

R. Goodwyn Rhett Mayoral Records, 1903-1911

Descriptive Summary

Title and Dates:

R. Goodwyn Rhett Mayoral Records, 1903-1911

Creator:

R. Goodwyn Rhett, 1862-1939

Quantity:

1 cubic ft.

Forms of Material:

Correspondence, contracts, plats, pamphlets, invoices, advertisements, newspaper articles, resolutions

Processed by:

Rebecca L. Schultz, 2014

Location: 01-A-002

Abstract

The collection consists of the records of R. Goodwyn Rhett, 50th mayor of the City of Charleston for two terms from 1903-1911. The records contain correspondence, newspaper clippings, and various city documents related to local industry and municipal developments of the period.

Biographical Sketch

Mayor R. (Robert) Goodwyn Rhett (1862-1939) was born amid the Civil War to Albert Moore Rhett and Martha (Goodwyn) Rhett in Columbia, South Carolina. Descended from an old colonial family, one of his early ancestors was Thomas Smith, the governor of South Carolina from 1693-1694. Another ancestor, Colonel William Rhett was speaker of the South Carolina House of Commons in the early eighteenth century and later, as vice-admiral of a colonial fleet, commanded the expedition which captured the pirate, Stede Bonnet.

Mayor Rhett spent much of his adolescence in Charleston where his father was a forerunner in the phosphate industry. He attended Porter Academy prior to enrolling in the University of Virginia. Rhett graduated with an M. A. in 1883 and earned his law degree soon after. Following his return to Charleston, Rhett formed the legal partnership of Trenholm and Rhett with George M. Trenholm in 1886.

Outside of his law practice, Rhett played an active role in many aspects of Charleston's business community, including the phosphate and banking industries. He held presidencies in both the South Carolina Loan and Trust Company and the Peoples National Bank of Charleston. Rhett was also largely responsible for the establishment of the Commercial Club of Charleston in

1902, which grew out of the entrepreneurial drive promoted during the South Carolina Inter State and West Indian Exposition.

Rhett began his political career as an Alderman on the City Council of Charleston in 1895, a position he held until his election as mayor in 1903. As City Alderman he served on the committees of Ways and Means, Contracts, and Railroads, as well as the Board of Equalization. During Rhett's tenure as mayor (1903-1911), he was responsible for the establishment of the Board of Public Works, as well as the construction of new police and fire stations. Rhett also played an instrumental role in the establishment of Roper Hospital, Union Station, and the Julian Mitchell School.

After Rhett's tenure as mayor, he went on to serve as the president of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States from 1916-1918 and as chairman of the South Carolina State Highway Commission from 1920-1926. In his retirement he also authored a *Charleston: An Epic of Carolina*, a 374-page history of the city he served for so many years. The book was published posthumously in 1941 (a digital edition is accessible via [HathiTrust](#)).

Scope and Content Note

The collection is organized alphabetically by subject, department, or agency. Documents are filed chronologically within each folder. Material found in the collection includes correspondence, contracts, plats, pamphlets, invoices, advertisements, newspaper articles, and resolutions.

Mayor Rhett's administration occurred during a period of relative economic growth in Charleston. While the City stagnated for much of the post-Civil War period, the establishment of the Charleston Navy Yard in 1901 brought much needed revenue into the region. Meanwhile the 1901-1902 South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition fostered a sense of vitality and entrepreneurship in the Charleston community. Mayor Rhett's records provide valuable insight into the development of Charleston's business and industrial interests during this important period of expansion and growth. Subjects of interest include railroad and shipping operations, the expansion of public works facilities, and the development of city parks. Also of note, is the wealth of information on the application of the Dispensary System in Charleston, as well as frequent violations of the law and police raids on illegal establishments.

Folder List:

Folder

- 1 Martin Frederick Ansel, South Carolina Governor, 1907-1910: law enforcement, visit of Baron Von Pilis, visit of President Taft
- 2 Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company, 1903-1906: Union Station, visit of William H. Taft (then Secretary of War)
- 3 Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company, 1907-1911: Confederate reunion, Immigrant Station, South Carolina Dispensary law, seizure of alcohol, Chicora Park
- 4 Battery Development Company, Contracts, 1909-1910: Battery sea wall, Murray Boulevard
- 5 Battery Development Company, Correspondence, 1909-1911: Battery sea wall, Murray Boulevard
- 6 Bonds and Insurance, 1904-1911: Summerville – Charleston Railroad line, Firemen's Fund
- 7 Building Code, 1907-1908: James H. Dingle, City Engineer
- 8 Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railroad, 1909-1911: Lawrence M. Pinckney, Charleston Harbor, Port of Savannah
- 9 Charleston Consolidated Railroad, Gas and Electric Company, 1903-1907: street lighting, Charleston Navy Yard, water supply, Union Station, South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition (Charleston Exposition), visit of William H. Taft (then Secretary of War), Scheutzenplatz German Rifle Club
- 10 Charleston Consolidated Railroad, Gas and Electric Company, 1908-1911: Isle of Palms, visit of Li Sum Ling, Ben Tillman, Alms House, Charleston Harbor, Market Street wharf
- 11 Charleston Light and Water Company, 1904-1911: water supply, William Enston Home, fire alarm system
- 12 Charleston Navy Yard, 1904-1910: illegal saloons, Marine Barracks, Battleship South Carolina, Prohibition
- 13 Charleston Terminal Company, 1911: fertilizer storage at wharves

Folder

- 14 Committee on City Lands and Public Buildings, c.1903-1911: annexations, Marion Square Holding Company, Charleston Consolidated Railway and Lighting Company, Old Fish Market (Concord and Market Streets), Committee on Pleasure Grounds
- 15 City Yearbooks, 1910-1911
- 16 Clerk of Council, 1904-1911: Union Station, Committee on Steam Engines, Roper Hospital, South Carolina Dispensary law violations, port and harbor improvements
- 17 Clubs and Committees, 1911: the American Jewish Committee, Salvation Army
- 18 Clyde Steamship Company, 1905-1911: South Carolina Dispensary law violations, blind tigers
- 19 Corporation Counsel, 1903-1906: juror qualifications, South Carolina Dispensary law, bequest of James S. Gibbes, licensing, taxation, Huger Street, Mehrtens Hall, Market Street, City Dispensary, city property, ordinances
- 20 Corporation Counsel, 1907-1908: ordinances, Southern Railroad Company, gambling, money lenders, Roper Hospital, South Carolina Dispensary law enforcement, Board of Water Commissioners, encroachments, Immigration Station
- 21 Corporation Counsel, 1909-1911: Murray Boulevard, old police station, sewerage bonds, lynching/murder trial of police officers, African Americans, Huger Street Fire Station, ordinances, conveyances, gambling, City Dispensary, hurricane of 1911
- 22 City Electrician, Iön Simons, 1907-1911: fire alarms/police alarms, hurricane of 1911
- 23 City Engineer, J. H. Dingle, 1904-1911: neglected properties, Spring Street Methodist Church, City Police Station, Planters Hotel, Market Street wharf, sewer construction, River and Harbor Act
- 24 Fire Department, 1903-1911: Ordinance for Protection of Theatres, Iroquois Theatre fire, sprinkler systems, Firemen's Pension Fund establishment, unsafe buildings, city fire alarm system, waterworks system, Adger's Wharf fire, Huger Street Fire Station
- 25 Freight and Transportation Bureau, 1907-1911: railroad services, shipping industry
- 26 Guild and Company, Contracting Engineers, 1911: gas company pipes, sewage system construction

Folder

- 27 Harbor Commission, 1911: Port of Charleston operations, River and Harbor Act, Ashley River improvements, Charleston Harbor improvements, wharves
- 28 Board of Health, 1904-1911: Spring Street Methodist Church, hurricane of 1911, unsanitary conditions
- 29 Duncan Clinch Heyward, South Carolina Governor, 1905-1906: visit of Secretary of the Navy, *USS Charleston*, John Hammond Fordham election to African American college, South Carolina State University; *State of South Carolina vs. Southern Railway Company*
- 30 Immigration Station, 1907-1911: establishment of Immigration Station in Charleston Harbor, economic panic
- 31 Inquiries, 1904-1911: water supply, hurricane damage, Carey-Cothran Act, South Carolina Dispensary law, City Magazine, Frank P. Millburn, Gibbes Museum, public abattoir
- 32 Internal Revenue Service, 1904-1908: alcohol taxation, police raids, South Carolina Dispensary law
- 33 Invitations, 1903-1911: Hibernian Society, bust of John Blake White, 1906 visit of William H. Taft (then Secretary of War), 1909 visit of President William H. Taft, Charleston Orphan House, General Wade Hampton Monument, Port of Charleston, Greek Orthodox Church, dedication
- 34 Juvenile Protective League, 1909-1915: Y.M.C.A., juvenile delinquency, “Big Brother” movement, National Child Labor Committee, juvenile court, Walter B. Wilbur
- 35 Samuel Lapham, City Alderman, 1904: Charleston Board of Visitors, Schutzenfest, Wagener-Melchers, Captain Berry, Charleston Navy Yard
- 36 Libraries, 1905-1911: Charleston Library Society, public library
- 37 Navy Department, 1904-1910: *USS Charleston*, Battleship South Carolina
- 38 Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, 1905-1906: *USS Charleston*
- 39 Olmsted Brothers, 1911: waterfront development, Hampton Park, General Hampton monument, Halsey Mill, Shamrock Terrace
- 40 Board of Park Commissioners, 1908-1911: Old Faber Place Plantation, Hampton Park, hurricane of 1911, repair of South Battery wall and Hampton Park structures

Folder

- 41 Philadelphia and Gulf Steamship Company, 1911: Port of Charleston
- 42 Lawrence M. Pinckney, City Alderman, 1911: Committee on Real Estate and Insurance, hurricane of 1911
- 43 Committee on Pleasure Grounds, c.1903-1911: White Point Garden bandstand, Mrs. Waring P. Carrington
- 44 Police Department, 1903-1904: South Carolina Dispensary law, police misconduct, elections, racial discord, African Americans, gambling, Washington Light Infantry, complaints
- 45 Police Department, 1905-1907: gambling, prostitution, licensing, South Carolina Dispensary law
- 46 Police Department, 1908-1910: Simonton School, blind tigers, gambling, African Americans, Gala Week, vagrancy, South Carolina Dispensary law enforcement, Jenkins Orphanage Band, African American Police Officers
- 47 Police Department, 1911: Automobile Ordinance, African Americans, South Carolina Dispensary law violations, Gala Week, election
- 48 Board of Public Works, 1911: street lamp and trolley poles, water supply, Charleston Terminal Company
- 49 Public Streets, 1903-1911: street repairs ordinance, commutation tax, Rutledge Avenue extension, Charleston Terminal Company, Seaboard Air Line Railway, Board of Public Works, street paving, America Street extension, Gala Week, conveyances
- 50 Schools, 1903-1911: College of Charleston Museum, Medical College, The Citadel Military College, City artwork, Waldemar Dieterich
- 51 Sewerage, 1905-1911: Sanitary and Drainage Commission, water supply
- 52 Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company, 1904-1905: city telephone contract
- 53 Southern Railway Company, 1904-1911: Union Station, machinist strike, alcohol seizure, Prohibition, Charleston Terminal Company, Latin American trade, Panama Canal
- 54 Supervisor of Registration, 1911: elections, voter registration

Folder

- 55 City Treasurer, J.O. Lea, 1906-1911: Committee on City Hall, Clock, and Chimes, Givan's Ferry land, Park Commissioners, Police Department appropriation, Charleston Consolidated Railroad, Gas and Electric Company, R.G. O'Neale
- 56 Union Station, 1905-1908: Architect Frank P. Milburn, Immigration Station
- 57 US Coast Squadron, 1905-1906: *USS Texas* Flagship, city water quality, shooting of sailor, Scheutzenplatz German Rifle Club, *USS Charleston*
- 58 US Corps of Engineers, 1905-1911: Charleston Harbor, Charleston Navy Yard
- 59 US Customs Service, William D. Crum, 1907-1910: collection of import taxes
- 60 US House of Representatives, 1905-1910: Charleston Harbor, Naval Appropriations Bill, *USS Charleston*, Charleston Naval Yard, sea wall, Sullivan's Island Army Post, immigration
- 61 US Interior Department, Bureau of Mines, 1911: coal mines, smoke ordinance
- 62 US Justice Department: canal construction, Immigration Station, Charleston Navy Yard and Marine Barracks
- 63 US Senate, 1904-1909: Dr. William D. Crum, racial relations, African Americans, Ben Tillman, *USS Charleston*, Charleston Harbor, Naval Appropriation
- 64 US Treasury Department, 1904-1910: Quarantine Station, Custom House, Dr. William D. Crum, African Americans
- 65 War Department: water supply, occupation of Cuba, Cooper River dredging, Charleston Harbor
- 66 Ways and Means Committee, 1904-1911: business licenses, South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition, (Charleston Exposition), hurricane of 1911, Committee on West End Improvements
- 67 West End Development Company, 1911: sale of Murray Boulevard lots
- 68 William Howard Taft, US President, 1911: presidential visit