

John P. Grace Mayoral Papers, 1911-1923

Descriptive Summary

Title and Dates:

John P. Grace Mayoral Papers, 1911-1923 (bulk 1911-1915 and 1919-1923)

Creator:

John P. Grace, Mayor of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, 1912-1915 and 1920-1923

Quantity:

1.5 cubic feet

Forms of Material:

Correspondence, contracts, reports, invoices, journal articles, newspaper clippings, printed material, plats, meeting minutes, financial statements, resolutions, pamphlets

Processed by:

Rebecca Schultz, 2014

Series List:

Series I: First Administration, 1911-1915

Series II: Second Administration, 1919-1923

Abstract

The collection consists of the papers of John P. Grace, mayor of Charleston for two non-consecutive terms, 1911-1915 and 1919-1923. The papers contain correspondence related to local business, politics, significant events, and municipal and charitable organizations.

Biographical Statement

John Patrick Grace, the fifty-first mayor of Charleston, was born on December 30, 1874 to second-generation Irish-Catholic immigrants, James I. Grace and Elizabeth (Daly) Grace. He attended the Christian Brothers School and the High School of Charleston, but ended his education early to enter into the workforce. During his formative years, Grace worked in a number of different fields, including bookkeeping, travelling sales, and the cotton and oil industries. He eventually left Charleston to work as a personal secretary to Congressman William Elliott, during which time he attended Georgetown Law School. Upon graduating with a degree in law in 1902, Grace returned to Charleston, entering into a partnership with W. Turner Logan.

During his time in Washington, the populist ideals of men such as William Jennings Bryan and Henry George resonated with Grace's own experience as a member of the Irish Catholic community and greatly influenced his social and political beliefs. His desire to bring about progressive changes in Charleston led Grace to become active in local and national politics. Between 1902 and 1908, he ran failed campaigns for the South Carolina State Senate, Charleston County Sheriff, and the United States Senate. Although unsuccessful in his early political campaigns, Grace became an increasingly influential figure in Charleston politics.

In 1908, Grace began publishing *Common Sense* (superseded by *The Charleston American* in 1916), a weekly newspaper in which he frankly displayed his political leanings and championed causes dear to his heart. Grace presented readers with articles advocating for the needs of the common man, criticizing big business and Charleston elitism, as well as the unpopular Prohibition movement. One of his dearest causes, that of Irish independence, garnered frequent attention and resonated with many of Charleston's working-class immigrant neighborhoods.

Grace's populist beliefs likewise played a significant role in his law career. In *Ex parte Drayton* (1907), Grace successfully challenged the practice of peonage in South Carolina. In his opinion, Judge William H. Brawley said of Grace, "their case has been brought here by a young member of this bar, himself belonging to a race that in the past has suffered through centuries of injustice and oppression, whose heart has been touched by the dry of the lowly, and who, apparently as his own cost, from sheer love of liberty and hatred of wrong, makes this appeal for the liberty to which they are entitled under every sanction of the Constitution and laws of their country."¹

When Grace ran for mayor in 1911, he led a grassroots campaign focused on criticism of the elite "Broad Street Ring" who typically dominated Charleston politics. These men concentrated on bringing new industry to the Lowcountry while paying less attention to the concerns of working-class men and women. Grace's frank denunciation of Charleston's elite and willingness to create dissension among the working class earned him the contempt of Charleston's most prominent individuals. Nevertheless, the appeal Grace held for the working-class, immigrant population and his efforts to register new voters won him the 1911 election by a margin of 194 votes.

When Grace competed for the Democratic ticket in 1915, both sides ran highly antagonistic campaigns. In a sign of the extreme political division that gripped the city, the final vote came down to a margin of just fourteen points in favor of Grace's opponent, T.T. Hyde. At a ballot recount scheduled for three days after the primary, violence erupted between Grace and Hyde supporters, resulting in the shooting death of Sidney J. Cohen, a reporter for the *News and Courier*. After this shocking display of violence, Grace conceded the election to Hyde.

Grace and Hyde faced-off once more in the 1919 mayoral election in what was again an incredibly close race. This time, after a recount, the pro-Grace fraction prevailed and Grace returned to the mayoralty for his final term. Although he ran for re-election in 1923, Grace was defeated by the young upstart, Thomas Porcher Stoney. While retiring from politics after the 1923 election, Grace remained a prominent figure in Charleston politics for decades to come. He backed a number of populist political candidates whose campaigns were marked by the same political controversy that marred his own political career.

Scope and Content Note

The collection is divided into two distinct series relating to Grace's non-consecutive administrations. Within each series, the records are organized by subject or according to the originating individual, organization, or department. Within each folder the documents are arranged chronologically with some related documents fastened together. The material found in the collection includes correspondence, contracts, reports, invoices, journal articles, newspaper clippings, printed material, plats, meeting minutes, financial statements, resolutions and pamphlets.

¹ Quoted in: Sass, Herbert Ravenel, *The Story of the South Carolina Lowcountry*, (West Columbia, SC: J.F. Hyer Publishing Co., 1956), 822.

The outbreak of hostilities during World War I occurred in the midst of Grace’s first administration, while his second administration occurred just after the war’s conclusion. Grace’s papers provide important insight into some of the circumstances effecting operation of the Charleston Naval Shipyard during this tumultuous period. Of special note is the focus of naval and city officials on the eradication of venereal disease through the suppression of prostitution. Prior to the war, Grace held a very laissez-faire attitude toward the presence of prostitution in the City of Charleston. During his second administration, however, Grace led a hard line against the practice. He instructed the police to force prostitutes from the City and prosecute those who facilitated the association of navy enlisted men with prostitutes.

Also of note during Grace’s first administration is the application of the South Carolina Dispensary system in Charleston. Grace ran on an anti-Prohibition platform, and one of his biggest supporters and an Alderman on City Council, Vincent Chicco was a known bootlegger. In correspondence with Governor Richard I. Manning, Grace’s reluctance to prosecute alcohol violations and the resulting friction between the two is particularly evident.

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First Administration, 1911-1915

1	1	Atlantic Coast Line Railway, 1912-1914: papers re: United Commerical Travellers, Freight Bureau, Charleston merchants, Charleston Northern Railway
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	3	Battery Development Company, 1913: papers re: Murray Boulevard, Simons-Mayrant Company
	4	Joseph A. Black, Charleston Democratic Executive Committee, 1915: papers re: voter fraud, election of 1915
	5	Coleman L. Blease, South Carolina Governor, 1913-1914: papers re: Dispensary system, blind tigers
2	OS-1	John Brown Memorial controversy, 1914-1915: John Brown’s Raid, abolition, African Americans, P.H. Aylett, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Camp Sumter, No. 250 United Confederate Veterans, bequests to city, “John Brown: Compiled from the Writings of G.W. Brown, M.D.,” by Eliza Johnston Wiggin
1	6	Henry Buist, 1912-1915: papers re: Murray Boulevard, Charleston Northern Railroad, Mark W. Potter, Oaks Club, Holston Corporation, Southern Railway, Standard Oil Company, Bishop Henry Northrop, Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railway, Geer Drug Company, A.C. Kaufman, election of 1915, W.R. Bonsal, F.W. Wagener, J. Elmore Martin

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	8	Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railway Company, 1913-1915: papers re: Mark W. Potter, W.R. Bonsal, Seaboard Air Line Railway, Holston Corporation, conveyances, Clinchfield Coal Company, Charleston Northern Railroad, Henry Buist, Town Creek, Panama Exposition, Southern Railway
	9	Chamber of Commerce, 1911-1912: papers re: Committee of Twenty-Five, Charleston Ad Club, Buy at Home Week Exposition, Water Front Committee, Port of Charleston, Panama Canal, Dock Commission Bill
2	OS-2	Charleston Consolidated Railway & Lighting, 1912-1915: papers re: Philip H. Gadsden, street lighting, segregation, African Americans, unions, employee strike, Chicora Place, Charleston Navy Yard, Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees of America
1	10	Charleston Light & Water Company, 1911-1915: papers re: water supply, A.C. Tuxbury Lumber Company, Charleston Bagging Manufacturing Company, Goose Creek water, Edisto River, Board of Water Commissioners, Charleston Light and Water Company, financial reports, Committee on Water Supply
	11	Charleston Navy Yard, 1913-1914: papers re: Admiral James M. Helm, housing, fire protection, Charleston Consolidated Railway & Lighting Company, visit of Secretary of the Navy
	12	Charleston Orphan House, George W. Williams, 1912-1915: papers re: William Enston Trust, Palmetto Minstrel Fund, Charleston Orphan Asylum
2	OS-3	Clerk of Council, Joseph Barbot, 1913-1915: papers re: Charleston Northern Railway, Southern Bell Telephone & Telegraph Company, Henry Buist, appointments, fireworks, Civic Club, Charleston Consolidated Railway & Lighting Company, public wharf, Simons-Mayrant Company, Roper Hospital, Medical Society of South Carolina, Charleston Real Estate Exchange, Charleston Museum, building codes, Southern Commercial Congress
1	13	Clerk of Council, R.G. O'Neale, 1912-1913: papers re: Police Department, Dispensary system, College of Charleston, Railroads Committee, Wood and Brick Buildings Committee, building code, Board of Health, Entertainment Committee, Seaboard Air Line Railway, Clinchfield Railroad, Association of Attorney Generals, Ward Nine, visit of the Secretary of the Navy, Murray Boulevard
	14	Department of Commerce, Lighthouse Service, 1913-1914: Charleston Harbor dredging, Charleston Terminal Company, Tradd Street wharf, Chisolm Mill

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1	15	Confederate Home College, 1915: papers re: Mrs. W. Branford Frost, city scholarships, education
2	OS-4	Corporation Counsel, W. Turner Logan, 1913-1915: papers re: Charleston Water Works, Charleston Terminal Company, convicted arsonist Marion P. Burdell release from State Hospital for the Insane, Lees-McCrae Institute, <i>James Evans v City Council of Charleston</i>
	OS-5	Corporation Counsel, George H. Moffett, 1911-1914: papers re: Committee on Streets, abolishment of Board of Public Works, Battery Wall, Dock Commission, injury claims, ordinances, Custom House, conveyance of property to the Board of Public School Commissioners, South Carolina Criminal Code, Housewives League, Bluestein Building, Murray Boulevard, Battery Development Company, Plumbing Ordinance, Charleston Light & Water Company, Simons-Mayrant Company, Old Fish Market, Shirras Dispensary
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1	16	E.G. Gaillard, 1914: papers re: Chicora Place, Charleston Northern Railway
	17	Department of Health, 1912-1914: papers re: J. Mercier Green, Board of Health committees, Civic Club Women's Committee, health education, sanitary conditions, night soil, garbage disposal, City Garbage Incinerator, Dairy Ordinance, bacterial testing
	18	Jenkins Orphanage, 1915: papers re: Industrial School for Colored Orphans, Rev. D.J. Jenkins, Orphan Aid Society property - Cromwell Alley lots, Smith Street, property taxes, 20 Franklin Street, Charleston Messenger, Old Folks Home
	19	Jitney Motor Company, 1915: papers re: regulation of jitneys
	20	Committee on Journals and Vacant Offices, 1913: papers re: committee and board appointments
2	OS-7	Juvenile Protective League, 1912-1915: papers re: juvenile delinquency, Juvenile Court Laws, tobacco sales, commitment of children to Industrial School, King's Daughters of South Carolina
1	21	J.O. Lea, City Treasurer, 1915: papers re: Southern Commercial Congress
	22	G.S. Legare, US Representative, 1911-1912: US Lighthouse Depot, Castle Pinckney, William D. Crum
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	25	Richard I. Manning, South Carolina Governor, 1915: County Dispensary Board, C.L. Wilson, former Governor Coleman L. Blease, John Marshall, A.W. Todd, law enforcement, gambling, blind tigers, police raids, State Law Enforcement deployed to Charleston
	26	Board of Market Commissioners, 1911-1913: papers re: William H. Welch, Clerk of Weights and Measures, Market Wharf property, Charleston Consolidated Railway & Lighting Company, Terry Fish Company
	27	F.H. McMaster, Insurance Commissioner, 1915
	28	Memminger Home & School Association, 1913: prostitution, gambling, blind tigers, law enforcement, St. John's Lutheran Church, 'tenderloin district', Archdale Street, Beaufain Street
2	OS-8	Miscellaneous Papers, 1909-1915: papers re: <i>The City of Columbia v D.E. Lusk</i> , 1911 fire loss per capita, wood block paving, freight rates, city employee wages, telephone rates, Simons-Mayrant Company
1	29	W.H. Mixson, 1913: Social Service League, Dispensary system, lynching, blind tigers, gambling, Star Theatre
	30	Navy Department, 1912-1914: papers re: visit of Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels to Charleston; Charleston Navy Yard, Committee on Maine Relics, Senate Bill No. 2492, Alvin Hovey-King
2	OS-9	Newspaper Clippings, 1911-1944 (bulk 1911-1915): papers re: 1911 election, voter fraud, Police/Fire Department salaries, Dispensary system, jitney companies, 1915 Election Day shooting and riot, railroads
	OS-10	Board of Park Commissioners, 1912-1915: papers re: Mall Park, 1915 election, Samuel Lapham, Sanitary and Drainage Commission, Charleston Navy Yard, Chicora Park
	OS-11	William Henry Parker, 1912-1913: papers re: Charleston Library Society, Dairy closings, <i>Susan B. Alston v J. Alwyn Ball and the Board of Health</i>
1	31	Lawrence M. Pinckney, City Alderman, 1911-1915: papers re: Ways and Means Committee, Charleston County Teacher's Association, railroad tax assessments, Real Estate Exchange, Murray Boulevard lots, West End Development Company, 164-166 Tradd Street, Freight Bureau, Roper Hospital, League of American Municipalities, Simons-Mayrant Company, Tradd Street Wharf, Dock Commission

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	40	Benjamin R. Tillman, US Senator, 1913-1914: James Sottile, Cooper River Bridge project, War Department, US Lighthouse Depot, Old Exchange building, Daughters of the American Revolution, Lighthouse Board, Immigration Station, <i>USS Maine</i> relics, Navy Department, proposed Marine Corps depot
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Second Administration, 1920-1923

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1	45	Central Labor Union, 1923: papers re: worker rights
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	49	Charleston County Sanitary & Drainage Committee, 1923: papers re: Ashley River Bridge, South Carolina Highway Commission
	50	The Charleston Museum, 1920-1923: papers re: Charleston Museum bulletins, Laura M. Bragg, Museum stamp collection, Museum Park fountain, Calhoun Street, Charleston County Delegation, Laura M. Bragg, American Association of Museums, Frederic Allen Whiting, Professor Rea, College of Charleston

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	68	Military Affairs, 1923: papers re: Militia Bureau, reorganization of South Carolina National Guard, Battalion of Field Artillery, <i>The Charleston American</i> newspaper, light artillery units
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	80	Roper Hospital, 1922-1923: papers re: drug abuse, F.O. Bates, complaints, American Hospital Association, George McF. Mood
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