



120 Academy Street, Trenton, N.J. 08608  
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**Coll. 464**  
**Edwin S. Fisher (1903-1994)**  
**Papers**

**By Ned Kolpan**  
**September 2021**

**Biography**

In 1927, the Trenton Fire Department installed its first alarm system. Three dispatchers were hired to helm this novel technology. Among the new recruits was Edwin Fisher. His 38-year dedication to the Trenton Fire Department culminated with his appointment as Chief Dispatcher for the Trenton Communications Bureau for both the police and fire departments in the late 1940s. He would remain in this position until 1966, but his involvement with the TFD's alarm system would continue until his death in 1994.

This lifelong relationship with the fire department, plus his involvement with many fire prevention-based organizations, left behind a legacy of endless notes, lists, and folders filled with records, protocols, and policies. An enthusiastic collector of letters, Edwin Fisher's collection includes the professional correspondence of former Chief Oliver Schafer, and his own business pursuits during the 1950s and 1960s, and decades of publications for all things fire safety.

**Scope and Content Notes**

This collection consists of notes, papers, magazines, catalogs, newspaper clippings, and letters related to business transactions and everyday activities of both Edwin Fisher and his predecessors.

The Edwin Fisher collection is significant in capturing what being a fireman is like behind the scenes. For every person running into a burning building, there is someone else who has to catalog the use of call boxes, order supplies, train others, and go to public events. Because the range of documents in this collection extends from the early 1900s to the 1970s, it expertly

showcases how fire department protocols have changed over the course of a century (or, more accurately, how they have stayed the same).

### **Series Description**

#### **Series I. Notes, Lists and Correspondence, late 1920s-1970s**

This series consists of a lifetime of notes, lists, rules and regulations kept by Edwin Fisher over his career, and makes up the bulk of the collection. This material extends from the late 1920s, when Fisher joined the TFD, until his tenure as Chief in the 1970s.

Of note are the many binders and folders of data organized by Fisher over the decades; diagrams for then-new alarm technologies; Fisher's own correspondence with technology specialists looking for his business; and Fisher's personal records of the fire and police system data.

#### **Series II. Business Correspondence, 1900s-1927**

This series contains letters about the business pursuits of his predecessors. Most are addressed to former chief Oliver Schafer. Many of the letters are from the 1900s, up to the 1920s.

Of particular note is a 1902 letter to Oliver Schafer from the Honorable F.W. Gnichtel of the Common Council of the City of Trenton; a 1904 business correspondence between Schafer and the John A. Roebling's Sons Company's insulated wiring department; a 1915 rough sketch from the Horace E. Fine Company of a planned fire sign layout; and a letter from the Western Electric Company concerning new, lower prices.

#### **Series III. Publications**

This series includes magazines, catalogues, pamphlets and books about fire safety, products for sale, and other publications needed to successfully maintain a fire department. The publications come from all over the United States, with some publications predating his time as chief.

Of particular note is a 1905 brochure for No. 300 Lightning Arresters from the Garton-Daniels Company of Keokuk, Iowa; catalogues for fire engines from Maxim, Cummins Diesel, Seagrave, Ward LaFrance, and Pirsch; a blue Eagle Signal Corporation binder containing catalogues; a fire prevention pamphlet entitled *Nature's Artillery*; and two fire safety stories by Maud Hart Lovelace titled, *The Twins and Mr. Jinx* and *Billy Barrett: The Fire Chief's Son*.

#### **Series IV. Newspaper Clippings**

This series contains newspaper clippings, both photocopied and original, of various fires throughout Trenton's history. It also includes stories about infrastructure proposals; fire prevention; moments in history; and natural disasters. In addition to the clippings are photocopied maps in different sizes of the Trenton area.

Of particular note is Edwin Fisher's 1994 Times obituary; a photocopy of the True American's 1900 coverage of the Livingston School fire; an original printing of a 1916 Gazette notice to

building contractors about an infrastructure proposal; and an enlarged map of the Trenton and Morrisville area.

## **Container List**

### **Series I. Notes, Lists and Correspondence**

- 1 / 1 / Trenton Fire Alarm Procedure, 1949
- 1 / 2 / Fire & Police System Data. Personal Records of Edwin S. Fisher
- 1 / 3 / Fire Service Resources Data
- 1 / 4 / First Aid. Electrical
- 1 / 5 / I.M.S.A. Letters & Bulletins
- 2 / 1 / Instructions Governing Fire Alarm Procedure
- 2 / 2 / Installation of Municipal Circuits, etc.
- 2 / 3 / "Radio Procedure" Envelope & Related Notes
- 2 / 4 / Radio Fire Record - N.Y.
- 2 / 5 / FDNY - Codes. Misc. Info
- 2 / 6 / Blank Trenton Fire Department Inspection Logs
- 2 / 7 / Correspondence
- 2 / Wire and Cable Specifications Binder
- 3 / 1 / Modern Fire Alarm Signaling Folder
- 3 / 2 / T.F.D. Rosters/Apparatus
- 3 / 3 / Blue Manuel Aid Binder
- 3 / 4 / Black and Maroon Notebook
- 3 / 5 / Black Rules and Regulation Folder, 1947
- 3 / 6 / Diagrams
- 3 / Signal Systems Binder
- 4 / 1 / Black Folder: Fire Alarm Stations
- 4 / 2 / Various Notes & Lists (Uncategorized)

### **Series II. Business Correspondence, 1900s-1927**

- 4 / 3 / Letters of Oliver Schafer
- 4 / 4 / Other Letters Pre-1927

### **Series III. Publications**

- 4 / 5 / Loose Adverts
- 4 / 6 / Catalogues & Magazines
- 4 / 7 / Blue Eagle Signal Corp. Collection of Catalogues
- 4 / Fire Prevention

### **Series VI. Newspaper Clippings**

- 4 / 8 / Edwin Fisher Obituary
- 4 / 9 / Livingston School & Other Fires (Photocopied)
- 4 / 10 / Clippings About Trenton (Original)
- 4 / 11 / Maps (Photocopied)