

A Langsdale Library Special Collection:

Thomas J. D'Alesandro, Jr., Father of Speaker Pelosi



Archivists are always happy when current events renew interest in a collection in their care and that is certainly the case with the [Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr.](#) Collection one of the numerous archival holdings in Langsdale Library's Special Collections Department.

Thomas J. D'Alesandro, Jr. (August 1, 1903-August 23, 1987) served as a member of the Maryland General Assembly, and then in the U.S. Congress and finally, three-terms as Mayor of Baltimore. D'Alesandro's name has returned to prominence with the election of his daughter, [Nancy D'Alesandro Pelosi](#) (D-CA) as Speaker of the House.



While this collection documents well his public life through text and images, family photographs with his daughter are rare in this collection. One of the few {left} shows young Nancy D'Alesandro between her brothers and her mother listening to a campaign speech of her father's during the mayoral campaign.

Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr., was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates in 1925 and served in the General Assembly until appointed General Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue in 1933. Elected to the Baltimore City Council in 1935, he left that body after his election to the United States Congress in 1938. D'Alesandro served in Congress through World War II and was reelected for a fifth time in 1946.



As a freshman Member of Congress, D'Alesandro listened to [Fiorello LaGuardia](#) (R-NY) on June 17, 1940 {left}. A five-term Member of Congress, the Italian-American from New York had lost his seat in the Democratic sweep of 1932 but was elected Mayor of New York on a reform ticket the following year. His story may have inspired D'Alesandro who entered the Baltimore Mayoral race during his own fifth term in Congress and after success at the polls resigned his seat in Congress May 16, 1947 to become Mayor of Baltimore.

"It is one of the largest airports in the world - certainly it is the most modern airport anywhere. We hope and expect that travelers from all over America and the world will use our new airport and that it will live up to its name by becoming a factor in the development of international friendship. We hope also that Friendship International Airport will become a great shipping port for air freight to points throughout the United States and the world. Finally, we hope and expect that Friendship International Airport will serve to keep Baltimore in the forefront as a transportation center - that our new airport will come to mean as much to this whole region as our harbor and our railroads have meant for so many years. I now declare that Friendship International Airport is formally opened."



Mayor D'Alesandro brought to completion plans begun by his predecessor, [Theodore McKeldin](#), {left} for a new airport. He welcomed President [Harry Truman](#) to the facility {above} when it opened as Friendship International Airport on June 24, 1950.



Now, through the kindness of the late Miss Etta Cone, a new building will be erected here to house the Cone Collection, one of the finest in the nation. The exhibit will be composed of French Paintings, sculpture, and a varied collection of art objects. . . .
With the completion of this wing, the capacity of the museum will be increased by one third, and the Baltimore public will be given a greater opportunity than ever before to enjoy and outstanding art exhibition that will add to our city's fame as one of the leading art centers of the world.

Mayor D'Alesandro
May 23, 1955

In the 1950's the Mayor's responsibilities included an extensive building campaign. In 1955 he broke ground in Wyman Municipal Park {above} for two new wings which lifted [Baltimore Museum of Art](#) to prominence.



He also broke ground or laid cornerstones for over 50 public schools throughout the City, like Hazelwood Elementary in 1957 {left}, as well as for numerous recreation facilities, firehouses, hospital additions, and public pools.



As Mayor of one of America's ten most populous cities, D'Alesandro welcomed dignitaries from around the world, including Foreign Minister (later Prime Minister) [Golda Meir](#) of Israel {left} on December 10, 1956.

Mayor D'Alessandro unsuccessfully challenged Republican [J. Glenn Beall](#) in 1958 for the U.S. Senate and lost the Mayor's race to J. Harold Grady the following spring. Despite these defeats he continued to be active politically serving as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention between 1944 and 1968. He also served on a Presidential Commission during the tenure of President [John F. Kennedy](#).

This collection was originally given to the [John F. Kennedy Presidential Library](#) at the request of the late President's widow and after her death was transferred to UB at the request of [Thomas D'Alesandro, III](#) when the JFK archives need to de-accession material to make room for Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis's materials after her death.

His son, {behind his father at right on the [Fireboat Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr.](#)} was elected Mayor in 1967. The father and son are affectionately remembered in Baltimore as "Old Tommy" and "Young Tommy."

Just a few weeks before her father's death in the summer of 1987, [Nancy D'Alesandro Pelosi](#) entered the United States Congress, elected to succeed the late [Sala Galante Burton](#) of San Francisco who had died earlier that year. Elected Minority Whip in 2001, she became Minority Leader in 2002. After leading her party to a congressional majority in the past fall elections, she was elected Speaker of the House on January 4, 2007. As Speaker of the House she is third in line for the Presidency making her the highest ranking woman in U.S. Government history.



The occasion was marked in her native city by the renaming of the 200 block of Albemarle St., in front of the D'Alesandro home, as *Via Nancy D'Alesandro Pelosi Way*.

The family's involvement in public affairs promises to continue into a third generation. As an NBC producer, D'Alessandro's granddaughter, Alexandra Pelosi, documented Gov. George W. Bush's campaign for the White House in 2000 and Gephardt and other Democrats campaigning for their party's presidential nomination in 2004. She authored a book in 2005, [Sneaking into the flying circus: how the media turn our presidential campaigns into freak shows](#).