

HISTORY MATTERS: DIGITIZING DELAWARE'S EARLY LEGISLATIVE PAPERS



Record Group Number: 1111 **Subgroup Number:** 000 **Series Number:** 000

Records Title: Early Legislative Papers

Collection Name: General Assembly

Series Name: Legislative Papers

Beginning Date: 1724 **Ending Date:** 1913

Bulk Dates: 1776-1853 **Quantity of Material:** 37.46 cubic feet

Extent: 63 boxes @ 0.47, 2 boxes @ 0.24, 3 map folders, 1 O/S Flat – 17 box @ 0.67, 1 O/S Flat – 25 box @ 0.91

Historical Note: Manuscript records reflecting the functions and activities of the General Assembly. This series consists of the records created or acted upon by the General Assembly of Delaware. The records begin prior to the Revolutionary War and continue in this form until the 1850s.

Scope and Content: The files contain the following subject/title headings: Accounts, Acts and Bills (and Amendments), Communications, Correspondence, Elections, Military, Petitions, Proclamations, Resolutions, Reports, and Summons.

Accounts reflect financial activities such as allowances of bills against the State for services rendered or goods provided, examination of the Treasurer's records, and the setting of rates for levying taxes. These records also depict the typical allowances and charges of the House and Legislative Council Representative's expenditures for activities such as travel, meals, and lodging both within and outside of the State of Delaware. These records also reflect the accounts of the County Loan Offices, wages, reports of the Clothier General on funds and/or supplies requested for the Delaware Regiment.

Acts and Bills (and Amendments) contain rough and final drafts of proposed legislation under consideration by the General Assembly. Many of these documents consist of passed and not passed drafts, with changes and amendments from both Houses, and references to the status of the legislation. These records also contain correspondence between the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council regarding the proposed bill being revised and debated in the General Assembly during that time. Some notable acts and bills within these records contain information on militias, establishing a military, desertion, Bills of Credit, treason, crime and punishments, taxes, currency, security, imports and exports, slaves, and war.

Communications contain correspondence and memoranda received by the General Assembly, much of it passed on from the Governor. These records often involve correspondence between the two Houses, between members of the House of Assembly or Legislative Council and the houses, and letters from the President and Vice President to the General Assembly. A variety of correspondence involves communications between the General Assembly, the

Clothier General, and Officers regarding payments and purchases for the Delaware Regiment. Other major topics included in these communications include the Articles of Confederation, the capture of President McKinley, traitors of the state, John Dickinson's resignation, and the death and funeral of Caesar Rodney.

Correspondence files generally contain items from other state and federal officials. Messages from the Governor to the General Assembly generally concern matters the Governor wants the General Assembly to consider.

Elections contain returns of elections and lists of polls (results) from all three counties of Delaware: New Castle, Kent, and Sussex; election results balloted for open representative seats in both Houses of the General Assembly; bonds of elected officials; announcements concerning elections and items dealing with actual or supposed election irregularities. Elections found within these records include the appointment of positions in governmental offices such as the General Assembly Court of Common Pleas, Orphan's Court, Supreme Court, Admiralty Court, Treasurer, Loan Offices, and Delegates to Congress.

Military records containing records on the establishment of a militia and military in the State of Delaware, the Continental Army, Military Treasurer, and Clothier General. Records also depict lists of persons who have taken an oath of fidelity to the State of Delaware; letters regarding recruitment issues; correspondence discussing the determination of wages, guns, clothing, food, fines, penalties, military discharge, and compensation pay for widows.

Petitions contain formal applications to the General Assembly requesting specific action on stated issues such as the printing of paper currency, payments for services, and the establishment of various installments throughout the state. These records also contain items such as remonstrances, memorials, and petition-related reports. Petitions were often created by the inhabitants of a certain Town, Hundred, or County within the State of Delaware. Petitions were generally passed on to committees specially appointed for investigation and reporting on the issue.

Proclamations contain records that were signed by the President or other governmental office and announced to the inhabitants of the state. These proclamations covered various declarations such as the celebration of holidays, persons, or the worshipping practices of religions.

Resolutions and Reports contain the formal expressions of the opinions or wishes of the General Assembly, House of Assembly, House of Representatives, or Senate, often with provisions for appointing a committee to review and investigate certain matters and report findings with recommendations for action. These records also contain files such as resignations, letters, drafts, and amendments pertaining to specific reports and resolutions. Most of the amendments within these records are amendments proposed by the Houses to resolutions being debated within the General Assembly. Many of these reports and resolutions discuss issues such as House adjournment, trade, printing, building, and the payment of public debts.

Summons contain writs, often from the President, Vice President, or the Governor, to the General Assembly or the Privy-Council requesting them to convene for special sessions, whether to discuss specific bills, resolutions, security, safety, etc. These summonses also contain writs from the General Assembly summoning witnesses to appear and give testimony on matters such as election irregularities.

Arrangement: Chronological by legislative session in mm/yyyy format and thereunder alphabetical by subject/title.

Index: Internal item-level database available.

Available Copies: Digital copies of records are available on [CONTENTdm](#). Records are also available on microfilm, 64 35mm rolls.

Condition of Material: Fair/poor; acid damage; storage damage; dirt damage.

Accession Number: 2007092

Input Date: February 13, 1987

Revision Date(s): July 1, 1987, July 12, 1995; March 28, 1996; August 3, 1999; June 14, 2001; July 10, 2007; July 6, 2017; December 27, 2021; June 30, 2023

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