Y-MS 23
Giss, Harold C., 1906-1973
Papers, 1948-1973

DESCRIPTION
The collection consists of correspondence, legislative minutes, speeches, publications, and personal financial records from Giss’ work of over 23 years in Arizona politics. Highlights include correspondence with distinguished individuals including John F. Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Morris Udall, and Arizona governors Samuel Goddard and Jack Williams and significant political issues including water resource management, Equal Rights Amendment, and state legislative reapportionment.

69 Boxes, 33.5 linear ft.

ACQUISITION
Gift from Maurice M. Giss in September 1973.

ACCESS - There are no restrictions on access to this collection.

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PROCESSING
The collection was originally processed in 1982 by Chris Fowler and reorganized in June 1998 by William Tackenberg. The scrapbook and photograph series were added in 2013.

ARRANGEMENT
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Harold C. Giss, Democratic member of the Arizona state legislature and businessman from Yuma, was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on February 5, 1906. He was the son of David Giss (1885-1946) and Katherine Edna (Glazier) Giss (1885-1944), of Vineland, New Jersey. In 1918, the family moved to California, where Giss graduated from Anaheim High School and attended Southwestern University, College of Law, in Los Angeles, for one year. On February 21, 1937 Giss married Goldie Pearl Stool (1914-) with whom he fathered three sons: Maurice M. (1941-), Kenneth A. (1945-), and Gerald D. (1947-). Giss was employed by a Los Angeles department store until January, 1938, when he settled in Yuma, Arizona and purchased the Emporium Department Store. In 1944, he expanded his business holdings by acquiring the Toggery Men's Store in Yuma.

In 1948, Giss began his twenty-five year legislative career when he ran successfully for the Arizona House of Representatives from District 6 (mostly Yuma County). In 1950, he was elected to the state Senate, where he served as Majority Leader for twelve years (1954-1966) and Minority Leader for seven years (1966-1973). During his tenure, Giss was chairman of several standing committees, including Judiciary, Appropriations, Public Health and Welfare, State Institutions, and Counties and Municipalities. He was a long-standing member of the Education Committee, the Finance and Revenue Committee, and the Legislative Council. Altogether, Giss served on twenty-four standing committees during his legislative career and was active in promoting a great deal of social legislation, including sponsorship of a bill to emancipate 18 to 21-year-olds. Because of his perseverance in trying to perfect all legislation, Giss earned the nickname, “The Great Amender.”

Giss also represented Arizona on the National Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments, and on the National Conference of State Legislative Leaders. He was a life member of the National society of State Legislators.

In addition to his legislative responsibilities, Giss contributed to many civic projects around Yuma, where he served on several local boards and committees. He was named an honorary member of most of Yuma’s service organizations, including the Elks, Eagles, Kiwanis, and Yuma County Chamber of Commerce. He was vitally interested in the state’s water problems and was chairman of the Lower Colorado River Land Use Committee. He was also a key figure in establishing Arizona Western College in Yuma in 1861. Giss was honored as “Yuma Man of the Year” for 1964-65.

Giss' dedication to the state legislature and to the needs of his constituency took its toll on the family business. In 1968, the Emporium closed and Giss filed for bankruptcy. Subsequently, his occupation was listed as “real estate and business consultant.” His avocations included interest in rodeo and aviation. Senator Giss died of a heart attack while attending the Yuma County Fair April 15, 1973.
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Correspondence, political publications, legislative bills, and reports resulting from Giss’ twenty-five years as State Senator and Representative in the Arizona legislature. The collection reflects state and national political issues of the late 1960s and early 1970s including water use, the Equal Rights Amendment, public health and education.

Approximately half of the collection consists of correspondence with political leaders and constituents of Arizona such as Morris Udall, Carl Hayden, Samuel Goddard and Jack Williams, Yuma mayors, special interest groups, and concerned citizens. Letters reflect issues concerning education, state revenue measures, retirement and land usage, and general political coordination in the Arizona Legislature from 1948 to 1973.

The remainder of the collection consists of printed materials, which reinforce the political activities and concerns of Senator and Representative Giss while in the Arizona Legislature including state political publications, candidate lists for elections, and resolution reflects state political activities from 1967 to 1973. A large amount of educational publications reflect Giss’ participation in educational issues and on educational committees for all levels of public school and college levels (1952-1973). Public health, water resource publications, and various state retirement reports reflect issues which Giss became involved with through legislative committee assignments. Arizona House of Representative bills (1957-1973) and Senate bills (1957-1973) reflect issues of concern to Giss as both the Democratic Majority Leader and later Minority Leader in the Arizona Legislature. Finally various national and state conference reports and publications correspond to the education, intergovernmental relations, and improvement in state government issues participated in by Giss.

The papers have been divided into seven series: Correspondence and Personal Material; Legislative Committee Minutes; Speeches; Financial Records, Personal Business and Travel Records, and Awards; Printed Material, Scrapbooks and Photos.

Series 1, Correspondence and Personal Material contain the heart of the collection and consist of twenty-four boxes (12 linear feet) with materials arranged topically. Giss’ papers (1948-1973) provide letters from constituents and interested parties on political issues confronting the Senator and the Arizona Legislature in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Correspondence includes issues of education, health care, retirement programs for state workers, topics discussed in the Legislative Council, land use and water resources. A large portion of the correspondence concerns communications with other Arizona politicians including state governors on political appointments, revenue issues, legislative reapportionment, and other topics taken up in the legislature.

Series 2, Minutes From Meetings and Conferences consists of reports and notes from various committees participated in by Giss while in the Arizona Legislature (1958-1973) with four boxes (2 linear feet) of materials arranged topically by committees or organizations. Committees include Finance and Revenue Committee, joint committees from the House of Representatives and Senate, Judiciary Committee, Committee on Water and Natural Resources, Committee on State Retirement, and Legislative Council meetings.
Series 3, Speeches, in two boxes (1 linear foot) of materials arranged topically includes Giss’ speeches to Arizona Legislature on political issues such as Colorado River land use, cable television, and the Senate calendars (1968-1973). Series also contains drafts of media and community speeches prepared by Giss. In addition, governor speeches to the Arizona Legislature are included from Governors McFarland, Fannin, Goddard, and Williams (1955-1972).

Series 4, Giss Financial Records and Biographical Materials, composed of two boxes (1 linear foot) of materials arranged topically focus on campaign expenditures, receipts, as well as Giss biographical information, eulogies, and certificates and awards presented to Giss (1955-1973).


Series 7, Photographs, with pictures of Giss and distinguished state and national leaders including Harry Truman, Governor Paul Fannin, and Governor Jack Williams. Also included are many photos of unidentified men and women along with Giss at social events.
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<th>f.1</th>
<th>Scrapbook</th>
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<td>f.4</td>
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f.2  Portraits of Harold Giss. Also includes photographs of Jack Williams 1960s – 1970s  
f.3  United States Marine Corps 185th Birthday Ceremony November 1960