

# A Guide to the Robert S. Gamble Manuscript Collection on Sully: The Biography of a House, 1961-1978

The Robert S. Gamble Manuscript Collection on Sully: The Biography of a House, 1961-1978  
1961-1978

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A Collection in The Fairfax County Public Library MSS 08-06

## Title Statement

A Guide to the Robert S. Gamble Manuscript Collection on Sully: The Biography of a House, 1961-1978

**Subtitle:** Robert S. Gamble Manuscript Collection on Sully: The Biography of a House

**Collection:** MSS 08-06

## Publication Statement

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## Profile Description

**Creation:** Machine-readable finding aid created by Ross Landis, April 21, 2024

**Language Usage:** Description is in English

## Descriptive Summary

### Record Group Number

MSS 08-06

### Language

English

### Abstract

The Robert S. Gamble Manuscript Collection on Sully: The Biography of a House consists of 4.0 linear feet and spans the years 1961-1978, containing Gamble's original research papers, research notecards, correspondence, notes, photocopies, newspaper clippings, photographs and negatives, relating to his 1973 book about Sully Plantation.

### Creator

Gamble, Robert S. (1943-)

### Extent

4.0 linear feet

### Repository

Fairfax County Public Library

## Administrative Information

### Access Restrictions

None

### Use Restrictions

Consult repository for information

## Acquisition Information

The collection has a complicated history. The bulk of the collection was donated to Fairfax County Public Library by Robert S. Gamble throughout 1976-1977 without a deed of gift. The photographs used for the book were removed from the collection and incorporated into the Virginia Room's "Photographic Archive of Fairfax County, Virginia". Two boxes of Gamble's research notecards were transferred to the Fairfax County Park Authority. It also appears additional files may have been added to the collection by staff from the Virginia Room and the Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning. In December 2016, Mr. Gamble retroactively signed a deed of gift officially donating his collection to FCPL. In February 2018, Gamble's research notecards were returned to FCPL by the Park Authority. In May 2018, the research notecards and photographs were reunited with the collection, and it now exists as originally donated.

## Processing Information

Chris Barbuschak, May 2018

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## Preferred Citation

Robert S. Gamble Manuscript Collection on Sully: The Biography of a House, MSS 08-06, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Separated Material

None

# Historical and Biographical Information

In 1971, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors expressed a desire to publish a study on the history of Sully Plantation. Henry Lee I purchased Sully in 1725, and it later passed down to his grandson, Richard Bland Lee, who built the house in 1794. Several families lived on the plantation until the Fairfax County Park Authority acquired the site in 1959, saving it from demolition during the construction of Dulles International Airport. The Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning appointed Robert S. Gamble to prepare a study that would be published as a booklet.

The booklet unexpectedly grew into a book because of the wealth of records Gamble uncovered that revealed how Sully played a more important role in Fairfax County's history than anyone had previously realized. The Sully Foundation, a non-profit organization established by Robert E. "Eddie" Wagstaff in 1969 to promote and support the preservation and interpretation of the Sully Historic Site, supported and underwrote the book's publication. The Foundation published Gamble's book, "Sully: The Biography of a House" in 1973, and it is widely regarded as the definitive study on Sully Plantation. The book received an Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History in 1974, as an exemplary study of its kind. At the instigation of Fairfax County historian Mayo Stuntz, the Sully Foundation reprinted the book as a paperback edition in 1994.

Robert Scott Gamble was born in Huntsville, Alabama on August 24, 1943. He graduated from Gadsden High School in 1961, received a B.A. in History and Political Science from Birmingham Southern College in 1965, and an M.A. in History from the University of Georgia in 1967.

After graduating, Gamble served in the Peace Corps and worked in the National Preservation Office of Dominican Republic. In 1969, he joined the staff of the National Park Service, working with the National Register of Historic Places, and later the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. Gamble also worked as an historian for the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation and in 1982, he became the senior architectural historian for the Alabama Historical Commission.

In 1989, the Society of Architectural Historians awarded Gamble the Antoinette Forrester Downing Award for his book, *The Alabama Catalog: Historic American Buildings Survey: A Guide to the Early Architecture of the State*, which detailed the history of architecture in Alabama and reviewed the state's properties surveyed by the Historic American Buildings Survey.

## Scope and Content

The Robert S. Gamble Manuscript Collection on Sully: The Biography of a House consists of 4.0 linear feet and spans the years 1961-1978, containing Gamble's original research papers, research notecards, correspondence, notes, photocopies, newspaper clippings, photographs and negatives, relating to his 1973

book about Sully Plantation.

### **Series 1: Research Files, 1961-1976, Boxes 1-6**

This series contains the files gathered over the course of Robert Gamble's research in 1971-1973 for the book *Sully: The Biography of a House*. The files consist of research notecards, correspondence, notes, photocopies, newspaper clippings, and other papers used by Gamble for his research. Boxes 4 and 5 consist of research notecards that contain excerpts from primary documents including data not actually used in the book. A few files appear to have come from the Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning: the Robert S. Gamble speeches, notes, etc folder in Box 1 and the correspondence files in Box 3. Correspondence found throughout the collection includes letters from Robert S. Gamble, Eleanor Lee Templeman, Bayard D. Evans, Nan Netherton, John Porter Bloom, John K. Gott, Robert W. Jentsch, Walter M. Macomber, Vernon W. Barlow, Martha Barlow, and many others whom Gamble and the Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning staff corresponded with during research for the book.

### **Series 2: Photographs and Graphics, Undated, Box 7**

These are the original photographs, graphics, and negatives that Gamble used in his book *Sully: The Biography of a House*. The photographs in this series are not a complete set of the images used in the final published book. Photographs are organized by page number as they appeared in the book.

## **Index Terms**

Barlow, Martha Estelle (1908-1976)  
Barlow, Vernon Westphal (1906-1986)  
Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning  
Gamble, Robert S. (1943-)  
Historic buildings -- Virginia-- Fairfax County  
Plantations -- Virginia -- Fairfax County  
The Society of the Lees of Virginia  
Sully Foundation, Inc.  
Sully Plantation (Fairfax County, Va.)  
Templeman, Eleanor Lee (1906-1990)  
Wagstaff, Robert Edward (1897-1970)

## **Container List**

### **Series 1: Research Files, 1961-1976**

**Box 1 Folder 1: Sully Brochures and Programs, 1965-1974**

**Box 1 Folder 2: Robert S. Gamble speeches, notes, etc [files appears to have come from Office of Comprehensive Planning], 1971-1976**

**Box 1 Folder 3: Gamble, Robert S. Sully. August 1971. Preliminary Draft, 1971 August**

**Box 1 Folder 4: Gamble, Robert S. Sully: An Historical and Architectural Report. Outline submitted February 12, 1971. , 1971**

**Box 1 Folder 5: Grigg, Wood, Browne, and Williams, architects. Sully Plantation: A Feasibility Study for Preservation Prepared for the Fairfax County Park Authority. December 5, 1973., 1973**

**Box 1 Folder 6: Resumes, 1973**

**Box 1 Folder 7: Original Manuscripts (Photocopies of Alexander Haight papers), Undated**

**Box 2 Folder 1: Research notes, Chapter 1, 1971**

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**Box 3 Folder 6: Correspondence, 1961-1971, 1961-1971**

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**Box 3 Folder 8: Sully Foundation, Ltd. Annual Report, 1971, 1971**

**Box 3 Folder 9: Outline History of Sully (manual prepared for docents of Sully), Undated**

**Box 4: Research notecards, Chapters 1-3, Undated**

**Box 5: Research notecards, Chapters 4-9, Personal Tax, and Land Tax Records, Undated**

**Box 6 Folder 1: Hardcover preliminary draft, 1971 August**

**Box 6 Folder 2: Final edited manuscript, 1973**

## **Series 2: Photographs and Graphics, Undated**

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**Box 7: SULLY, P. 002b - 1725 land patent, Undated**

**Box 7: SULLY, P. 004 - 1725 survey, Undated**

**Box 7: SULLY, P. 007 - Thomas Lee of Stratford, portrait, Undated**

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**Box 7: SULLY, P. 025 - Alexander Hamilton, portrait, Undated**

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