Allen, William F. (William Franklin), 1883-1946.

William F. Allen scrapbooks
1830-1946
(bulk dates 1937-1938)

Abstract: Two scrapbooks chronicling William Franklin Allen's 1937-1938 term in the U. S. House of Representatives for the state of Delaware, as well as his business affairs in Seaford, Delaware.
### Descriptive Summary

**Identification:** MSS 093, Item 002  
**Creator:** Allen, William F. (William Franklin), 1883-1946.  
**Title:** William F. Allen scrapbooks  
**Inclusive Dates:** 1830-1946  
**Bulk Dates:** 1937-1938  
**Extent:** 2 volumes  
**Language:** Materials entirely in English.

### Administrative Information

**Citation:** MSS 093, Item 002, William F. Allen scrapbooks, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.  
**Shelving Summary:** Shelved in SPEC MSS 093 FOLIO+  
**Location:** Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/  
**Source:** Gift of William C. Allen, 2004.  
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Biographical Note

William Franklin Allen was born in Bridgeville, Delaware, on January 19, 1883, and lived there until 1889, when his family moved to Seaford. In 1903, the family moved to Laurel where they finally settled and Allen attended both grade school and high school. After graduating, Allen began working for the Pennsylvania Railroad as an agent, train dispatcher, and telegrapher. In 1922, he returned to Seaford and began a real estate business while also forming a second business of buying and selling fruit and produce along the Eastern Shore. In 1927, Allen branched into the petroleum business and founded Allen Petroleum Corporation and also founded Allen Package Company. He married Addie M. Davis and together they had three children: Robert (b. 1916), Franklin (b. 1919), and Doris (b. 1920).

During this time, Allen was also deeply involved in both state and local politics. Allen served as school commissioner for the city of Seaford from 1920 until 1924. Also in 1920, he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention held in San Francisco, California. From 1923 until 1927, he served as state senator, presiding as president pro tempore during his last session. A Democrat and firm believer in President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal policies, in 1936, he was elected to the Seventy-fifth Congress, serving from January 1937 until January 1939. He was defeated in his re-election bid of 1938 in a national Republican landslide. Following his defeat, Allen removed himself from politics and focused his attention on his petroleum business. He died on June 14, 1946, and was buried in Seaford, Delaware.

Sources:


Biographical information also derived from the collection.
Scope and Content Note

Two scrapbooks chronicling William Franklin Allen's 1937-1938 term in the U. S. House of Representatives for the state of Delaware, as well as his business affairs in Seaford, Delaware.

William F. Allen, Democratic member of the U. S. House of Representatives for the state of Delaware (1937-1939), was born in Bridgeville, Delaware, in 1883, and died in Lewes, Delaware, in 1946. The William F. Allen Scrapbooks were donated to the University of Delaware by Allen’s grandson, William C. Allen. Allen's single term in Congress capped his political career as a lifelong Sussex County Democrat. The scrapbooks primarily chronicle his term in Washington, though clippings, correspondence, and personal ephemera reveal details about Allen's business ventures and earlier civic and political activities. Throughout, the scrapbooks document Democratic party politics at the local and state level in Sussex County and Delaware. Allen's state prominence led to a close relationship with national chairman James Farley, and support from the prominent Congressman Sam Rayburn, who appeared in Delaware during Allen's first campaign for Congress. Containing correspondence, invitations, and news clippings in addition to other ephemera, the collection provides insight into some of the issues facing politicians during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

There are a few letters from constituents mixed in with correspondence from dignitaries. Of particular interest is ephemera related to the 1937 inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt for a second term as president. Of regional importance are news articles related to Allen’s efforts toward the construction of a bridge across the Delaware River. The scrapbooks include a copy of H.R. 9740, Allen's bill creating Wilmington’s Delaware Bridge Authority in 1938, as well as material documenting his support of plans to construct a bridge over the Chesapeake Bay. In addition to Allen's political activities, invitations and clippings document social aspects of Allen's life in Washington. Several clippings note the participation of Allen's children, Doris and Franklin, with "the young Congressional Set," attending parties, weddings, and other popular affairs hosted by families of members of Congress.

The scrapbooks appear to have been created at some time after Allen was defeated for a second term: materials were placed in the scrapbooks in no strict chronological order. Items related to a particular event are often spread throughout several pages. There is duplication of material both within and between the scrapbooks. On some items, the work "scrap" is written at the top, indicating that they were intended for inclusion in the scrapbook. Also included in the scrapbooks is a small amount of ephemera related to the Allen family. These include primarily receipts dating from 1830 as well as two unidentified cloth bags.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945.

Rayburn, Sam, 1882-1961.


Hull, Cordell, 1871-1955.

Topical Terms

Political campaigns--United States--20th century.

Democratic Party (Del.)--20th century.

Geographic Names

Washington (D.C.)--History--20th century.

Sussex County (Del.)--History--20th century.

Form/Genre Terms

Scrapbooks.

Occupation

Businessmen.

Legislators.
Detailed Description of the Collection

William F. Allen Scrapbooks, 1830-1946 2 volumes

Two scrapbooks chronicling William Franklin Allen's one term (1937-1938) as a member of the U. S. House of Representatives for the state of Delaware, as well as his business affairs.

Scrapbook 1, 1937-1938 [Volume 1]

1 volume

Contains correspondence from colleagues and constituents, notably chairman of the Democratic National Committee James A. Farley, and Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Also includes news clippings mentioning Allen’s efforts to secure construction of a bridge over the Delaware River and his support for a bridge over the Chesapeake Bay. Additional news clippings demonstrate Allen’s interest in political issues in his home state, especially the party dissension among Delaware Democrats that threatened Allen’s chances of being re-nominated as Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in the 1938 election. Also represented in the scrapbook is Allen’s business relationship with the Pure Oil Company as connected to his own company, Allen Petroleum Corporation.

Scrapbook 2, 1830-1946 [Volume 2]

1 volume

Includes ephemera related to the inauguration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt for his second term, correspondence from colleagues and constituents, including Democratic National Committee Chairman James A. Farley, and a program for the inauguration of Richard C. McMullen as governor of Delaware. Also included are ephemera from a testimonial dinner for James A. Farley, various announcements, invitations, and calling cards, and news clippings related to Allen and political issues throughout the state of Delaware. Of particular note is a copy of the Democratic Register, a congressional yearbook for 1936, ephemera from Allen’s trip to the Panama Canal in 1938, and a copy of H.R. 9740, the congressional bill establishing Wilmington’s Delaware Bridge Authority in 1938. The scrapbook also contains various receipts belonging to the Allen family dating from 1830 as well as two unidentified cloth bags.