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**Collection 248  
Governors of New Jersey Collection**

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**History**

New Jersey has a long history when it comes to how many governors were in office, with each governor having to deal with numerous different conflicts ranging from the American Revolution to working to enforce Prohibition. The office of governor can be separated into three distinct time periods, based on the state constitutions of 1776, 1844, and 1947.

In 1776, Congress had made the governor a figurehead and a judge, but the legislature was seen as the governmental power. The governor was elected annually by the Legislative Council and General Assembly, and was not granted any executive powers. The 1844 constitution granted the governor veto power for the first time and the ability to appoint officials, as well as popular election for a three-year term. He could not serve two consecutive terms. The constitution of 1947 expanded the authority of the governor, including extending the term of office to four years with the ability to serve two successive terms.

The first “governor” of New Jersey, Philip Carteret, became mayor in 1665 when he was 25 years old. He played a part in the founding of six towns including Elizabethtown and Newark, but was forced to go to England because he was worried that a rebellion would occur. After reporting his findings to Sir George, that rebellion was crushed a little more than 100 years before the American Revolution started. The next governor, Edmund Aarons was responsible for implementing England’s colonial policy during the last quarter of the 17th century. England’s James II directly worked with Aarons in consolidating and administering all the northern colonies as the Dominion of New England.

New Jersey’s first governor as a state, William Livingston (1776-1790), was known for his penmanship and the essays he would send to British officers in an effort to antagonize them. The state constitution gave him little power and treated the governorship as if he were little more than a figurehead. Livingston had many goals such as improving the militia’s pay but was often ignored.

## **History (cont.)**

Richard Howell (1793-1801), the third governor, had been a soldier fighting in the Revolution and spent his winter at Valley Forge. After the war, he turned to law and also had an interest in songwriting. He built the first state prison in Trenton along with passing legislature that approved the first toll roads and bridges.

Joseph Bloomfield (1801-1802, 1803-1812) was the first governor actually born in New Jersey and was known for the laws he passed that abolished slavery. That law provided for gradual abolition, stating that all male children of slaves would be free at age 25 and all female children at age 21.

Daniel Haines (1843-1845, 1848-1851) convinced his peers that the state's fundamental laws were incompatible with the then present day. He successfully created a bipartisan convention because he did not want the constitution to be strongly affected by the governor's party.

The 15th governor, Charles C. Stratton (1845-1848) was the first who was elected by the people. Before him, governors were elected annually by the state's legislature. In addition, he was the first governor elected who was not a lawyer although the state's constitution held that he would be the chief judge of the state. He was a Rutgers graduate and the last governor the Whigs elected.

Many believe that New Jersey would have likely joined the Confederacy if it wasn't for Charles S. Olden (1860-1863). New Jersey held strong economic and political ties with the South. When the Civil War started he urged the legislature to show New Jersey's determination to put down rebellion.

Alfred Driscoll (1947-1954), the 43rd man to serve as governor, was the first in New Jersey to serve two terms. Under the new constitution, a governor was now able to serve for four years and to succeed himself. This constitution was widely praised and was used as a model for other states. It is still in use as of 2020.

Robert B. Meyner (1954-1962) was a Democratic candidate who notably went out of his way to expose any gambling or corruption that was prevalent in Republican Bergen County. He won partly because his opponent, Paul Troast, wrote a letter seeking to get a convicted labor leader released from jail. One of Meyner's first acts as governor was to suspend former governor Harold Hoffman (1935-1938) for misappropriating state funds. He also held weekly radio and television reports similar to the "Fireside Chats" of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

## **Scope and Content Notes**

This collection contains mostly newspaper clippings that detail numerous governors' tenure and significant impacts they made in office either for the state or the country. Also collected are a number of documents ranging from event programs to inaugural addresses. The collection is separated into two series: Series I. The Governors Newspaper Series; Series II. Programs and Addresses; and Series III. General Information.

## Series Descriptions

### Series I. The Governors Newspaper Series

This series contains newspaper clippings that were mounted on black board by the librarians in the children's department at the Trenton Free Public Library at an unknown time. The articles were written by John T. McGowan, an Associated Press Writer, and were part of a series on the governors published presumably in the *Times of Trenton*. They are organized into three sub-series: The Constitution of 1776, The Constitution of 1844, and The Constitution of 1947.

#### The Constitution of 1776

The following is a list of all governors elected under the Constitution of 1776 with their dates in office. Those not represented in the collection with an article are marked with an \*

William Livingston (1776-1790)  
William Paterson (1790-1793)  
Richard Howell (1793-1801)  
Joseph Bloomfield (1801-1802, 1803-1812)  
\*Aaron Ogden (1812-1813)  
William S. Pennington (1813-1815)  
\*Mahlon Dickerson (1815-1817)  
Isaac H. Williamson (1817-1829)  
Peter D. Vroom (1829-1832, 1833-1836)  
\*Samuel L. Southard (1832-1833)  
Elias P. Seeley (1833)  
Philemon Dickerson (1836-1837)  
\*William Pennington (1837-1843)  
Daniel Haines (1843-1845, 1848-1851)

#### The Constitution of 1844

The following is a list of all governors elected under the Constitution of 1844 with their dates in office. Those not represented in the collection with an article are marked with an \*

Charles C. Stratton (1845-1848)  
\*George F. Fort (1851-1854)  
\*Rodman M. Price (1854-1857)  
William A. Newell (1857-1860)  
Charles S. Olden (1860-1863)  
Joel Parker (1863-1866, 1872-1875)  
Marcus L. Ward (1866-1869)  
Theodore F. Randolph (1869-1872)  
Joseph D. Bedle (1875-1878)  
George B. McClellan (1878-1881)  
George C. Ludlow (1881-1884)  
Leon Abbett (1884-1887, 1890-1893)  
Robert S. Green (1887-1890)  
George T. Werts (1893-1896)

### **The Constitution of 1844 (cont.)**

John W. Griggs (1896-1898)  
Foster M. Voorhees (1898-1902)  
\*Franklin Murphy (1902-1905)  
Edward C. Stokes (1905-1908)  
\*John F. Fort (1908-1911)  
\*Woodrow Wilson (1911-1913)  
\*James F. Fielder (1913-1917)  
Walter E. Edge (1917-1919, 1944-1947)  
Edward I. Edwards (1920-1923)  
George S. Silzer (1923-1926)  
A. Harry Moore (1926-1929, 1932-1935, 1938-1941)  
Morgan F. Larson (1929-1932)  
Harold G. Hoffman (1935-1938)  
Charles Edison (1941-1944)

### **The Constitution of 1947**

The following is a list of all governors elected under the Constitution of 1947 with their dates in office. Those not represented in the collection with an article are marked with an \*

Alfred E. Driscoll (1947-1954)  
Robert B. Meyner (1954-1962)  
\*Richard J. Hughes (1962-1970)  
\*William T. Cahill (1970-1974)

[The newspaper series ended prior to 1974 so the following persons are not represented; they are listed here for informational purposes only]

Brendan Byrne (1974-1982)  
Thomas Kean (1982-1990)  
James Florio (1990-1994)  
Christine Todd Whitman (1994-2001)  
Donald DiFrancesco (2001-2002, acting)  
John Farmer, Jr. (January 8, 2002, acting)  
John O. Bennett (January 8-12, 2002, acting)  
Richard Codey (January 12-15, 2002, acting; 2004-2006)  
Jim McGreevey (2002-2004)  
Jon Corzine (2006-2010)  
Chris Christie (2010-2018)  
Phil Murphy (2018-present)

### **Series II. Programs and Addresses**

This series contains documents related to several governors (see Container List), including articles, New Year's greeting card (1937), testimonials, special messages to the legislature, inaugural addresses, inauguration programs, and state of the state messages. One notable document is the packet that tells Christine Todd Whitman's (1994-2001) story, the first woman to hold the governor's office of New Jersey.

### **Series III. General Information**

This series contains one folder of general information, including an article about the governor's residence in Princeton, Drumthwacket, an article by Harry Podmore on the inauguration ceremony (1962), a published play by Arlene Sayre about the first governor Philip Carteret (1964), and several pages from an unknown publication about Trenton that contains drawings and information about William Livingston, William Paterson, and Richard Howell. There is also a folder of information about the Royal Governors' residences, compiled by the Trenton Free Public Library librarian (1968)

### **Container List**

#### **Box / Folder / Title**

##### Series I

1 / 1 / Constitution of 1776

1 / 2 / Constitution of 1844

1 / 3 / Constitution of 1947

##### Series II

1 / 4 / Charles Smith Olden

1 / 5 / Harold G. Hoffman

1 / 6 / Robert B. Meyner

1 / 6a / Robert B. Meyner – Clippings

1 / 7 / Richard J. Hughes

1 / 8 / Brendan T. Byrne

1 / 9 / Thomas H. Kean

1 / 10 / Jim Florio

1 / 11 / Christine Todd Whitman

##### Series III

1 / 12 / General Information

1 / 13 / Royal Governors information

### **Bibliography**

Lockard, Duane. *The New Jersey Governor: A Study in Political Power*. Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1964.

McGowan, J. (n.d.). Bloomfield part of history before becoming N.J. chief.

McGowan, J. (n.d.). Driscoll reformed Constitution and built some great highways.

McGowan, J. (n.d.). Gambling key issue for Meyner.

McGowan, J. (n.d.). Hero and songwriter, Howell served 9 terms.

McGowan, J. (n.d.). Jerseyans get say, elect first non-lawyer.

McGowan, J. (n.d.). Olden led state into the war.

Stellhorn, Paul A., and Michael J. Birkner, eds. *The Governors of New Jersey, 1664-1974*. Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1982.