

John J. Buckley Mayoral Papers, 1921-1985

Basic Information

Repository: Lawrence History Center

Accession Number: 2007.005

Creator: John J. Buckley

Quantity: 3 Carton Boxes, 1 Nonstandard Flat Box, and 29 Scrapbooks

Processed By: Jennifer Williams

Access: Some materials have been withdrawn from the collection and are restricted until 2050.

Related Material

More information on the urban renewal program can be found in the Urban Renewal Collection (2003.008, 1997.060, and 1997.061) and the Mayor Daniel P. Kiley, Jr. Papers (see below).

The Lawrence History Center also holds the papers of Mayor Daniel P. Kiley Jr. (2007.002) and Mayor Lawrence LeFebre (2006.076).

Biographical Note

Mayor John Joseph Buckley was born on July 5, 1916 to John Joseph Buckley and Julia Mary (Cronin) Buckley. His father was a police patrolman in Lawrence, MA. As a child Mayor Buckley attended schools in Lawrence, including St. Patrick's Grammar School and Lawrence High School. He graduated from the latter in 1933 and then worked in several of the city's mills for two years until he was able to go to St. John's Preparatory School in Danvers, MA as a postgraduate. While at St. John's he participated in the track and field team, and made many friends. He and four teammates hitchhiked to New York City in order to go to the National Prep School Track and Field Meet, at which his team came in first. The story of the five teammates was reported upon by several New York newspapers, and the publicity resulted in Mayor Buckley receiving a track scholarship to Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1941.

After graduating from college Mayor Buckley served in World War II, and was discharged with the rank of major in 1947 after spending most of his time in Washington, D.C. and Panama. By the time he was released from duty he was married to Gloria L'Argent of Silver Spring, MD. They returned to Lawrence, MA and he ran for mayor in 1947 and 1949, losing both elections. However, his third bid for the office of the mayor was successful, and he was elected in 1951. This would be the beginning of his fourteen year reign as the mayor of Lawrence. During these years he attempted to revitalize the city's economy through the help of federal and state aid. He also participated in the urban redevelopment movement and the TOPICS program. Seventy new businesses came to the city and 12,000 new jobs were created during his terms in office. During this time he also expanded his political role to areas outside of Lawrence. He became an adviser to the Federal Housing and Home Finance Authority, and was elected to the Governor's Council in 1960 and 1962. He attempted (and ultimately failed) to win appointments as the Massachusetts Commissioner of Commerce, Essex County Sheriff, state treasurer, and state auditor. In 1964 he lost the election for mayor, and sought other opportunities.

In 1968 Mayor Buckley was appointed Essex County Registrar of Deeds and won an election for a six-year term in 1970. In 1971 he ran for mayor again and was successful, and also won the elections in

1973 and 1975. During these terms he kept government spending and taxes low, and appointed those that he knew were loyal to him to various offices. He also continued to participate in the urban renewal/redevelopment program. He oversaw the building of a new post office, public library, police station, and Boys Club. He also oversaw the renovation of city hall, the building of Lawrence General Hospital, and the building of a series of new apartments. The Lawrence Industrial Park and Greater Lawrence Regional Vocational-Technical School were also built, but the In-Town Mall failed. Other issues he responded to were problems relating to trash disposal and sewage as well as pollution in the Merrimack River. In 1976 Mayor Buckley won the Greater Lawrence Chamber of Commerce's Ralph B. Wilkinson Good Citizenship Award, but lost the mayoral election a year later. For the next several years he took positions as Haverhill's economic coordinator and research director for the State Legislature's Housing and Urban Development Committee.

In 1983 he decided to run for office again, and successfully won the election for mayor. During his term he successfully pushed forward with his desire to ratify a new city charter and to create a four-year term for the mayor. This was to be his last term of office, for he lost the election in 1985 and did not run again. Throughout his twenty-two year career as mayor, Buckley was a major participant in the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Massachusetts League of Cities and Towns.

Mayor Buckley and his wife had four children: John, Michael, Brian, and Patrick. They divorced in 1970. Throughout his adult life he lived in a small home at 10 Mount Vernon Street in Lawrence, and was a member of many local organizations. These organizations included the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks, the Knights of Columbus, the American Legion, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Arlington Social Athletic Club, the South Lawrence Associates, and the Bon Secours Guild. He died on February 3, 1997.

Scope and Content Note

This collection is composed of three carton boxes of documents with dates ranging from 1921 to 1985, twenty-nine scrapbooks dated between 1952 and 1985, and one copy of the Centennial Edition of the *Lawrence Eagle Tribune*. With a few exceptions, the materials all relate to Buckley's terms in office. The paper documents include state and city departmental/program records detailing the work of such departments as the Community Development Department, Department of Public Property and Parks, Department of Engineering, and the Lawrence Rent Control Board. These departmental records have many references to urban renewal/redevelopment projects. There are also reports and publications on various local projects, state resolutions, acts, and projects, federal departments, city economics, regional projects, urban renewal/development, and educational programs. Several folders focus on the Lawrence Public Schools, especially the Greater Lawrence Regional Vocational-Technical High School. The collection also includes proclamations made by Mayor Buckley between 1973 and 1975, as well as various types of correspondence to and from the mayor between 1952 and 1979.

The collection also details Mayor Buckley's involvement in several professional organizations, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the Massachusetts League of Cities and Towns, and the Mayors' Association. Records include correspondence, programs, and flyers. There are also several folders containing news materials, mostly concerning the editorials and replies of Channel 5 News between 1973 and 1975. Political materials include campaign financial reports, flyers, election calendars, and correspondence for the years between 1972 and 1985. Miscellaneous records include Mayor Buckley's 1985 resume and pamphlets from the Elks Lodge. Lastly, the scrapbooks are composed mainly of newspaper clippings dealing with Mayor Buckley's campaigns, policies, and activities during his terms of office.

Arrangement

- Series I. Departmental and Program Records, 1952-1975
- Series II. Reports and Publications, 1943-1985
- Series III. Lawrence Public Schools, 1973-1986
- Series IV. Proclamations, 1973-1975
- Series V. Correspondence, 1952-1984
- Series VI. Professional Organizations, 1973-1984
- Series VII. News Materials, 1970-1975
- Series VIII. Politics, 1972?-1985
- Series IX. Miscellaneous, 1921-1985
- Series X. Photographs, 1962?-1972?
- Series XI. Scrapbooks, 1952-1985

Series I. Departmental and Program Records, 1952-1975

Box 1

This series is composed of the paper records of various state and local departments/programs, mostly dating between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s. These departments/programs include the Department of Engineering, the Department of Health and Charities, the Department of Public Property and Parks, the Department of Public Safety, the Governors Council, and the Rent Control Board. Some of the subjects within this series are urban renewal/redevelopment, the Traffic Operations Program to Improve Capacity and Safety (TOPICS), problems with sewage drains and other public utilities, taxes, the water supply, the disposal of solid waste, fire prevention, nominations to various departments, and street improvements. The types of records vary, including memoranda, correspondence, reports, maps, drawings, and newsletters.

Series II. Reports and Publications, 1943-1985

Box 1 – 2

This series is composed of various newsletters, reports, magazine articles, court cases, summaries, rules, and regulations. The subjects vary widely, and include economics, urban renewal/redevelopment, discrimination and other social issues, the use of natural gas, education, insurance, the testing of agricultural and milk products, highway building, and Lawrence charter reform. The subjects cover Lawrence as well as the state as a whole. The majority of the materials date from 1953 to 1985.

Series III. Lawrence Public Schools, 1973-1986

Box 2

This series contains mostly materials relating to the Greater Lawrence Regional Vocational Technical High School. These materials are Regional School District Committee meeting minutes dating from 1973 to 1975. The rest of the items in this series are dated between 1976 and 1986. They include court case decisions involving school districts in Massachusetts, applications for open positions in the school district, statistics regarding state-wide examinations in the public schools, grievances, agreements between the school committee and school employees, statistics regarding the student population in Lawrence, and memoranda relating to unemployment compensation.

Series IV. Proclamations, 1973-1975

Box 2

This series is composed of proclamations (and related correspondence) signed by Mayor Buckley as well as other public officials in Massachusetts. Many of these proclamations name days, weeks, and years after individuals, activities and groups, such as “Business Opportunity Day” and “Youth Appreciation Week.” Some proclamations discuss other issues, including reevaluation in Massachusetts cities and towns, copyright laws, the creation of new federal holidays, and new federal tariff and fuel tax proposals.

Series V. Correspondence, 1952-1984

Box 2

This series consists of multiple folders containing general correspondence, invitations and replies, and correspondence specific to the Rent Control Board. The general correspondence dates from 1952-1955, 1962-1964, 1972-1976, 1979, and 1983-1984. There are thank you letters, letters of congratulation, complaints, letters requesting assistance, correspondence related to urban renewal/redevelopment, and memoranda relating to public housing and discrimination. The invitations and reply letters date between 1972 and 1975, and discuss various events to which Mayor Buckley was invited. These events include weddings, anniversaries, and fundraisers. The Rent Control Board correspondence dates from 1952 to 1955. It focuses mostly on audits of the Board, new laws regarding rent control, and the hiring/resigning of Board members.

Series VI. Professional Organizations, 1973-1984

Box 2

This series includes pamphlets, programs, bulletins, proclamations, correspondence, reports, and newsletters regarding the professional organizations of which Mayor Buckley was a member. These organizations are the Massachusetts League of Cities and Towns, the National League of Cities, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The subjects within this series include Mayor Buckley's appointment to the Nominating Committee of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the Fair Housing Act, schedules for conferences, unemployment, economics, social issues, transportation policies, and labor issues.

Series VII. News Materials, 1970-1975

Box 3

This series contains mostly editorials and replies from Channel 5 (WCVB-TV) dating between 1973 and 1975. The majority of these materials discuss federal and state government activities, agencies, and officials. Other subjects include crime, divorce, desegregation, economics, and pollution. This series also includes an edition of the Kansas City Saturday Evening Post, which dates to approximately 1970. The edition contains a long article discussing the current state of Kansas City, especially as regards its architecture and tourist attractions. Lastly, the series contains two publications created by NBC News which date to the year 1975. The first publication is a history of television documentaries on NBC News from 1950 to 1975. The second publication is a history of the first fifty years of NBC News.

Series VIII. Politics, 1972?-1985
Box 3

This series contains mostly campaign materials for various candidates dating from approximately 1972 and 1983-1985. Included are campaign finance reports, correspondence, advertisements, schedules, newspaper clippings, notes, and election calendars. Several of the candidates covered are Mayor Buckley, Kevin Sullivan, Mary Claire Kennedy, and John Kerry. The other materials within this series are forms for buying 1977 presidential inaugural commemoratives representing the inauguration of James Carter.

Series IX. Miscellaneous, 1982-1985
Boxes 3 & 4

This series includes multiple types of documents on various subjects. There are bylaws/rules and newsletters from the Lawrence Elks Lodge from the years 1921 and 1982-1985, as well as Mayor Buckley's 1985 resume. There are also other materials in this series, including correspondence, flyers, postcards, poetry, programs, newspaper clippings, and newsletters. There are multiple subjects covered, such as cable television contracts, vacations in Florida, the 1984 riots, ethical issues, public school graduations, and employee management. Finally, there is a large wooden sign that says "Office of the Mayor, John J. Buckley" on it.

Series X. Photographs, 1962?-1972?
Photocopies in Box 3

The majority of the photographs in this collection were taken at the 1962 'For God and Country Parade.' They show floats, cars, individuals, and carriages representing many different businesses and organizations, including Hood, United Through Communications, the Lawrence police department, the Internal Revenue Service, and Holy Trinity Parish. Other photographs include groups of men involved in urban renewal, Mayor Buckley pictured with a little league team, his 1984 Inauguration Procession, Mayor Buckley pictured with his mother, photographs of Edward Hewitt, and photographs of the police department building.

Series XI. Newspapers and Other Printed Materials, 1953-1968, Undated
Box 4

This series contains a variety of posters and newspapers. Several of the posters promote John J. Buckley's candidacy for (re)election to the office of Mayor. One of the posters has a great deal of information concerning the Mayor's participation in the Urban Redevelopment Project. Only the last poster is dated, having been created in 1964. There are also several posters promoting the work of the Lawrence Development and Industrial Commission. They discuss the Commission's attempts to bring industry back into the city. The final poster was created by the Greater Lawrence Chamber of Commerce. It discusses the fact that Lawrence residents support the people of West Berlin, who they believe face many dangers. These posters are mostly reprints from the Lawrence Eagle Tribune, and were published between 1961 and 1964.

The newspapers are composed mostly of two editions of the Lawrence Eagle Tribune. One is the centennial edition from 1953, which celebrates the 100th anniversary of Lawrence being incorporated as a city. It contains many historic photographs of the city of Lawrence and its residents, as well multiple articles relating to the history of the city. There is also a centennial edition of the Lawrence

Eagle Tribune that celebrates the 100th anniversary of the opening of that newspaper. It contains contemporary stories on a variety of subjects as well as information on the history of the city and the newspaper. There are also two single pages from 1958 and 1964. One has an advertisement for the Greater Lawrence Citizen's Committee for Industrial Development, and the other has an article discussing the top taxpayers in Lawrence.

Series XII. Scrapbooks, 1952-1985

Closed Stacks

This series is composed of twenty-nine scrapbooks dating between 1952 and 1985. The scrapbooks contain mostly newspaper clippings related to Mayor Buckley's work, including campaigns, policies, and activities, and are arranged chronologically. Subjects include the public schools, regional transportation, urban renewal/redevelopment, various businesses and organizations, as well as government departments. There is one scrapbook that focuses specifically on the Greater Lawrence Citizen's Committee for Industrial Development, which covers the year 1956. It contains maps and correspondence as well as newspaper clippings.