

Vermont State Archives  
Secretary of State Howard E. Armstrong  
1949-1965  
1 microfilm reel

#### BIOGRAPHY

Howard E. Armstrong was born in Bennington, Vermont on April 19, 1903. He was a University of Vermont graduate and was admitted to the Vermont bar in 1926. He served as 2nd assistant clerk of the House in 1925 and clerk from 1927-1933. He was Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs for Governor Charles Smith in 1935, the Commissioner of Industries starting in October of 1936, and the Commissioner of Industrial Relations from 1939-1949. Armstrong, a Republican, served eight terms as Vermont's Secretary of State, from 1949-1965. He was defeated by Harry Cooley, a Democrat, in the November, 1964 election. Howard Armstrong died on October 7, 1983.

#### SCOPE AND CONTENT

A large percent of Howard Armstrong's records consist of correspondence and memos concerning proposed legislation. There is material on bills concerning elections, corporations, outdoor advertising, vital records and licensing and registration. Bills on the position of candidates names on ballots (H.149, 1951 and S.25, 1954), on voting machine regulations (S.41, 1955), and on absentee voter balloting (H.436, 1955) are discussed. Registration fees for lobbyists are discussed as well as fees for corporations and licensing.

Secretary of State Armstrong did not hesitate to write his views on legislation and state policy which affected his office. There are statements on why he supported H.210 (1955) which called for the elimination of the straight party ticket. He wrote why he thought the Real Estate license law should be modernized, and he explained why the Vermont Trademark law was obsolete. Armstrong is outspoken concerning an ice fishing bill (H.200, 1951) and is "violently opposed" to a proposal to regulate junk yards at the state level through the Office of the Secretary of State.

There is heated correspondence between Armstrong and the Health Department concerning a bill to eliminate the Secretary of State as the custodian of vital records. Armstrong also spoke out against H.272 (1953), which would change the procedure for recording vital statistics. He conveys his views on several pieces of legislation concerning state employees and the Personnel Department. At one point Armstrong stated that Personnel did not "adhere to the mandate of the Constitution of Vermont" and the Department accused Armstrong of the "misuse of temporaries." Armstrong was outspoken on the issue of salaries for state officers; he wrote several detailed statements on why the pay was not fair. Armstrong also wrote an interesting statement in 1957 on why he wanted to resign from the Public Records Commission.

Unlike other Secretary of State records, there is virtually no correspondence of the Deputy Secretary of State; there are no

letters by longtime deputy Helen Burbank.

Howard Armstrong was Secretary of State for 16 years, but only one cubic foot of his records survive. The surviving sample gives a sense of the issues faced by Armstrong and how he dealt with those issues.