

**University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Archives and Special Collections**

Mary Leite Fonseca (1912-2005) Papers,

Manuscript Collection – MC 55

Biographical note: Mary Leite Fonseca served as a Democratic Massachusetts state Senator for the First Bristol District in Southeastern Massachusetts for 32 years. A pioneer in the Massachusetts Legislature, she was the first person of Portuguese descent to serve in the state Senate. She was appointed Second Assistant Majority Leader by Senate President Kevin Harrington in 1973, and later that year became the first woman appointed Assistant Majority Floor Leader — Senate Majority Whip. She held that position for the rest of her career in the senate.

Mary Leite was born in Fall River on March 30, 1912, to Portuguese immigrants Mary B. and Joseph Leite. The second-oldest child in a family of 12, she attended Fall River public schools and graduated from B.M.C Durfee High School in 1932. Before beginning her political career, she worked as a secretary, a translator and at the Fall River Public Library. In 1938 she married John C. Fonseca Jr. Together they had two children, a daughter, Irene V. Fonseca, and a son, John G. Fonseca.

In 1945, she earned her first political appointment by winning a seat on the Fall River School Committee. Her first run at the Massachusetts state Senate came in 1952 with a successful, low-budget campaign for the seat in the Second Bristol District. She served on many committees while in the Senate, including the Education and the Ways and Means committees. See appendix A for a complete list.

Fonseca was a supporter of many women's rights bills. She was a vocal proponent of equal pay for women and the right for women to keep teaching after marriage. Fonseca served as the chair of the Massachusetts Special Commission on the Status of Women – a commission formed in 1964 by Gov. Endicott Peabody to study and file legislation concerning women's equality issues.

Although she never went to college, she was known as a champion for public education in southeastern Massachusetts — from elementary schools to universities. Fonseca was instrumental in crafting legislation that would convert the former Southeastern Massachusetts Technical Institute into Southeastern Massachusetts University. The university recognized her efforts by presenting her with an honorary degree in 1974.

Fonseca was a board member of the Fall River chapter of the Portuguese American Civic League. She received many awards over the years. In 1980, the Portuguese-language newspaper *O Jornal* presented her with the Luso American of the Year Award for her contributions to the Portuguese community.

Though Fonseca's political career ended in 1984 in an unsuccessful bid for re-election, she remained active in the Southcoast community. Fonseca died on June 13, 2005 at the age of 90.

Scope and contents note:

Acquisition: Gift of Irene V. Fonseca, January 2006, Accession # 06-16.

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Processed: April 2006 Mike Pacheco and Judy Farrar.

Box #	Folder#	Description
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Series I: Legislative Records

Notebooks

1	1	Public Service Committee notebooks, 1953 2, 7 ½" x 10", soft cover, brown Includes legislative acts, notes, various documents, most glued in
1	2	Education Committee notebook, 1953 7 ½" x 10", soft cover, brown Includes legislative acts, notes, various documents, most glued in
1	3	Education Committee notebooks, 1954 2, 7 ½" x 10", soft cover, brown Includes legislative acts, notes, various documents, most glued in
1, 2, 3	4-11, 1-3, 2	Education Committee records, 1962 Legislative acts, notes, correspondence, various documents
2, 3	4 - 6, 3	Education Committee records, 1976 Legislative acts, notes, correspondence, various documents
2, 3	7, 4	Public Safety Committee records, 1962 Legislative acts, notes, correspondence, various documents
20		3 black 3-ring binders which contained 1962 legislative materials
20		1 manila folder which contained Education documents

Other legislative records

4	5	Correspondence, 1953 - 1980
2	8	Fall River Industrial Commission documents, 1950 - 1954
2	9	Senate # 184, Married Teachers Bill, 1953
18	3	Yeas and Nays on Senate 184, 2 versions, 1953
18	3	Photostat, Chapter 188 legislation, with correspondence, 1954
2, 3	10, 1	Juvenile Delinquency Investigation, 1955 Correspondence, memo, other documents
20		Maroon leather presentation binder labeled "Investigation Juvenile Delinquency: Senator Mary L. Fonseca", 9" x 11 ½"
2	11	Bradford Durfee/NBIT Merger Press release and report, 1960
2	12	Fall River Regional Vocational-Technical District documents, 1960
3	6 - 8	"The Facts on Bay State Education" information packet with presentation folder, 1961
		Southeastern Massachusetts Technological Institute, 1963 - 1969
3	9	Documents regarding name change, 1968 - 1969
3	10	Clippings, 1963 - 1965
18	3	Passed legislation with seal of Commonwealth, Chapter 168, 1973
2	13	Legislation, 1980

Box #	Folder#	Description
4	1 - 3	Campaign material, 1952 – 1976?
	1	Biographical information, political career, [circa 1984]
	2	Bumper stickers, [post- 1952]
	2	2 ½" x 5 ½" campaign card, 1952
	2	3" x 5" campaign card, [post-1952]
	2	Campaign literature and correspondence, 1952 – 1976?
	3	Correspondence re: victories, 1954 – 1982
19		Campaign posters, 14" x 22", [1970s?]
4	4	Other political campaigns, various documents, n.d.
<u>Speeches, General</u>		
5	1	Speeches on government and politics, n.d.
	2 – 3	Speeches on education, 1969, 1974, 1978, n.d.
	4	Speeches, notes, fact sheets on women in the workforce [post-1973]
	5	Speeches from convocations, n.d.
<u>Speeches, Graduation</u>		
5	6 – 7	College and post-secondary, 1959 – 1979, n.d.
	8 – 9	Junior and Senior High School, 1965 – 1970, n.d.
	10	Unknown audience, 1964
	11	General, undated
	12	excerpts, 1965, 1968, 1969, n.d.
	13	Notes, 1963
	14	Commencement Programs, 1965 – 1969
5	15 – 21	Speeches, other topics, 1964 – 1980
	22	Speech excerpts, n.d.
	23	Speeches by others, 1944 – 1977 and n.d.
	24	Speech duplicates
	25	Collected sources for speeches, mostly undated, 1982, 1984
<u>Records of Political Events, Banquets</u>		
4	6 – 12, 19	Documents from various political banquets and events, 1944 - 1997
4	13	Dighton Rock documents, 1960s – 1972
4	13	Information sheets, b/w photo, 5" x 7", correspondence
19	3	Oversize clippings
4	14 – 18	Dighton Rock correspondence and photographs, 1973 – 1978 44 b/w 8" x 10" photographs
Democratic National Convention documents, 1960 – 1972		
4	8	Correspondence, policy statements, booklets, various, 1960
19	6	Campaign literature, 1960
4	9	<i>Directory, Democratic National Convention, 1960</i>
4	10	Program: <i>Democrats in Convention, 1972</i>
<u>Newsletters and Booklets</u>		
2	14	<i>Vocational Education in Massachusetts, 1952</i>
2	15	<i>Tax Talk, 1952, Vol. 19, No. 7</i> 1953, Vol. 20, No. 1 – 5 1953 – 1954 Special Issue
2	16	<i>State House Reporter, 1954</i>
2	17	<i>President-elect John Fitzgerald Kennedy's speech to a joint convention of the Two Houses of the General Court of Massachusetts, 1961</i>

Box #	Folder#	Description
3	15	<i>Directory of Massachusetts Legislators and Other Elected Officials, 1969 - 1970</i>
2	18	<i>Massachusetts Legislators and Other Elected Officials, 1973 - 1974</i>
3	15	<i>Congressional Record, 1972, with correspondence, 1981</i>

Photographs

19	5	b/w photo, Massachusetts Senate,
18		25" x 10", 1953 - 1954
		20" x 16" mounted on board, 1961
by wall		21 1/4" x 17 1/4", framed, 1967 - 1968
18	2	6 b/w photos, Senate Ways & Means Committee, Massachusetts Legislature, 11" x 14", 1959 - 1976
18		b/w, 3 women taking oath with 3 men, mounted on board, 10" x 8", n.d. [circa 1950s]
18		b/w, labeled "Pat O'Brien, Mike Douglass, Sen. Fonseca, Sen. Rurak, March 1965", with paper mat [scrapbook page], 10" x 8", 1965
18	4	b/w, Senator Fonseca and others breaking ground for SMTI, 14" x 11", (Deb has another copy, with mat)
18	5	b/w photo, Massachusetts Senate, 20" x 16", 1967 - 1968
18		b/w, with newspaper caption and paper mat [scrapbook page], 10" x 8", 1973
18		b/w, SMU campus, mounted with signed mat, 16" x 20", 1978
18		b/w, 8" x 10", with Governor King and Sri Lankan visitors, 1979
18		b/w, Senator Fonseca with two men, signed, labeled EG&G Meeting at Fall River, matted, 10" x 8", 1982
18		b/w, mounted, Senator Fonseca with unknown man, 12" x 9", n.d.
18		Scrapbook page with 2 b/w 5" x 7" photos, n.d.: Senator Fonseca at a signing ceremony with Governor Dukakis and others Senator Fonseca with Ted Knight and unknown man
18		color, Senator Fonseca with two men, 8" x 10", [scrapbook page], n.d.
18		b/w, Senator Fonseca with two women [one is Mary Monroe? of New England Telephone Company], one man [at IAPW Meeting?], mounted and matted, 12" x 10", n.d.
18		color, Senator Fonseca with 8 men, 2 women, and plaque, mounted on board, 10" x 8", n.d.
18		color, ships in harbor, photographer's label on back, 14" x 11", n.d.
19	1	Color photo, portrait, 16" x 20", n.d.
Photo Book 1		36 Photographs, some signed or labeled
Photo Book 2		58 Photographs, some signed or labeled
18		Photocopy of a framed piece? And photocopy of back

Scrapbooks of newspaper clippings

7		November 1944 - March 1947 12 1/2" x 12 3/4" Brown embossed leather, bound with two metal rings, "Scrap Book" in gold
7		1948 - ? [post-1952] 12 1/2" x 12 3/4" Black, embossed leather with turquoise and gold emblem, bound with string Articles, photocollage
8		1951 - 1979 11 1/2" x 14 1/2", Green A few pasted in, most loose
17		January 1973 - September 1973 19" x 16 1/2", black

Box #	Folder#	Description
9		September 1973 – October 1973 11 ½" x 14 ½", Green
10		January 1974 – May 1974 Black, 16" x 12"
10		April 1974 – July 1974 Black, 16" x 12"
8		July 1974 – May 1975 11 ½" x 14 ½", Green
9		June 1975 – March 1976 11 ½" x 14 ½", Green
11		March 1976 – October 1976 11 ½" x 14 ½", Green
12		November 1976 – February 1977 12" x 14 ¾", brown leather with gold trim
12		February 1977 – April 1977 12" x 16", brown leather with gold trim
13		April 1977 – August 1977 12" x 16", brown leather with gold trim
13		September 1977 – November 1977 12" x 16", brown leather with gold trim
14		November 1977 – April 1978 12" x 16", brown leather with gold trim
14		April 1978 – July 1978 12" x 16", brown leather with gold trim
15		July 1978 – August 1978 13" x 15", black
17		August 1978 – October 1978 18 ¼" x 16 ½", black
15		January 1979 – April 1979 13" x 15", black
15		March 1979 – June 1979 13" x 15", black
loose		June 1979 – April 1981 18 ¼" x 16 ½", black
16		April 1981 – October 1981 12" x 13", black

Box #	Folder#	Description
11		May 1982 – December 1982 12 ¼" x 14 ¼", red
loose		December 1982 – June 1984 19 ¾" x 24", black
loose		July 1984 – December 1984 19 ¾" x 24", black
3, 19 19	22, 2	Newspaper clippings, 1944 – 2006 Metal lithographic plates, 2, from Boston Globe, 10/11/1984
<u>Awards and Certificates</u>		
3	16	Election certificate for Fall River School Board, 1949
18	1	Certifications of Election to 2 nd Bristol Senatorial District, 9 ½" x 15", 1953, 1973
3	16	Department of Education certificate, completion of "Legislative Procedure" course, 1953
3	1 6	Certificate of Service in the Field of Education, School Board, Fall River Public Schools, 11 ¾" x 8 ¾", [1953?]
3	16	Plymouth County Teachers Association Citation, 8 ½" x 11", 1964
3	16	Statement, Acushnet Democratic Town Committee Coffee Hour, 1966
20		Public Service Award plaque, Senior Citizens & Associates of America, 10" x 12", 1966
3	17	Friendship Dinner documents and photo, 1966
18	1	Funeral elogy for Robert F. Kennedy by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, 12" x 18", 1968
18	1	Appointment to Governor's Commission on Status of Women, 12" x 19", 1971
18	1	<i>Address to the Great and General Court of Massachusetts, by President-elect John Fitzgerald Kennedy</i> , 1961 speech transcribed on parchment, 19" x 14", with correspondence, 1970
3	16	Certificate of Appreciation, Distributive Education Clubs of America, 8 ½" x 11", 1973
3	16	Tribute booklet, Second Bristol District, 1973
18	6	Comendador da Ordem do Infante Dom Henrique, 9 ¼" x 13, 1972
20		Citation plaque, Massachusetts Secondary School Principals' Association, 10" x 12", 1972
18	6	Certificate of Recognition, Commonwealth of MA, 11" x 14", 1973
3	18	Southeastern Massachusetts University Honorary Degree documents, 1974
3	16	Certificate of Appreciation, Massachusetts CUNA Credit Union Association, 8 ½" x 11", 1976
3	16	Certificate of Appreciation, National Federation of the Blind of MA, with Braille card, 11" x 8 ½", 1977
by wall		Framed newspaper collage, Greater Fall River Chamber of Commerce, 16 ¼" x 23", 1978
		Luso-American Award, 1981
3	19	Thank you speech
3	20	B/W Photos, 5" x 8" (3) and 4" x 5" (30)
20		Framed plaque, 10 ¼" x 13" [says 1980]
3	16	Acknowledgement of election to Hall of Famed Associates, Bishop Connolly High School Century Club, 11" x 8 ½", 1981
18	6	Proclamation of Mary L. Fonseca Day, State of Rhode Island, 8" x 13", 1981
18	6	Resolutions in Honor of Mary Leite Fonseca, Commonwealth of MA, 11" x 14", 1981
18	6	House of Representatives Official Citation, Commonwealth of MA, 11" x 14", 1981
18	6	Governor's Certificate of Congratulations, with correspondence, 11" x 14", 1981
3	16	City of Fall River Official Citation, 8 ½" x 11", 1981
3	16	Portuguese-American Federation Tribute, 11" x 8 ½", 1981
3	16	Corky Row Ladies Auxiliary Award, 11" x 8 ½", 1981
18	6	Distinguished Citizen Award, Bristol Community College, matted, 10 ½" x 14", 1981
3	16	American Legion Citation of Appreciation, 7" x 9 ¼", 1981
3	16	Certificate of Appreciation, Espirito Santo Federal Credit Union, 8 ½" x 11", 1983
18	6	Golden Dome Citation, Commonwealth of MA, 23" x 17 ½", 1984

Box #	Folder#	Description
18	6	Medal of Merit, Commonwealth of MA, 11" x 14", 1985
18	6	Certificate of Appreciation, Commonwealth of MA, 14" x 11", 1995
3	21	University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Reception documents and photos, 1996 b/w photo, 9" x 7" 9 color photos, 4" x 6"
3	16	Distinguished Service Award for contributions to public education, 11" x 8 ½", n.d.
3	16	Honorary Membership, Fall River Teachers Association, 11" x 7 ½", n.d.
3		The Sacred Cod club membership certificate, 9" x 12", n.d.
21		Laminated cartoon plaque with label on back, 9" x 8"
21		Distinguished Service Award plaque, Student Body of SMU, 12" x 15", n.d.
by wall		Wooden plaque with whip, Southeastern Massachusetts University Foundation, 19" x 25 ½", n.d.
<u>Personal Records</u>		
6	10	Photocopies of 1932 high school yearbook, with added notes
6	11	BMC Durfee High School, Class of 1932 Reunion documents, 1957 – 1982
6	12	BMC Durfee High School, Class of 1937 Reunion documents, 1972
6	13	Personal correspondence, 1949, 1962, 1998
6	14	Portuguese Alliance Benevolent Association application and Souvenir Book, 1952, 1954
6	15	Newsletter, <i>Alpha Upsilon Baystater</i> , 1969, 1973
6	16	Souvenir Program, <i>Pioneers of Santo Christo Church</i> , 1976
shelved with collection		<u>Books</u> <i>Azores/Açores</i> , 1980, (2), with dedications, one with translation of dedication <i>Portuguese Pilgrims and Dighton Rock</i> , M.L. da Silva, 1971 <i>Mom, They Won't Let Us Pray</i> , Rita Warren, 1975, with correspondence and clippings, inscription <i>Business and Academia</i> , ed. Hoy and Bernstein, 1981, with correspondence <i>A Memory of John F. Kennedy</i> , [1964] <i>Kennedy Campaigning</i> , Murray B. Levin, 1966, inscribed by Donald Carvalho, with notes throughout <i>No Retreat From Tomorrow: President Lyndon B. Johnson's 1967 Messages to the 90th Congress</i> , with White House correspondence <i>The Professional: Lyndon B. Johnson</i> , William S. White, inscribed by Johnson, with White House correspondence, 1964 <i>The Speeches of Senator John F. Kennedy Presidential Campaign of 1960</i> <i>The Strategy of Peace</i> , John F. Kennedy, 1960, inscribed by Kennedy <i>The Road From Here</i> , Paul Tsongas, 1981, inscribed by Tsongas <i>How to Win in 1952: Campaign Handbook, Democratic National Committee</i> <i>The Control of Urban Schools</i> , Joseph M. Cronin, 1973, inscribed by Cronin <i>The Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention</i> , 1976
6	17	<u>Ephemera</u> , mostly n.d. Notes and various documents Portuguese-American napkin Invitation cards, 1975
21 – 22		4 Women's Hats

Box #	Folder#	Description
Series II: Portuguese American Civic League records		
6	1	Constitution and By-laws booklets, 1935, 1939, 1947
	2	Meeting Notes, n.d.
	2	Minutes, 1945, 1946
	2	State Meeting Report, 1949
	3	Lists of officers, directors, 1937, 1940
	3	Member lists, n.d.
	3	Roll call and attendance lists, 1948 and n.d.
	4	Convention banquet programs, report, 1939 – 1947
	5 – 8	Correspondence, 1943 – 1995, n.d.
	6	Brochures, 1995
	6	Other documents: business card, press release, 1995
	6	<i>Lus•Us</i> newsletter, 1995
	9	Newspaper clippings, 1942 – 1962 and n.d.
7		Scrapbook: 11 ¼" x 12 ¾", black, embossed with gold emblem, bound with string Contains a few clippings from 1950
19		<u>Photographs</u> b/w photo, Portuguese American Civic League banquet, 20" x 10", 1941 b/w photo, Portuguese American Civic League banquet, 20" x 10", 1947 b/w photo, Portuguese American Civic League banquet, 20" x 8", 1949 b/w photo, "Testimonial Dinner for Fonseca", 20" x 10", 1950 b/w photo, Portuguese American Civic League banquet, 20" x 8", 1952 b/w group photo [PACL Banquet?], inscribed "Senator—Mary Fonseca, February 15, 1953", 20" x 12", 1953
3	16	<u>Awards</u> Certificate of Recognition of Achievements, Portuguese American Civic League, 11" x 8 ½", 1981
by wall		Metal and wood plaque, 15" x 13 ¼", 1985