

Records of the City of Charleston Incinerator, 1916-1956

Descriptive Summary

Title and Dates:

Records of the City of Charleston Incinerator, 1916-1956

Creators:

James H. Dingle, C.E., 1916-1938

Bernard M. Thomson, C.E., 1938-1947

Gedney M. Howe, C.E., 1948-1951

Joseph Needle, C.E., 1955-1956

Quantity:

3 Hollinger Boxes and 38 oversized files in flat storage.

Forms of Material:

Correspondence, contracts, invoices, reports, newspaper clippings, publications, advertisements, maps, plats, site plans, and drawings.

Processed by:

Rebecca Schultz, 2014

Location:

AR-B-025 to AR-B-027

Abstract:

The Records of the City of Charleston Incinerator date from 1916 to 1956 and consist of the papers of the four City Engineers who oversaw its operation: James H. Dingle, Bernard M. Thomson, Gedney M. Howe, and Joseph Needle. The bulk of material falls under the administrations of James H. Dingle, 1916-1938, and Bernard M. Thomson, 1938-1947. These records document the City's efforts to cope with the refuse of a growing population in a sanitary and effective manner during a time of both financial duress and wartime exigencies.

Background:

For many years, the City of Charleston's primary method of garbage disposal consisted of dumping refuse in salt marshes in an area of town previously isolated from residents. However, as the City and its population grew, the need for a more sanitary and inoffensive means of garbage disposal weighed heavy on the minds of city officials. The City's first attempt at garbage incineration lasted from 1918 to 1921 and involved the use of a 40-ton, top-feed "garbage

destructor” designed by the Griscom-Russell Company of New York. This original incinerator, located in the vicinity of Hanover and Lee streets, ultimately proved of inadequate size to handle the garbage produced by Charleston’s population, and the City reverted to its earlier practice of dumping on salt marshes.

The City’s next venture into garbage incineration did not occur until 1934 under the administration of Mayor Burnet R. Maybank. Mayor Maybank was determined to alleviate the City’s high unemployment rate using federal funds, available through the Civil Works Administration (CWA), on public works projects which would benefit the entire community. The City Dump, created in the northeastern part of the city by filling in salt marshes with trash, was considered a public nuisance and threat to the health of the City’s inhabitants. With the use of CWA funds, the new City Incinerator was established at the corner of Cooper and Drake streets in 1934 and the City Dump was burned off, the land there to be earmarked for public housing projects.

In 1941, the City Incinerator, once again, reached capacity due to increased wartime production and defense activities in the region. Because of its proximity to the Charleston Naval Shipyard, the City qualified for federal assistance through the Division of Defense Public Works Program. The scarcity of supplies during this period, along with the difficulty of gaining the necessary wartime priority rating made completion of the incinerator expansion problematic. What should have been a six-month project was ultimately not completed until 1944.

In the coming years, the City Incinerator continued to operate under a number of different directors. Eventually, however, in 1955, it was decided to abandon the use of garbage incineration in favor of the “sanitary fill” method of garbage disposal.

Scope and Content Note:

This collection consists of the files of four City Engineers, who oversaw operation of the City Incinerator, James H. Dingle (1916-1938), Bernard M. Thomson (1938-1947), Gedney M. Howe (1948-1951), and Joseph Needle (1955-1956). The collection is thus separated into four distinct series, one for each director, with a fifth series consisting of oversized documents, mainly maps and plats (1917-1942). The material found in the collection includes correspondence, contracts, invoices, reports, ledgers, newspaper clippings, publications, advertisements, maps, plats, site plans, and drawings. It should be noted that some of the documents in the collection are in poor condition due to the age of the material.

During the years covered by this collection, the Charleston community and United States as a whole experienced tremendously significant world events including World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. The Records of the City of Charleston Incinerator provide a unique glimpse into the effects of war on the home front population of Charleston. The correspondence of the City’s engineers, James H. Dingle, in particular, likewise offers insight into the mindset of learned members of the Charleston community in regard to events occurring on the world stage.

Series List:

Series I: James H. Dingle, City Engineer, 1916-1938, Boxes 1, 2, and 3 (oversized)
 Subseries I: Correspondence, 1916-1936
 Subseries II: Incinerator Operations, 1918-1938 (bulk 1935-1938)
 Subseries III: Incinerator Construction (CWA Project), 1934-1935
Series II: Bernard M. Thomson, City Engineer, 1938-1947
 Subseries I: Correspondence, 1938-1947
 Subseries II: Incinerator Operations, 1939-1945
 Subseries III: Incinerator Improvements and Additions
Series III: Gedney M. Howe, City Engineer, 1948-1951 (2 folders)
Series IV: Joseph Needle, City Engineer, 1955-1956
Series V: Oversized Maps, Plats, Site Plans, and Drawings, 1917-1942 (38 files)

Note to the Researcher:

For further research of the City of Charleston Incinerator, including the building's later use as a community center, see the *General Historical Files* of the City of Charleston Records Center. Also see the City of Charleston Engineering Records, 1867-1979.

Container List

Box Folder

James H. Dingle Files:
Correspondence, 1916-1936:

1	1	Correspondence, 1916
	2	Correspondence, 1917
	3	Correspondence, 1918
	4	Correspondence, 1919-1920
	5	Correspondence, 1921-1930
	6	Correspondence, 1934
	7	Correspondence, 1935
	8	Correspondence, 1936

Incinerator Operations, 1918-1938:

3	1	Garbage Collection and Destruction Ledger, 1918-1921 (poor condition)
	9	Daily Reports, 1935
3	1A	Miscellaneous Reports, 1935
1	10	Invoices and Estimates, 1935
	11	Publications, 1935-1938

Box Folder*Incinerator Construction, 1934-1935:*

3	2	CWA Project Applications, 1934
1	12	CWA Project Bids, 1934
	13	Pit Hoppers and Gates, 1934
	14	Charging Device, 1934
	15	Forces Draft Fans, 1934
	16	Roofing Material, 1934
	17	Asphalt Oil, 1934
	18	Motor Driven Pump, 1934
	19	Rolling Doors, 1934
	20	Steel Stairs, 1934
	21	Radial Brick Chimney, 1934
	22	Preheater, 1934
	23	Device to Operate Dump Floor Windows, 1934
	24	Furnace Castings, 1934
	25	Oil Burning Equipment, 1934-1935
	26	Damper and Operating Equipment, 1934
2	1	Corrugated Asbestos Roofing, 1934
	2	Subway Grating, 1934
	3	Steel Plate Air Ducts, 1934
	4	Oil Piping and Storage Tanks, 1934
	5	Speaking Tubes, 1934
	6	Reinforced Steel, 1934
	7	Sheeting – Lumber, 1934
	8	Sand – Gravel, 1934
	9	Piles – Lumber, 1934
	10	Form – Lumber, 1934
	11	Cement, 1934
	12	Furnace Steel, 1934
	13	Suspended Arches, 1934
	14	Brick – Common and Insulating, 1934
	15	Chimney, 1934
	16	Structural Steel, 1934
3	3	Steel Sashes – Window Glass, 1934
2	17	Lime, 1934
	18	Crushed Stone, 1934
	19	Electrical Material, 1934
	20	Miscellaneous Steel, 1934
	21	Copper Sheets, 1934
3	4	Heating System, 1934
2	22	Outside Pipe, 1934
	23	Interior Piping, 1934

Box Folder

Bernard M. Thomson Files:
Correspondence, 1938-1947:

2	24	Correspondence, 1938-1940
3	5	Correspondence, 1941
2	25	Correspondence, 1942, 1942
	26	Correspondence, 1943 (January-June)
3	6	Correspondence, 1943 (July-December)
2	27	Correspondence, 1941
	28	Correspondence, 1945-1947

Incinerator Operations, 1939-1945:

	29	Contracts, 1939-1940
	30	Operations, 1939-1940
	31	Invoices, 1942-1945
	32	Newspaper Clippings, 1942-1945
3	7	Contracts, 1944-1947
2	33	Transportation Applications, 1944
	34	Bids, 1945

Incinerator Improvements and Additions, 1938-1944:

	35	WPA Project Proposal, 1938
3	8	DDPW Project Proposal, 1941
	9	DDPW Project Blueprints, 1941
	10	DDPW Project Bids, 1942
	11	DDPW Project Contracts, Part One, 1942-1943
	12	DDPW Project Contracts, Part Two, 1942-1943
	13	DDPW Project Contracts, Part Three, 1942-1943
	14	DDPW Project Materials, 1942-1943
	15	Wartime Priority Rating, 1942-1944
	16	W.P.A. Project Forms, 1941-1944

Gedney M. Howe Files, 1948-1951

	17	Correspondence, 1948
	18	Repairs and Additions, 1950-1951

Joseph Needle Files, 1955-1956

	19	Incinerator Closure and Conversion, 1955-1956
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Area Drawer

Oversized Maps, Plats, Site Plans, and Drawings, 1917-1942

FS	12	Thirty-eight maps, plats, site plans, and drawings of various sizes removed to flat storage
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