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Trenton Administration Collection
Circa 1746–2023 (bulk circa 1930-1990)

By Chris Loos
December 2023

Summary Information

Creator(s):

City of Trenton

Donor:

Unknown (found in collections); Betty Holland (donor)

Language of Materials:

English, with some items in Spanish

Extent:

Approximately 13 linear feet

Location of Repository:

Trentoniana Department, Trenton Free Public Library, 120 Academy St., Trenton, NJ
08608

Subjects:

African American mayors--New Jersey--Trenton / Annexation (Municipal government)--
New Jersey / Cadwalader, Thomas (1707 or 1708-1779) / City & town halls--New Jersey--
Trenton / Finance--Public--Trenton (N.J.) / Government facilities--New Jersey--Trenton /
Holland, Arthur John (1918-1989) / Mayors--Legal status, laws, etc.--New Jersey / Mayors--
New Jersey--Trenton / Model ordinances--United States / Municipal charters--New Jersey /

Municipal government--Corrupt practices / Municipal government--New Jersey--Trenton / Municipal government by city manager / Municipal government by commission / Municipal home rule--New Jersey--Trenton / Municipal incorporation--New Jersey / Municipal law--New Jersey / Municipal officials and employees--Legal status, laws, etc. / Municipal officials and employees--New Jersey--Trenton / Municipal officials and employees--Salaries, etc. / Ordinances, Municipal--New Jersey--Trenton / State-local relations--New Jersey / Trenton (N.J.)--Administrative and political divisions / Trenton (N.J.). Common Council--Rules and practice / Trenton (N.J.)--History / Trenton (N.J.)--Politics and government / Urban policy--New Jersey--Trenton

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access:

No access restrictions.

Reference Number:

CITY—ADMIN

Preferred Citation:

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Trenton Administration Collection, Trentoniana Department, Trenton Free Public Library, 120 Academy St., Trenton, NJ 08608

Scope/Content

This collection covers the two governmental bodies that have administered the City of Trenton--the city's Common Council and its various executives. The materials span the entirety of Trenton's tenure as a city, from its charter in 1792 to the present day, although most items date from the second half of the twentieth century. They include the city's various charters and items related to government reform; dockets, minutes, and ordinances of Trenton's Common Council; and general histories and annual addresses of the city's mayors and managers. Newspaper clippings, correspondence, and personal items of mayors without sufficient material to merit a distinct collection--at present, all

mayors save Richard and Frederick Donnelly, Arthur Holland, and Carmen Armenti-- have also been placed here. Finally, this collection also contains the city government's annual reports (where extant), which include compiled summaries and statistics from governmental departments and bureaus.

Archivist's Note: Like with all collections within the Trenton City Records, these items have been compiled from various locations within the Trentoniana Department and arranged *ad hoc*. Many of the documents likely came from the Arthur Holland Collection, having been removed from their original locations by prior librarians. This archivist has imposed the order below on these materials and has arranged the items in each folder approximately chronologically. The ordinances have not been placed in chronological order, but rather have been grouped only by topic of legislation. The section containing Trenton's mayors *does not* compile every known scrap from throughout Trentoniana, but rather includes only those documents related to each figure's governance and other pieces of sufficient interest (such as diplomas, ledgers, and personal correspondence).

[*See also: The Trenton Elections and Politics Collection (pending); Scrapbooks SB 47, 269-274, and 287 (by city commissioner George Reiker, all part of the Parks and Recreation Collection).*]

Administrative History

An exhaustive history of the area containing the City of Trenton, itself bound up in the history of the Colonies of East and West Jersey and the united Colony of New Jersey, lies outside the scope of these brief remarks. For more information, see the works by [Raum \(1871\)](#), [Lee \(1895\)](#), and the [Trenton Historical Society](#), from which this summary takes its information.

The Unami Lenape people were the original inhabitants of the land that Trenton now occupies. Once European settlers arrived in the seventeenth century, they began displacing the Lenape by force and through treaty; the [1758 Treaty of Easton](#) forced those remaining to resettle in places like Ontario, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin. The first European settlement was established in 1679 by Quakers under Mahlon Stacy, whose son sold the lands to William Trent (the namesake of "Trent-Towne") in 1719. Both Stacy and Trent held enslaved Africans in bondage, and their labor, combined with the settlement's strategic position, helped spur the region's

growth throughout the colonial period. Around 1719, the township of Trenton was formed from portions of the surrounding townships of Maidenhead (now Lawrenceville), Nottingham (now mostly Hamilton), and Hopewell. King George II granted a section of the township a royal charter in 1746, forming the brief Borough of Trenton under control of Chief Burgess Thomas Cadwalader. The charter failed to produce the benefits that the burgesses had hoped for, so they surrendered it to the King in 1750 and the territory of the borough returned to the Township.

Following the Revolutionary War, in which Trenton played a small but pivotal role, the newly-formed State of New Jersey designated Trenton as its capital in 1790. Two years later, they properly established the city under a new charter that allowed for the popular election of some offices but left the power to appoint a mayor with the State Legislature. Further charters in 1837 and 1866 granted more autonomy to the municipal government, and an act of the State Legislature in 1847 established the mayor's election by the citizens of the city. As Trenton grew throughout the nineteenth century, it annexed South Trenton (1851), a part of Nottingham, (1856), Chambersburg (1888) and Wilbur (1898).

The shape of Trenton's government remained more or less the same, with the occasional change or experiment, until 1911. That year, the people voted to adopt a commission form of government (under the provisions of the Walsh Act)--in part as a Progressive Era-reaction to party machine politics, although Cumber's *Social History of Economic Decline* describes it as how Trenton's industrialists weakened the pro-labor government of Walter Madden. Under this system, Trentonians elected five directors, each of whom headed a division of city government. The five chose a mayor from among themselves, who served a largely symbolic steering role, somewhat akin to the president of a Board of Trustees. Frederick W. Donnelly (mayor from 1911 to 1932) dominated the city's political scene at this time. The commission system did not last long following Donnelly's resignation, as a scandal involving illegal activities within the Trenton Police Department precipitated the adoption of the Municipal Manager form in 1935. This form, as outlined in the Municipal Manager Act of 1923, was similar to that of the commission, but the mayor title was purely symbolic. Administrative power instead was invested in a city manager of the commissioners' choosing. Paul Morton, a native of Lexington, Kentucky, took on this role until his resignation in 1939. Trentonians had soured on the hopes of the Manager form of government by this point, and that same year voted to return to the commission form.

The commissioners administered the city alongside the Common Council until 1959, when the citizens voted to change to the current Council-Strong Mayor form as laid out in the Faulkner Act of 1950. Arthur Holland, the first mayor under this system, led the city from 1959 until his death in 1989, except for a four-year period between 1966 and 1970. Since the new charter was adopted in 1959, the shape of Trenton's municipal government has remained essentially the same, with a balance between the legislative powers of Common Council, led by the Council President, and the executive authority of the city mayor and their appointed bureau heads. This system weathered the arrest and conviction of Tony Mack on federal corruption charges in 2014, and as of December 2023, still operates effectively under the leadership of mayor Reed Gusciora.

Arrangement

Series I: City Governance

- Box 1, Unfolded: *Acts and Ordinances of the City of Trenton, To Which is Prefixed the Act of Incorporation* (1799; 1937 photostat)
 - Unfolded: *Charter and Ordinances of the City of Trenton* (1875)
 - Folder 1: Fragment of *Acts and Ordinances* (1799)
 - Folder 2: City charter amendments and supplements, 1866; 1874
 - Unfolded: City charter and ordinances, 1875 (2 copies)
 - Folder 3: South Trenton (1840), Chambersburg (1874; 1882), and Wilbur (1894) charters
 - Unfolded: City charter and ordinances, 1889 (2 copies)
- Box 2, Unfolded: City charter and ordinances, 1899 (2 copies)
 - Unfolded: City charter and ordinances, 1903 (2 copies)
- Box 5, Folder 1: Reports on city government and administration (1929; 1951; 1955; 1987)
 - Unfolded: *A Political History of Trenton New Jersey* (Bernard Walsh, 1939) (typescript and facsimile)
 - Folder 2: Government structure diagrams and charts (various years)
 - Folder 3: Commission form of government--Official city publications (ca. 1911, 1949)

Folder 4: Commission form of government--Promotion/publicity (1911)

Folder 5: Council-Manager form of government--Ordinance adopting (1935); publicity

Folder 6: Optional Municipal Charter Law (Faulkner Act)--State government publications

Unfoldered: *Report and Recommendations of the Trenton Charter Commission* (1961; 2 copies)

Folder 7: Charter Study Commission--Publicity from Commission

Folder 8: Charter Study Commission--Correspondence (1960; 1962; 1987)

Box OS1: City Administration scrapbook (1932-1937), Part I

Box OS2: City Administration scrapbook (1932-1937), Part II

Series II: Common Council

Unfoldered: *Ordinances of the Common Council*, 1842

Unfoldered: City ordinances, 1842, 1847, 1856 (combined volume)

Box 3, Unfoldered: City ordinances, 1903-1908 (2 copies)

Unfoldered: City ordinances, 1909-1911 (3 copies)

Unfoldered: City ordinances, 1936 (3 copies)

Unfoldered: Revised general ordinances, Supplement 7 (1976)

Unfoldered: Revised general ordinances, Supplement 9 (1980)

Box 4, Unfoldered: *Revised General Ordinances of the City of Trenton* (1967), with Supplements 1-5 (1970-1975)

Unfoldered: *Revised General Ordinances of the City of Trenton*, amended to 2003 (2 copies)

Unfoldered: Revised Ordinances supplements 21-29 (1992-2000)

Box 5, Folder 9: City Council--Lists of Members (various years)

Folder 10: Council Ordinances and Resolutions--City administration and government

Box 6, Folder 1: Council Ordinances and Resolutions--Employee pay, Part I

Folder 2: Ordinances--Employee pay, Part II; Residence requirement; Insurance and benefits; Other city employee topics

Folder 3: Ordinances--City land purchases, sales, and leases, Part I

Folder 4: Ordinances--City land purchases, sales, and leases, Part II

Folder 5: Ordinances--Building codes, Part I

Folder 6: Ordinances--Building/Housing codes, Part II

Folder 7: Ordinances--Building/Housing codes, Part III

Box 7, Folder 1: Ordinances--Zoning

Folder 2: Ordinances--Urban planning, development, and renewal, Part I

Folder 3: Ordinances--Urban planning, development, and renewal, Part II

Folder 4: Ordinances--City finances, Part I

Folder 5: Ordinances--City finances, Part II

Folder 6: Ordinances--Taxes (Real estate and other)

Box 8, Folder 1: Ordinances--Historic Landmarks

Folder 2: Ordinances--Streets, sidewalks, and parking, Part I

Folder 3: Ordinances--Streets, sidewalks, and parking, Part II; Public transportation

Folder 4: Ordinances--Water, sewage, and garbage disposal, Part I

Folder 5: Ordinances--Water, sewage, and garbage disposal, Part II

Note: Includes minutes of Common Council, 1977-1978.

Folder 6: Ordinances--Power and Electricity

Folder 7: Ordinances--Parks and Recreation

Box 9, Folder 1: Ordinances--Licensing and Alcoholic Beverage Control

Folder 2: Ordinances--Police, Fire, and Public Safety, Part I

Folder 3: Ordinances--Police, Fire, and Public Safety, Part II

Folder 4: Ordinances--Health and Human Services, Part I

Folder 5: Ordinances--Health and Human Services, Part II

Folder 6: Ordinances--Other (Municipal court fees/fines; City Hall; Litigation and compensation; Marine Terminal, Board of Education; Civic Center; Miscellaneous bids; etc.; etc.; etc.)

Folder 7: Common Council--Misc. Addresses, correspondence, and ephemera

Box 10, Unfolded: Common Council manuals, 1884, 1899-1900, 1900-1906

Box 11, Unfolded: Common Council manuals, 1907-1912

- Box 12, Unfolded: Common Council manuals, 1905-1912 (combined volumes)
- Box 13, Unfolded: Minutes of the city of Trenton, 1792-1806 (1937 WPA transcription)
- Unfolded: Minutes of the township of Trenton, 1755-1818 (1937 WPA transcription)
- Folder 1: Common Council minutes excerpts on firefighting, 1848-1854 (from Podmore's notes)
- Box 14, Folder 1: Common Council/Commissioners meeting minutes, May-June 1935
- Folder 2: Council meeting minutes, July-August 1935
- Folder 3: Council meeting minutes, September-October 1935
- Folder 4: Council minutes, November-December 1935
- Folder 5: Council minutes, January-February 1936
- Folder 6: Council minutes, March-April 1936
- Folder 7: Council minutes, May-June 1936
- Folder 8: Council minutes, July-August 1936
- Folder 9: Council minutes, September-October 1936
- Folder 10: Council minutes, November-December 1936
- Box 15, Folder 1: Council minutes, January-February 1937
- Folder 2: Council minutes, March-April 1937
- Folder 3: Council minutes, May-June 1937
- Folder 4: Council minutes, July-August 1937
- Folder 5: Council minutes, September-October 1937
- Folder 6: Council minutes, November-December 1937
- Folder 7: Council minutes, January-February 1938
- Folder 8: Council minutes, March-April 1938
- Folder 9: Council minutes, May-June 1938
- Folder 10: Council minutes, July-August 1938
- Box 16, Folder 1: Council minutes, September-October 1938
- Folder 2: Council minutes, November-December 1938
- Folder 3: Council minutes, June-July 1939

Folder 4: Council minutes, August-September 1939

Folder 5: Council minutes, October-December 1939

Folder 6: Council meeting notices and docket matters, 1935-1938
(reverse chronological)

Folder 7: Council meeting notices and dockets, 1938 (reverse
chronological)

Box 17, Folder 1: Council dockets and meeting summaries, 1962

Folder 2: Council meeting minutes/dockets, 1963 (incomplete)

Folder 3: Council meeting minutes/dockets, 1964 (incomplete)

Folder 4: Council meeting minutes/dockets, 1965 (incomplete)

Folder 5: Reports of bids/proposals to city council, 1965

Folder 6: Council meeting minutes/dockets, 1968-1973 (incomplete)

Folder 7: Council meeting minutes/dockets, 1974 (incomplete)

Folder 8: Council meeting minutes/dockets, 1978-1980 (incomplete)

Folder 9: Council meeting minutes/dockets, 1981-1987 (incomplete)

Series III: Mayors and Other Executives

Box 18, Folder 1: Lists of Mayors (latest update December 2023)

Folder 2: Podmore's profiles of mayors (1940s-1950s)--Cadwalader to
Creveling

Folder 3: Podmore's profiles of mayors (1940s-1950s)--Bodine to Duch
(Connolly missing)

Folder 4: Thomas Cadwalader--Scans of documents; pictures; other bios

Folder 5: Moore Furman--Other bios

Folder 6: James Ewing/Joshua Wright--Newspaper clippings; Ewing's
spelling reform pamphlet (copy); Wright's mayoral
appointment certificate

Folder 7: Stacy Potts--Newspaper clippings

Folder 8: Charles Burroughs--Newspaper clippings, genealogy

Folder 9: Samuel Evans/Eli Morris--Newspaper clippings

Folder 10: Samuel R. Hamilton, William Napton, John R. Tucker, Franklin S. Mills, and some contemporaries--Correspondence, clippings (*see also Box OS3*)

Folder 11: Joseph Wood--Podmore's notes and typescript of report

Folder 12: John Briest to William Rice--Newspaper clippings

Folder 13: Garrett D. W. Vroom--Clippings, speeches, ledger (*see also Box OS4*)

Folder 14: Frank McGowan--Newspaper clippings, correspondence, other documents

Folder 15: Welling Sickel and Frank Briggs--Newspaper clippings

Folder 16: Frank S. Katzenbach--Annual message (1903) typescript; correspondence; ephemera

Box 19, Folder 1: Frederick W. Gnichtel--Clippings; correspondence; ephemera

Folder 2: Frederick W. Gnichtel--Writings and addresses

Folder 3: Walter Madden--Correspondence and reports

Folder 4: George LaBarre--Writings; Podmore's notes (*see also Boxes OS1 and OS2*)

Folder 5: William J. Connor (mayor) and Paul Morton (manager)--Clippings

Folder 6: John Hartmann--"Radio Talks on Civil Defense" (1942)

Folder 7: Andrew Duch--Clippings

Folder 8: Donal Connolly--Clippings

Folder 9: Donal Connolly--Correspondence; proclamation

Folder 10: Donal Connolly--Celebration dinner booklets (*see also Politics and Elections Collection*)

Folder 11: William Faherty--Clipping; testimonial dinner booklet

Folder 12: Douglas Palmer--Clippings, ca. 1987-1993

Folder 13: Douglas Palmer--Additional clippings, 1994-2013

Box 20, Folder 1: Douglas Palmer--Recordings, addresses, misc. correspondence and ephemera

Folder 2: Tony Mack--Clippings (1983; 2006-2014)

Folder 3: Tony Mack--2012 “Earth Week” ephemera; 2012 Federal criminal complaint

Folder 4: George Muschal--Clippings

Folder 5: Eric Jackson--Clippings

Folder 6: Reed Gusciora--State of the City ephemera; business correspondence; proclamations

Folder 7: Mayors--Miscellaneous ephemera

Box OS3: William (and son John) Napton scrapbook; Franklin S. Mills scrapbook

Box OS4, Folder 1: G.D.W. Vroom--Diploma and posthumous commemoration

Folder 2: List of Trenton city officers, 1866

Folder 3: Joseph Shaw--Mayoral appointment certificate (1893)

Note: Mayors with sufficiently substantial materials (currently Richard/Frederick Donnelly, Arthur Holland, and Carmen Armenti) have their own collections.

Series IV: Annual Reports and State of the City Addresses

Box 21: City annual reports (some with mayor’s message), 1888-1899

Box 22: City annual reports (some with mayor’s message), 1900-1905

Box 23: City annual reports (some with mayor’s message), 1906-1910

Box 24, Unfolded: *Annual Reports of the City Officers*, 1911

Unfolded: *Annual Reports of the City Officers*, 1912

Folder 1: Mayors’ Addresses, 1874-1880

Folder 2: Mayors’ Annual Messages, 1881-1889 (1888 missing)

Folder 3: Mayors’ Messages, 1891; 1897; 1907

Box 25, Unfolded: *Message of Walter Madden*, 1908 (2 copies)

Unfolded: *Message of Walter Madden*, 1909 (2 copies)

Folder 1: Mayor’s Message, 1910 (2 copies)

Unfolded: *Message of Walter Madden*, 1911 (2 copies)

Folder 2: Board of Commissioners Efficiency Report, 1914

Folder 3: City annual reports, with city managers’ remarks, 1935-1937

Unfolded: Arthur Holland inaugural address and State of the City addresses, 1962-1966 (2 copies)

Box 26, Folder 1: State of the City addresses, 1963-1966

Folder 2: State of the City addresses, 1967-1970

Folder 3: State of the City addresses, 1972 [*sic*]-1979

Folder 4: State of the City addresses, 1980-1989

Box 27, Folder 1: State of the City addresses, 1990; 1996-2000; 2004; 2011

Folder 2: City annual reports, 1938; 1957; 1964

Folder 3: City “annual reports” (on newsprint), 1959; 1963; 1966-1968

Folder 4: City annual reports, 1996-2000

Folder 5: City annual reports: 2001-2007