
OS:B		oversize folder 2	Photographs: state and national government, military, and portraits (1936-1961, undated)
OS:B		oversize folder 3	Photographs: state and national government, military, and portraits 1958-1959, undated
Series VI. Manuscript Volumes 1918-1961, undated			
P:15		31 volumes	Volumes: scrapbooks, photos, personal notes, news clippings (1918-1961, undated)
Series VII. Display Items 1914-1961, undated			
35:76	20		22 items, Medals (1924-1960, undated)
35:76	22		31, items Display items (1914-1961, undated)
Series VIII. Audio/Visual 1947-1959			
35:	23		Film: "Face the Nation," (March 1, 1959)
	24		Sound recording, (December 10, 1947)
	25		3, items Plaques, (1950-1961)
	26		3, items Plaques, (1959, undated)

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50:			8, items Shovels, pick axe, key (1948-1960)