



Sharlot Hall Museum Library and Archives
415 West Gurley Street
Prescott, AZ 86301
www.sharlot.org

Title: Sarah Folsom Papers

Creator: Sarah Folsom

Dates: 1921-2001 **Bulk Dates:** 1952-1969

Quantity: 4 linear feet (3 boxes)

System of Arrangement:

- Series 1: Correspondence, Personal Notes and Speeches
- Series 2: Alma Maters, Publicity, Programs and Publications
- Series 3: Blanton and Folsom Families, Sarah's Death
- Series 4: Newspaper Articles referencing Sarah Folsom
- Series 5: Photographs
- Series 6: Scrapbooks

Abstract: Sarah Blanton Folsom was a dynamic, innovative educator who served six terms as Yavapai County School Superintendent, and was serving in her third term as Arizona State Superintendent of Public Instruction when she tragically passed away at the age of 53. This collection includes correspondence, personal notes, speeches, newspaper articles, photos, and personal scrapbooks.

Identification: SHM MS-27

Language and Scripts of the Materials: English

Biographical History

Sarah Folsom was born in Alabama in 1915. She received her BA degree in 1936 from Judson College in Marion, Alabama and earned her Master's Degree in English from Auburn University. She was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Judson College and an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Auburn University in 1966. She taught for 7 ½ years in Alabama schools before moving to Prescott in 1943. In her first election, little known candidate Sarah Folsom pulled a major upset by defeating her opponent for County Superintendent of Schools in November, 1952, and served six terms in this position. In 1964 she took on incumbent W. W. Dick when she decided to run for State School Superintendent. Against seemingly hopeless odds she



beat the incumbent and won the election by 500 votes. She became the second woman to serve in this position. She was a proponent of state-supported kindergarten but would not accomplish this during her tenure. However, due to the groundwork that she laid, state-supported kindergarten would become a reality. She originally opposed federal funding for schools but then became a powerful supporter, using the argument that if the state cannot provide enough funding for education, there is no choice but to accept federal funding.

According to Sarah, she was not a politician but an educator interested only in children and education. She believed in strengthening the fundamentals of reading, writing and math, and reestablished the instruction of phonics to aid children in becoming proficient readers. She believed that "reading is the foundation of success and education." She instituted television programs on new math techniques with college credit for in-service training of teachers. During her tenure she installed a statewide pre-school vision screening program and a Vocational Rehabilitation Cooperative program for special education students. She launched a state-wide attack on adult literacy and moved quickly to insure that Arizona would get \$400,000 in remaining Title III (adult education) funds so they would not be reallocated elsewhere. Additionally, she made a daily flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance compulsory and believed that patriotism should be instilled in American children through a continuous 1-12th grade American History program. She endorsed President Johnson's Aid to Education Bill which would aid low-income schools and the development of school libraries in Arizona. Originally opposed by teacher groups in 1964, Sarah was awarded the Arizona Education Association's prestigious Distinguished Service Award.

Sarah was only the second woman elected as State Superintendent of Education. She was the first woman ever to address a graduating class at Auburn University. She was the first woman to be awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Auburn University. She was invited to a reception at the White House and received an invitation to Richard Nixon's inauguration; however she decided not to attend because she had too many obligations in her role as State Superintendent of Instruction.

Sarah had photo ops with President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Barry Goldwater considered her a friend. During the year that she died there were persistent murmurs that she was being considered for the federal position of Education Commissioner in Washington, D.C. Sarah instated quality educational programs in Arizona and just a few days before her death, the National Education Association reported that Arizona led all states in its spending efforts for elementary and high schools. This stands as a tribute to a soft spoken but tenacious woman who changed the face of education in Arizona. The State of Alabama House of Representatives issued a Resolution upon her death in June, 1969.



Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of scrapbooks, correspondence, speeches, awards, memorabilia from Sarah Folsom's alma maters, family ephemera, photos and newspaper articles detailing her tenure as Yavapai County Superintendent of Education and Arizona State Superintendent of Education. There are personal black and white photos from her childhood and photos of family members. There is also a large quantity of photos documenting her time in office. One scrapbook contains certificates, awards, and notes and letters of congratulations from notable persons including senators and Barry Goldwater. Also included are Certificates of Election and special acknowledgements from American Airlines, the United States Military Academy and the United States Army. Correspondence includes invitations to White House functions and a touching letter to her husband, who was stationed away from home in the military, after the birth of their son. A 3-D artifact, the copper and wood nameplate from Sarah's desk, was sent to Collections at the Sharlot Hall Museum on February 14, 2014.

Restrictions

None

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

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Related Archival Materials & Subjects

[Arizona. Department of Public Instruction](#)

[Arizona. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#)

[Arizona. State Department of Education](#)

[Education](#)

[Educators](#)

Folsom, Sarah

[Humboldt Unified School District \(Yavapai County, Ariz.\)](#)

[Kindergarten](#)

[Prescott Unified School District \(Yavapai County, Ariz.\)](#)

[Yavapai County \(Ariz.\)](#)

Related materials include oral histories of Doug and Gail Folsom.



Administrative Information

Custodial History

Accession Number – **2008.109**

The materials found within this collection were personally donated by Jim and Candy Folsom, on behalf of the Folsom Family, to the Sharlot Hall Museum on April 13, 2008. The materials were processed and placed into a standardized DACS compliant archival arrangement and organization scheme. A new DACS compliant number was assigned to the collection, MS-27, in November 2013.

Accruals: More accruals to this collection are not expected.

Description Control: This collection was processed by Cynthia Vaughn using *Describing Archives: a Content Standard (DACS)* in 2013-14.

Container List

Title: Sarah Folsom Papers - SHM MS-27

Dates: 1940-1969

Series Scope and Content: This series consists of correspondence to and from Sarah Folsom, handwritten notes, copies of speeches and a daily schedule from 1966.

Series 1: Correspondence, Personal Notes and Speeches		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Dates
1/1	Correspondence to Sarah Folsom	1940-1969
1/2	Correspondence from Sarah Folsom	1944-1969
1/3	Handwritten Notes and a Daily Schedule	1966
1/4	Copies of Speeches	1957-1966



Title: Sarah Folsom Papers - SHM MS-27

Dates: 1940-1985

Series Scope and Content: This series consists of memorabilia from Judson College and Auburn University, publicity and press releases, programs and publications in which Sarah Folsom is mentioned.

Series 2: Alma Maters, Publicity, Programs and Publications		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Dates
1/5	Judson College Memorabilia	1940-1966
1/6	Publicity, Press Releases	1954-1966
1/7	Programs and Publications	1958-1985
1/8	<u>Dust in Our Desks</u> publication	1985

Title: Sarah Folsom Papers - SHM MS-27

Dates: 1921-2001

Series Scope and Content: This series consists of memorabilia and photos from the Blanton and Folsom families and information regarding Sarah Folsom's death on June 11, 1969.

Series 3: Blanton and Folsom Families		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Dates
1/9	Blanton Family Memorabilia	1938-2000
1/10	Blanton Family Photos	1921-1958
1/11	Folsom Family Memorabilia	1941-1969
1/12	Folsom Family Photos	1940's-1960's
1/13	Death of Sarah Folsom	1969



Title: Sarah Folsom Papers SHM MS-27

Dates: 1952-1969

Series Scope and Content: This series consists of newspaper articles referencing Sarah Folsom and her accomplishments.

Series 4: Newspaper Articles		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Dates
1/14	Newspaper Articles	1952,1954-1958
1/15	Newspaper	1960,1962,1963,1965,1968-1969
2/1	Newspaper Articles	1964
2/2	Newspaper Articles	1966
2/3	Newspaper Articles	Undated
2/4	Newspaper Articles regarding state-supported kindergarten	1960-1969



Title: Sarah Folsom Papers SHM MS-27

Dates: 1965-1969

Series Scope and Content: Photographs taken during school visits, banquets, conferences and meetings, special events such as Sarah's trip to Washington, D.C. for the National Teacher of the Year installation, award ceremonies, and portraits are included in this series.

Series 5: Photographs		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Dates
2/5	Visit to Washington School District	1965
2/6	Banquet Photos	1965-1966
2/7	Future Farmers Conference	1966
2/8	Town and Country Conference, Tucson	1966
2/9	Visit to Washington School District, Summer Session	1966
2/10	Accreditation Committee Meeting	1966
2/11	National Teacher of the Year Event	1966
2/12	Honorary Ph.D. from Auburn University	1966
2/13	AZ State Conference on Education	1966
2/14	Washington School District filmed by KTAR-TV	Undated
2/15	Pioneer Spirit a Great Heritage Parade Entry	Undated
2/16	Photos with U.S. army personnel	Undated
2/17	Visit to Adult Education Class	Undated
2/18	Conference and Award Ceremonies	Undated, 1965-1969
2/19	Portraits of Sarah	1954-1969



Title: Sarah Folsom Papers SHM MS-27

Dates: 1960-1969

Series Scope and Content: This series consists of scrapbooks containing newspaper articles, certificates, awards, and correspondence.

Series 6: Albums		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Dates
3	Newspaper Articles	1964-1966
3	AZ National Press Clipping Services Articles	1966-1967
4	AZ National Press Clipping Services Articles	1967-1968
4	Certificates, Awards and Correspondence	1964-1969