

A Guide to the Papers of Arthur W. Mitchell 1910-1950

Arthur W. Mitchell Papers 1910-1950

1910-1950



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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

1910-1950

Language

English

Abstract

Copies of the family, personal, business and political correspondence of the first black Democratic Congressman in the United States. Mr. Mitchell represented Chicago in the United States House of Representatives from 1934-1942. The originals are housed at the Chicago Historical Society. Acc. #1968-15

Collector

Arthur W. Mitchell

Physical Characteristics

15,000 items

Repository

Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University

Administrative Information

Access

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Preferred Citation

The Arthur W. Mitchell Papers, 1968-15 , Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

Biographical/Historical Information

Arthur W. Mitchell was born in Roanoke, Alabama, December 22, 1883 the son of Taylor and Ammar (Patterson) Mitchell, who were also natives of that state. Arthur W. Mitchell obtained his early education in Randolph and Chambers counties of Alabama, attending the public schools, and afterward entered the Snow Hill Industrial School and Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute at Tuskegee, Alabama in 1899.

He subsequently taught in the public schools of Alabama, and during this time he established the Armstrong Agricultural School in 1908 at West Butler, Alabama, and served as its principal until he resigned in 1917 to enter military training at Camp Pike, Arkansas. In 1919 he moved to Washington, D.C, read law, for a period of three years, during which time he also engaged in the real estate business. In 1924 he moved to Chicago and was admitted to the practice of law in the State of Illinois.

In 1934 he was selected by the regular Democratic Organization to become the candidate for congress from the first Illinois district and was elected to the congress of the United States House of Representatives, becoming the first African-American elected to the House as a Democrat. Mitchell was reelected in 1936, 1938, and 1940, thus serving four full terms and retired in January 1943.

After retirement Arthur Mitchell moved to Dinwiddie County, Virginia where he built a southern style mansion, in which he enjoyed the life of being a southern gentlemen. His hopes for a political career in Virginia did not come to be. He continued as President of The Mutual Housing Company and was one of the individuals who established Virginians against Jim Crow.

Arthur Mitchell was married several times, in 1904 he married his first wife Eula King and they had a child Arthur W. Mitchell Jr. His first wife Eula King died in 1909, he then married Annie H. Harris in 1911.

Scope and Content Information

When Arthur Mitchell was elected he became the Black Congressional Representative of African-Americans. Mitchell deeply resented this and this is reflected in his correspondence. Nevertheless, African- American and others sought his help and support for a number of different agendas.

Correspondence and speeches in this manuscript group document quite clearly the friction between Mitchell and many Americans. Of particular note. correspondence documenting Mitchell long fight with the NAACP

over a national Anti-Lynch law and his Controversial "Negro Commission". Most of the correspondence is with the Chicago Democratic Party and concerns political patronage.

Some correspondence with William Hastie, Henry Stimson, Walter White, Roy Wilkins, William Dawson and others.

Series Description

Series I. Family And Personal Correspondence 1910, 1965 A. Family 1932, 1965 Correspondence between Mitchell and family members. B. Personal 1910, 1934 Subjects concerning a wide range of issues. C. "Miss B" 1935-1943 Correspondence with a special person in Mr. Mitchell's life.

Series II. Congressional Correspondence A. Interoffice 1935-1941 Mitchell corresponding with his office staff. B. Congressional 1935- 1942 Mostly matters pertaining to Party politics. A large number of letters from people seeking jobs and other political favors. Arranged chronologically within the folders. Correspondence about Lynching and the Negro Industrial Community.

Series III. Correspondence Post Congressional from a number of individuals seeking assistance and Hoping that Mitchell as an ex-congressman can provide it. A. General Correspondence by date 1942-1968 B. Correspondence N.D., Alpha

Series IV. The Mutual Housing Co. 1920-1957 Mitchell established the Mutual Housing Company soon after his arrival in Washington D.C. The series has minutes, financial statements, deeds, and correspondence. A. Ledgers and Reports Minutes, proposals and articles of incorporations B. Minutes 1920-1924

Series V. Mitchell v. The United States. Arthurs lawsuit against the Illinois Central Railroad.

Series VI. Literary A. Reports B. Writing Articles C. Speeches

Series VII. Printed A. Political Broadsides B. News Clippings

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Family 1950-1966 and N.D.

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Family Correspondence 1934 Oct 16-31

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