



120 Academy Street, Trenton, N.J. 08608
609-392-7188 * www.trentonlib.org

**Mayor Arthur J. Holland
Personal Papers, 1940-1990**

**By Ellen R. Callahan
April 2022**

Biography

Arthur John Holland (24 October 1918 – 9 November 1989) was born in Trenton, the second child of Joseph F. and Helena (nee Groh) Holland. He served as mayor of the city for 27 years, from 1959-1966 and then 1970-1989 (his death).

A graduate of the Immaculate Conception High School in Trenton (class of 1935), he was educated by the Franciscan Friars whose members were responsible for staffing the school and the church which was part of the complex. As a young man, Holland was active in the community life of that church, and the Friars encouraged his religious activities and for him to consider becoming one of them.

In 1939, after studying Greek and Latin in the Trenton School System's night classes, he entered St. Francis College, the minor seminary of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual (O.F.M.Conv) on Staten Island, N.Y. He finished the novitiate in his second year and went on to the major seminary in Cohoes, N.Y. After six years of study, Holland left the seminary in 1945 and did not take final vows for the priesthood as a Franciscan Friar.

Holland completed his education at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J. where he earned a B.A. in Political Science and an M.A. in Public Policy. In 1989, prior to his death, then-president of Rutgers Edward Bloustein announced the creation of the Arthur J. Holland Program on Ethics in Government. It is housed in The Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers.

After seminary, Holland was employed by two New Jersey polling firms. In 1951, he was appointed Deputy Director of Public Affairs for the City Trenton by the Department of Public

Affairs Director, Commissioner George Page. This was Holland's first experience in politics and government and the beginning of his political career. His widow Betty stated that her husband often remarked "the close-up view of city government built in him the desire to be part of the decision-making process. Providing good government, honest government, was a way in which to help people collectively. Also, government provided a way to help individuals directly. As a deputy to a commissioner, he saw practices and actions that he deemed unethical and had no power to change. In order to correct them, he had to be an elected commissioner."¹

In 1955, he ran for a seat on the five-man City Commission and won, defeating an incumbent. Four years later, he ran for re-election and garnered more votes than the other candidates. By tradition, the highest vote-getter was usually chosen as mayor and Holland was given that distinction by the other commissioners. The title of mayor granted its holder a ceremonial status rather than greater authority in governing, although he was the presiding officer at commission sessions.

The City changed its form of government in 1962 to Strong Mayor/Council, and Holland ran for the office of mayor which he won. That same year, he married a fellow graduate student at Rutgers, Elizabeth "Betty" Jackson, and announced their intention to purchase a house in the City.

In 1964, the couple and their baby daughter garnered national and international attention when they moved into a house on Mercer Street, a predominately Black neighborhood in what would later be called Mill Hill. While they received support from places within the United States and abroad, the reaction in Trenton was not as positive, and Holland was defeated in his 1966 bid for re-election. Carmen J. Armenti, North Ward Councilman during Holland's first term, was elected Trenton's new mayor.

Holland's polling group, friends who were professionals at polling firms but unpaid consultants to Holland, looked at the results of polls taken prior to the election and it seemed obvious to them that there was a backlash. In examining the results previously, they had not been sensitive to a distinct resentment on the part of White voters to Holland's move into a mixed neighborhood and into a house that was next to a Black Family.²

During the next four years, Holland had consulting positions in Washington, D.C. with research organizations and other groups. He also worked on the development of an initiative that would later be announced by President Lyndon B. Johnson as the Model Cities Program. Model Cities had many facets to it in approaching what was considered blight and other negative qualities in cities across the country. Holland was also sought as a speaker on the future of race relations.

¹ Biography supplied by Betty Holland, December 2019

² *ibid*

Eventually, he took a position at Rutgers as a research scholar in a new study group, the Urban Studies Center, and also taught in the university's political science department.

At the suggestion of others, he ran for mayor again in 1970 and defeated Armenti. He would later seek and win re-election in 1974, 1978, 1982 and 1986.

In 1988, he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer and underwent surgery. Eventually the cancer metastasized to other parts of his body and he died at Trenton's St. Francis Hospital in November 1989. He is interred at St. John Cemetery in Trenton and was survived by his wife and five adult children.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains seven boxes and one oversized folder of material that had been removed from the main collection of the Holland Papers because, at the time, they were perceived as being more personal in nature. While there are some records in this collection that reflect Holland's work as city commissioner and then mayor, most are to a greater degree more personal. Material includes correspondence, reports, a photograph album, a newspaper scrapbook, and loose newspaper clippings. Also included are several pieces of memorabilia including business cards, campaign flyers, name tags and badges. In addition, there are guest registers and other keepsakes from his memorial and funeral services held in November 1989.

This collection provides some information about the many campaigns Arthur Holland waged during his career, information about his brief time at Rutgers University between his 1966 defeat as mayor and his reelection in 1970. Perhaps above all, the correspondence in this collection shows a facet of Holland through the eyes of friends and relatives. Letters in the Fall of 1945 send encouragement and support when he chose not to take his vows as a priest. He received congratulations in 1962 for his win as mayor, and then condolences in 1966 for his loss. Get well wishes during his final illness in 1989 reflect the esteem in which he was held by friends, colleagues, and citizens of Trenton. The extensive newspaper coverage of the mayor between 1953 and his death in November of 1989, document his career and personal life.

The collection is separated into eight series as described below.

Series Description

Series 1. Correspondence, 1940-1989

This series consists of correspondence to Holland and sometimes includes copies of his outgoing letters. Letters in the Fall of 1945 send encouragement and support when he chose not to take his vows as a priest. While there is some correspondence with city employees, specifically between Holland and Otto Ortlieb, Director of Public Works regarding complaints to be dealt with (1962), often letters are from constituents requesting assistance, criticizing the mayor's policies as well as cards and letters from friends. In addition, there are a few racist "hate" letters which rail

against desegregation and communism (1962) and which condemn the mayor for choosing to move into the predominantly Black neighborhood of Mill Hill in 1964. Finally, some of the mayor's correspondents included Washington D.C. luminaries including J. Edgar Hoover, Robert F. Kennedy, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter.

Series 2. Writings, Reports, Speeches, 1947-1989

This series contains a variety of reports, speeches and articles written by Holland. Some are very personal, including a 1947 piece titled "One-Volume Library" commending the learning in the Bible, while others are annual reports on the state of the city. Also included is his children's book *The Adventures of Bernie Bean* written in 1984.

Series 3. Subject Files, 1939-1990

Covering a variety of subjects as listed below, this series includes Holland's report cards from St. Francis College, Staten Island, 1939-1940; information on his employment at Rutgers University between 1967-1968; certificates of appreciation he received throughout his career, and many other topics.

Series 4. Trenton

These files contain reports, minutes and other material about the city including a police report to the mayor regarding vacant buildings in the city (1962), and tables showing comparative data (population, form of government etc.) on cities throughout the country including Trenton, ca.1979.

Series 5. Campaign Material, 1955-1986

Information in this series includes messages from the candidate and his campaign organization, handouts showing his policies and accomplishments, bumper stickers and voting reminders. There is also one oversized 1974 poster "Re-Elect Arthur J. Holland Mayor."

Series 6. Memorabilia, 1949-1980s

Material in this series includes name tags and identification cards of the mayor; a March 1988 photo album documenting his and Betty Holland's trip to the Republic of China (Taiwan) as part of a delegation from the U.S. Conference of Mayors; and a fountain pen from the White House, ca. 1960s.

Series 7. Funeral Services, November 1989; November 9, 1990

This series commemorates services for the mayor after his death on November 9, 1989 and includes guest registers, funeral cards, a mass program, and a program for a First Anniversary Mass held on November 9, 1990.

Series 8. Clippings, 1953-1992, Nov. 20, 2006 and Scrapbook, ca. 1989

In this series, Arthur Holland's career and personal life are well documented by the press, predominantly *The Trenton Times* and the *Trentonian*. This includes coverage of his campaigns, his initiatives as mayor, the controversy of moving his family into the predominantly Black

neighborhood of Mill Hill in 1964, his final battle with cancer, his death, and many retrospectives and commemorations of his life. Even as late as November of 2006, a *Trenton Times* article recalled Holland as the most honest of politicians. Finally, a scrapbook compiled by Bill Thorton includes clippings that, for the most part, cover the last year of his life.

Container List

Box / Folder / Title

- 1 / 1 / Correspondence - 1940, 1945, 1947-1949
- 1 / 2 / Correspondence - 1955-1959
- 1 / 3 / Correspondence - 1960-1962
- 1 / 4 / Correspondence - Congratulations re. election as Mayor, May 1962
- 1 / 5 / Correspondence - 1963-1968
- 1 / 6 / Correspondence - Regarding May 1966 defeat in mayoral election, May-July 1962
- 1 / 7 / Correspondence - 1970-1979
- 1 / 8 / Correspondence - 1982-1989
- 1 / 9 / Correspondence - Get Well Cards from Ms. Karen Rowe's 5/6 grade class, Woodrow Wilson School Children, 1988
- 1 / 10 / Correspondence - Original Autographed Letters (photocopies filed with other correspondence in above folders):

8/20/1962 - Attorney General RFK transmitting report regarding government agency procurement bids [not attached]

11/02/1962 - Mamie Doud Eisenhower thanking Holland for sending her Trenton's "National Cultural Center Week proclamation

12/24/1963 - J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI thanking Holland for a letter of support and enclosing some of his own speeches and essays on his policies

6/9/1975 - President Gerald R. Ford regarding the Housing and Community Development Act and praising Holland and Trenton for having completed their plan

9/10/1977 - President Jimmy Carter thanking Holland for his hospitality while in Trenton and asking him to "Please work hard for Brendon [Byrne]

6/30/1978 - President Jimmy Carter transmitting a status report on national urban policy [not attached]

12/6/1986 - Bill Clinton, Governor of Arkansas, regarding their meeting at the National League of Cities convention in San Antonio.

- 2 / 1 / Correspondence - Get Well Wishes, May-December 1988
- 2 / 2 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Annual Report to the People of Trenton, 1956-1958
- 2 / 3 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Inaugural Addresses, 1962, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982
- 2 / 4 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Review and Forecast of the State of Business and Industry for the Trenton Times, 1962 & 1963

Container List (cont'd)

Box / Folder / Title

- 2 / 5 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Statement after 1966 defeat in mayoral election, June 30, 1966
- 2 / 6 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Reports to City Council and People of Trenton, 1972 & 1974
- 2 / 7 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Statements before the New Jersey State Legislature: Joint Appropriations Committee, 1966; Assembly Tax Policy Committee, 1970; Assembly Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources re. flooding and land development, 1972
- 2 / 8 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Testimony before Congressional Committee on Science and Technology re. Intergovernmental Dissemination of Research and Development Results, 1975
- 2 / 9 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Statement before the Platform Committee of the Mercer County Democratic Party, 1975
- 2 / 10 / Writings, Reports, etc. - *The Adventures of Bernie Bean* by Arthur J. Holland, Illustrated by T. Carl Schottman, 1984; related material including invitation to a reading
- 2 / 11 / Writings, Reports, etc. - President's Report, Annual Conference of Mayors, June 19, 1989
- 2 / 12 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Speech to the Industrial Arts School, 1956
- 2 / 13 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Magazine Articles: "Comprehensive State and Area-Wide Health Planning in New Jersey", 1967; "Memo from the Desk of the President", New Jersey Conference of Mayors, Conference Quarterly, 1977; "Can One Be 'Too Honest' for Politics?", 1988
- 2 / 14 / Writings, Reports, etc. - Miscellaneous: "One-Volume Library" [referring to the Bible], 1947; [Nicknames in Trenton], ca. 1978; "To be a Reporter," ca. 1980
- 2 / 15 / Subject Files - 138 Mercer Street: 1936 Tax Assessment; undated certification as Trenton Historic Landmark
- 2 / 16 / Subject Files - Booster Club, Arthur J. Holland, 1970-1989
- 2 / 17 / Subject Files - Certificates of Appreciation, undated, 1956, 1962-1989
- 2 / 18 / Subject Files - Certificates of Appreciation - Metal Plaque in velvet case given in tribute to Mayor Holland by Trenton's sister city, Jundiaí, Brazil
- 2 / 19 / Subject Files - Education: Arthur Holland report cards from St. Francis College, Staten Island, 1939-1940; Science report and diagram of frog, October 1939
- 2 / 20 / Subject Files - Events Programs, 1967-1989
- 3 / 1 / Subject Files - Holland Family Finances, 1960s-1980s
- 3 / 2 / Subject Files - Holland, Hubert [relationship to Mayor Holland unknown]: letters to/from Friar Dunstan McDermott, December 1943 and February 1944
- 3 / 3 / Subject Files - Holland, Joseph S. [Mayor's brother]: election cards for Congress, 1954 and Sheriff, 1966
- 3 / 4 / Subject Files - Inaugural Balls, 1970-1982 [see also Booster Club, Box 2, file 16]

Container List (cont'd)

Box / Folder / Title

- 3 / 5 / Subject Files - Interview: "Rediscovering Trenton with Mayor Arthur J. Holland, ca.1979
- 3 / 6 / Subject Files - Koch, Ed: Signed photograph of NYC Mayor Ed Koch with Arthur Holland, 3/10/1989
- 3 / 7 / Subject Files - Nicolais, Rae Cella: Witness statement regarding petitions for the charter form of government study commission, July 8, 1961
- 3 / 8 / Subject Files - Notary Public credentials of Arthur J. Holland, 1956 & 1962
- 3 / 9 / Subject Files - Resumes of Arthur J. Holland, 1954-1978
- 3 / 10 / Subject Files - Rutgers University, Holland's employment at, 1967-1968; brochures on the Arthur J. Holland Program on Ethics in Government, ca. 1989-1990
- 3 / 11 / Trenton - Inventory of all equipment and materials situated at the Municipal Building, 1958-1962
- 3 / 12 / Trenton - Mayor's Schedules, January-March and September 1986; with Chairman Sergej Gorycheve and party, July 27-31, 1987
- 3 / 13 / Trenton - Mayor's Staff Meeting re: records filing system. 3/26/1982
- 3 / 14 / Trenton - Police report to Mayor re: vacant buildings in city, July and August 1962
- 3 / 15 / Trenton - Proclamations by Mayor: commending Trenton Tercentenary Commission for its work, January 2, 1964; declaring Edward F. Meara III Day be held on October 1, 1986, September 30, 1986
- 3 / 16 / Trenton - Tables showing comparative data on cities throughout the country including Trenton, ca. 1979
- 3 / 17 / Campaign Material - 1955 - City Commissioner
- 3 / 18 / Campaign Material - 1959 - City Commissioner [Mayor by virtue of highest votes]
- 3 / 19 / Campaign Material - 1962 - Mayor [under new Strong Mayor/Council form of Government]
- 3 / 20 / Campaign Material - 1966 - Mayor [defeated]
- 3 / 21 / Campaign Material - 1970 - Mayor
- 3 / 22 / Campaign Material - 1974 - Mayor
- OS 1 Campaign Material - 1974 - "Re-Elect Arthur J. Holland Mayor" [11"x14 cardboard poster which includes picture of Mayor Holland]
- 3 / 23 / Campaign Material - 1975 - County Executive [defeated]
- 3 / 24 / Campaign Material - 1978 - Mayor
- 3 / 25 / Campaign Material - 1982 - Mayor
- 3 / 26 / Campaign Material - 1986- Mayor
- 3 / 27 / Campaign Material - undated miscellanea

Container List (cont'd)

Box / Folder / Title

- 4 / 1 / Memorabilia - membership cards, identification cards and home stationery, ca. 1949-1986
- 4 / 2 / Memorabilia - Name Tags, pins, ca. 1950s-1980s; "The President - The White House" fountain pen, ca. 1960s?
- 4 / 3 / Memorabilia - Leather memo pad/card holder embossed with A.J.H. Includes Mayor Holland's business cards, identification card, business cards of others, newspaper clippings, names and addresses, scribbled notes and phrases, ca. 1970s-1980s
- 4 / 4 / Memorabilia - Souvenir photo album commemorating delegation of U.S. Conference of Mayors to the Republic of China (Taiwan) [customized showing many pictures of Arthur and Betty Holland], March 1988
- 5 / 1 / Funeral Services - Guest Register, Book I, November 1989
- 5 / 2 / Funeral Services - Guest Register, Book II, November 1989
- 5 / 3 / Funeral Services - Guest Register, Book III, November 1989
- 5 / 4 / Funeral Services - Guest Register, Book IV, November 1989
- 5 / 5 / Funeral Services - Mass of Christian Burial Program and Funeral Cards, November 13, 1989
- 5 / 6 / Funeral Services - First Anniversary Mass Program, November 9, 1990
- 6 / 1 / Clippings - 1953-1956
- 6 / 2 / Clippings - 1962-1969
- 6 / 3 / Clippings - 1970-1979
- 6 / 4 / Clippings - 1980-1988
- 6 / 5 / Clippings - January - October 1989
- 6 / 6 / Clippings - November 9-14, 1989 [covering his death, memorial services, and funeral]
- 6 / 7 / Clippings - November 1989-1992, 11/20/2006
- 6 / 8 / Clippings - no dates
- 7 "Honorable Arthur J. Holland 1989 from 1918 Mayor 1962-1989," compiled by Bill Thorton, 1989 [3-ring binder with newspaper clippings regarding Mayor Holland all dating for the most part, from 1989 including coverage of his illness, death, and many published retrospectives and commemorations of his life]

Provenance

Holland's widow, Betty, donated these papers to the Trenton Free Public Library. The bulk of this material was removed from the main collection of the Holland Papers because, at the time, they were perceived as being more personal in nature. A large portion of the clippings were previously filed in the Trentoniana Department's Vertical File Series. The Thorton scrapbook was previously cataloged as S[crap]B[ook] #306.

Processing Note

This material was divided into the series listed above and arranged for ease of research. Duplicate newspaper clippings were removed. Finally, several letters deemed to have their own intrinsic value were removed from the general correspondence and placed in a separate folder at the end of Box 1. Copies of these letters were made and interfiled with the other correspondence.

Related Collections

Mayor Arthur J. Holland - Papers

Mayor Arthur J. Holland - Advisory Committee on Human Rights

Mayor Arthur J. Holland - Committee on Unity / Council on Human Relations

Mayor Arthur J. Holland - Trenton Council on Human Relations

Mayor Arthur J. Holland - N.J. State Anti-Discrimination & Civil Rights Legislation