

MONTGOMERY COUNTY ARCHIVES

Guide to the Records of the

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHARTER
COMMITTEE**

1942-1957, 1968-1976

Record Group 18: Civic Organizations

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ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

In June 1942, the MCCF established the Montgomery County Charter Committee (MCCC) to work for the adoption of a home rule charter. Its first president and one of its most active members was Allen H. Gardner, a prominent attorney who lived in Silver Spring. In 1937, he had headed a MCCF committee charged with studying the reorganization of County government. Other members of the MCCC, including Mrs. Stella [John H.] Werner and Frederick P. Lee, were also active in the MCCF.

The Maryland State Constitution required that, once twenty percent of the registered voters in any county had signed a petition requesting a referendum on home rule, the voters would then select at the next election a Charter Board to draw up a home rule charter, which would be placed on the ballot during the following election. In 1942, the elected Charter Board drew up a charter and submitted it to the County Commissioners in April 1943. It was defeated in the 1944 election; however, the MCCC decided to organize on a permanent basis, embark on a public education program, and begin the process over again with a revised charter.

To permit the participation of all Montgomery County residents and to maintain its strict adherence to nonpartisanship, the MCCC solicited from every candidate his or her opinion on the Charter and supported candidates from both parties who were in favor of it. The MCCC also began its efforts to transfer planning and development functions from bi-county commissions and agencies, such as the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC), which had authority over the location to parks and highways, jurisdiction over building inspections and subdivisions, and advised on zoning regulations.

After another successful campaign to collect the necessary signatures, a Charter Board endorsed by the MCCC and the other candidates whom it supported were elected in 1946. The Charter was passed in 1948. The MCCC continued its efforts to achieve nonpartisanship in governing and elections, and to weaken the MNCPPC's monopoly on planning and oversight functions.

On January 18, 1949, the first elected County Council took office. Two of its members were Allen H. Gardner and Frederic P. Lee, who was elected president. The Council set up citizens' advisory committees, published zoning decisions, took steps to improve the County's financial condition, and provided funds for the building of schools.

EXTENT

1.3 cubic feet: 1 records box, 1 letter-size Hollinger box.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The records of the MCCC end in 1954, but this record title also contains material from 1968 to 1976, documenting the solicitation of materials from and the taping of an oral history by Allen H. Gardner for the Marie Bennett Memorial Library established by the League of Women Voters. Significant topics include the MCCF, the MNCPPC, election law, the Montgomery County home rule charter movement, the County Advisory Committee on Post-War and County

Planning, the establishment of the Montgomery County Council and its early years, E. Brooke Lee, the Lindsay Act, effective county government, and nonpartisan government and elections.

The records are primarily those of Allen H. Gardner, a member of the MCCF and first president of the MCCC, and document all the activities of the Committee from its inception in 1942 to a 1954 memorandum reevaluating its role and discussing its future. Frederic P. Lee and Stephen James, two later presidents, are also well represented in the collection. An oral history transcript taped by Allen H. Gardner in 1973 can be found in Folder 23. The original transcript is located in Record Group 16: Oral Histories. Material includes a scrapbook, correspondence; constitutions and by-laws; lists; election brochures, flyers, broadsides, sample ballots, and artifacts; reprints, newspaper clippings; handbooks and manuals; press releases; transcripts of telephone conversations, radio talks, and an oral history; speeches; form letters; notices; minutes; draft and final charters; legislative bills; budgets; statements; memoranda; reports; agendas; calendars; legal briefs, opinions, and decisions; and a newsletter. The records are arranged in chronological order.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS

This collection is open for research.

LANGUAGE

English.

PROVENANCE

These materials originate from Accessions #96-43 and #2016-02.

RELATED RECORDS

Record Group 16, Oral Histories: Allen H. Gardner

Record Group 17, Personal Papers: Stella B. Werner Papers

Record Group 18, Civic Organizations: Records of the Montgomery County Civic Federation

Record Group 18, Civic Organizations: Records of the League of Women Voters

USING THESE RECORDS

To request records listed in this finding aid, the following information should be given to the archivist:

Record Group 18, **Records of the Montgomery County Charter Committee**, Series Number and Name, Box Number and Folder Title(s).

The preferred citation for materials from these records is:

Montgomery County Archives; Gaithersburg, Maryland. Record Group 18: Civic Organizations. Records Title: The Records of the Montgomery County Charter Committee. Series number and series name. Box number and folder title, if appropriate.

PROCESSING PROCEDURES

General processing procedures consisted of discarding duplicates, unnecessary binders, and

routine transmittals. Oversized documents and photographs were removed from the original location in their assigned series and placed in separate containers. Separation sheets were inserted in the original location within the folder to indicate the new location of any records placed elsewhere.

Preservation copying of newspaper clippings was performed whenever feasible. Records in folders were arranged, unless otherwise indicated, in forward chronological order, with undated records appearing at the end of the folder.

PROCESSING STAFF/FINDING AID AUTHOR

MCA Staff

Sarah Hedlund

BOX INVENTORY

Box 1

June-September 1942
October-December 1942
1943
1944
January-April 1945
May-December 1945
January-April 1946
May-August 1946
September-October 1946
November-December 1946
January-March 1947
April-December 1947
January-September 1948
October-December 1948
January-May 1949
June-December 1949
January-March 1950
April-June 1950
July-September 1950
October-December 1950
January-April 1951
May-December 1951
February 1952-May 1976

Box 2

Newspaper clippings, 1942-1957

Flat File 13

April-December 1947: Voters, Know Your Charter! 1947 (1 Broadside)

Flat File 25

Charter Committee Scrapbook, 1950