

Guide to the Robert B. Griffith Collection

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Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope and Contents Note	4
Arrangement	4
Administrative Information	5
Related Materials	5
Names and Subjects	6
Collection Inventory	6

Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Griffith, Robert B., 1899-1979
Title:	Robert B. Griffith Collection
ID:	MS-00315
Date [inclusive]:	1928 to 1975
Physical Description:	2.40 Cubic Feet (4 boxes)
Physical Description:	2.05 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Robert B. Griffith Collection (1928-1975) documents the work of Robert B. Griffith, an instrumental figure in the development of water resources in Las Vegas, Nevada, as well as the creation of McCarran International Airport and Nellis Air Force Base. The collection consists of Colorado River Commission papers, 1928 International Air Race documents, general correspondence, a feasibility study, an airport guide, American Legion papers, the memoirs of Alfred Merritt Smith, and death and burial records belonging to his father. The collection also includes slides from various countries, including the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Preferred Citation

Robert B. Griffith Collection, 1928-1975. MS-00315. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical Note

Robert B. Griffith was born in 1899 in California and moved to Las Vegas, Nevada with his father E.W. Griffith, a Las Vegas contractor and pioneer, in 1905. He attended the University of Nevada in Reno, graduating in 1923 with a degree in civil engineering. That same year he married Ruth Atcheson and returned to Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1925, upon his appointment as postmaster, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce assigned him the task of determining if the city could

accommodate airmail service. As part of this task, Griffith helped the city lease Anderson Field, which was renamed Rockwell Field as part of the lease agreement. Upon the expiration of the lease, the owners of Rockwell Field sold the land and Griffith selected a new site that later became Nellis Air Force Base. Griffith retired as postmaster in 1930, but continued to serve as an aviation expert for the community. He was instrumental in the development of both the Nellis Air Force Base and McCarran International Airport.

During World War II, Griffith began working towards securing water for Southern Nevada. Starting in 1957, Griffith served on the Colorado River Commission and served as chair in 1966. Griffith, along with other community leaders, convinced the federal government to assist in the building of a water pipeline that went from Lake Mead to the Las Vegas Valley. The project, initially named the Southern Nevada Water Project, supplies water to Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Henderson, Boulder City, and Nellis Air Force Base. Griffith passed away in 1979. Three years later in 1982, the city renamed the project the Robert B. Griffith Water Project.

Sources:

Stoldafor, Robert. "Robert Griffith." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, February 7, 1999. Accessed June 27, 2018. <https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/robert-griffith/>.

Rogers, Jedediah. "Robert B. Griffith Water Project." Bureau of Reclamation, 2006. Accessed June 27, 2018. <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=181>.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents Note

The Robert B. Griffith Collection (1928-1975) documents the work of Robert B. Griffith, an instrumental figure in the development of water resources in Las Vegas, Nevada, as well as the creation of McCarran International Airport and Nellis Air Force Base. The collection consists of Colorado River Commission papers, 1928 International Air Race documents, general correspondence, a feasibility study of a mechanical system for Griffith Phytotronics Laboratories at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, a 1928 Oakland Municipal Airport guide, American Legion papers, the memoirs of Alfred Merritt Smith, and death and burial records belonging to his father. The collection also includes slides from various countries, including the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Materials remain as they were received.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Access Note

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Acquisition Note

Materials were received periodically from 1980 to 1990; accession numbers 80-134 and 90-48.

Processing Note

In 2018, as part of an archival backlog project, Christina Lamoureux rehoused the materials, wrote the finding aid and entered the data into ArchivesSpace.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Collections

The following resources may provide additional information related to the materials in this collection:

Robert B. Griffith Escrow Papers for the Las Vegas Army Airfield in Southern Nevada, 1941. MS-00028. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Mary Jane Griffith Reiter Papers, 1926-1964. MS-00262. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Names and Subjects

- Colorado River Commission of Nevada
- Southern Nevada
- American Legion
- photographs
- Water rights

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
Colorado River Commission papers, International Air Race correspondence and documents, Griffith Phytotronics Laboratories feasibility study, assorted water resource papers, Alfred Merritt Smith memoir, Oakland Municipal Airport guide, American Legion papers, and E.W. Griffith death and burial records, 1928 to 1975	box 01
Photographic slides of the United States and Canada, 1950 to 1975	box 02
Photographic slides of Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and other foreign countries, 1950 to 1975	box 03
Photographic slides of assorted landscapes, people, and objects, 1950 to 1975	box 04