

**The New York Public Library  
Humanities and Social Sciences Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

**City Club of New York Records**  
1896-2005  
MssCol 553

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## Table of Contents

<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Related materials note</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Historical note</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Scope and content note</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Arrangement note</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Series descriptions and container list</b> .....	<b>1</b>
SERIES I. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1896-1925 .....	1
SERIES II. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION, 1907-2004 .....	1
SERIES III. ADDRESSES, MEMORABILIA, AND RELATED CITY CLUB MATERIAL, 1901-1996 .....	3
SERIES IV. VIDEO RECORDINGS, 2001-2004 .....	4

## Summary

- Main entry:** City Club of New York
- Title:** City Club of New York records, 1896-2005 (bulk 1896-1925; 1960-2005)
- Size:** 2.6 linear feet (6 boxes)
- Source:** City Club of New York
- Abstract:** The City Club of New York was founded in 1892 by Edmund Kelly as a men's club to promote effective and honest government in New York City. The collection, 1896-2004, consists mainly of records from the early years of the organization and the latter part of the 20th century. The files contain addressees, articles, correspondence, memoranda, memorabilia, minutes, reports, and video recordings.
- Access:** Advance notice required. Apply at <http://www.nypl.org>
- Preferred citation:** City Club of New York Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

**Related materials note**

Albert S. Bard Papers. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Stanley Turkel Collection of City Club Memorabilia. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

## Historical note

The City Club of New York was founded in 1892 by Edmond Kelly as a mens club to promote effective and honest government in New York City. Kelly (1851-1909) was a lawyer, political reformer and sociologist, born in France to American parents. Kelly returned to the United States with his parents in 1868. After completing his formal education with an LL.B, in 1877, Kelly embarked upon a career in the business world. What propelled Kelly to prominence was his advocacy against the political machine. Kelly was noted for overturning the Tammany machine that wrought corruption in New York City. This served as an incentive for the formation of the City Club of New York

The Constitution, Article I, (amended March 18, 1907) states: The purpose of the City Club of New York shall be to aid in securing permanent good government for the City of New York through the election and the appointment of honest and able municipal officers and the establishment of a clear and stable system of laws relating to the city. With this objective in their constitution, the City Club was established as a non-partisan and pro-active organization that would serve as a watchdog to promote effective and good government.

The City Club administration was made up of the President, Board of Trustees, Executive Committee (enforced the orders of the Board), and other committees devoted to specific issues such as subways, the environment, elections, club membership, and city government practices. Over time, the committees would evolve and change as different issues became a focal point. The Club took positions on cable franchises, pollution, rejection of New York City as the 51st state, campaign finance reform, support of term limits, and conducted Public Policy Forums. The City Club also joined other organizations such as the Citizens Union, Common Cause/NY, the New York Public Interest Group, and the Women's City Club of New York to petition the government.

The City Club positions on issues were frequently published in The New York Times, the Daily News, and the New York Post as well as in its own publications. The City Club Bulletin was the first newsletter, published from September 1895 through 1940. A new newsletter, City Club Comments, was created in 1959. It was edited for years by I. D. Robbins (former president and board member) and his wife Caroline Robbins. Comments was succeeded in 1978 by The Gadfly. This new publication was founded by Stanley Turkel. The word gadfly described in an American dictionary as "a purposely annoying or provoking person.." This was the purpose of the newsletter, to heighten the awareness of the public about issues of importance to New York City. A feature of the Gadfly was "Impertinent Questions in Search of Pertinent Answers" which contained open questions to elected officials regarding important issues of the day.

Special events sponsored by the City Club include: the Friday Roundtable Luncheons, the Distinguished New Yorker Dinners, the Albert S. Bard Awards, and the Richard S. Childs Lectureship. The City Club Roundtable Luncheons meet once a week on Friday (except during the summer). At these Luncheons, the invited speaker, usually a member, made a presentation. The Distinguished New Yorker Dinners, established in 1969, are held annually as a fund-raiser to honor a New Yorker who made a memorable contribution to civic well-being. Jacob S. Potofsky, President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America was the first person selected to be honored. Named in honor of Albert S. Bard (1867-1963) who fought for the improvement of civic life in New York City, the Bard Awards for Excellence in Architecture and Urban Design were first given in 1963. The Richard S. Childs Lectureship in Municipal Administration was established by the City Club Research Foundation during the celebration of Childs' 95th birthday in 1977. Childs was a reformer and civic leader who served as President of the City Club from 1930 to 1942.

The City Club dissolved in 2009 after a century of public service on behalf of New Yorkers.

## **Scope and content note**

The collection documents the City Club of New York efforts to promote good government for New York City. Included are correspondence and position statements. Records for 1896-1908 focus mainly on the poor sanitation conditions during the first decade of the 20th century and include reports from City watchers who observed the work of the street cleaners and street flushers.

There is a noticable 50-year gap in the records of the City Club's activities. The later records from 1960s through 2005 concern the Albert S. Bard awards for excellence in architecture, cable television franchises, environmental issues, rejection of the proposal to make New York City the 51st state, term limits, and residential zoning.

## **Arrangement note**

The City Club of New York Records are organized in the following series:

Series I. General correspondence, 1896-1925

Series II. Administrative information, 1907-2004

Series III. Addresses, memorabilia, and related City Club material, 1901-1996

Series IV. Video recordings, 2001-2004

## Series descriptions and container list

### Series I. General correspondence, 1896-1925

The series, 1896-1925, focuses on the City Club efforts to improve public health and safety. The City Club letters, memoranda, and reports indicates that the Club was not satisfied with services for the public. One of their major concerns was street washing and snow removal. There are several reports from City Club inspectors observing snow removal. Other correspondence concerns the wages of street cleaners and other municipal workers.

One volume, 1907-1908, contains letter press copies of letters written by the Secretary on behalf of the City Club. Included are discussions of financial and business matters, responses to inquiries from the public, and letters to the municipal government, the courts, and other community organizations. The volume contains a index of recipients.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	1896-1907
	2-4	1907
	5	1908
	6	1923-1925
<u>Box</u>	<u>Vol</u>	
1	1	1907-1908

### Series II. Administrative information, 1907-2004

The series contains board and executive minutes, reports on street cleaning, information about the Bard Awards for excellence in architecture. The reports are mainly from the early period of the City Club history on street cleaning.

The files contain contain annual reports, copies of certificates of incorporation, Board and Executive Committee minutes, files on the Bard awards, early reports on street cleaning, and "issues" files.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
2	1	Annual Reports, 1998-2002
		Bard Awards
	2	1963-1969
	3	1970-1985
	4	1988-1989
	5	1990-1995
	6	1995
	7	1995-1997
	8	2003-2004
		Board and Executive Minutes
3	1	1997-2001
	2	2002-2003
	3	2003
	4	2004
	5	Centennial Gala program, 1993
	6	Certificate of Incorporation (copies)
	7-8	Constitution and by-laws, 1963-1999 (copies)
	9	Conference Committee on Street Conditions, 1907
	10	Historical Information, n.d.
		Issues
4	1-3	1960s
	4-6	1970s

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
4	7-9	1990s
5	1	1990s
	2	2002-2003
	3	2004
	4	Memo re salt and fresh water, 1907
		Metropolitan Sewage Committee, 1907
	5	Public Policy Forums, 2000-2004
		Reports
	6	City schedule of wages for ordinary labor, circa 1907
		re Drivers and Strike, circa 1907
		Labor and Politics, circa 1907
	7	Plea bargaining in the Supreme Court of NYC, 1974
	8	Police, Firemen & Street Cleaners-comparisons, circa 1907
		Price comparison for cleaning
	Reforming Campaign Financing..., 1973	
	Sewer System Conditions .., 1907	
	Snow removal	
9		Snow removal, 1907
		Charter provisions
		Push Carts, circa 1907
		Sanitary Codes, circa 1907
10		Testimony, comments, circa 1907
11		Street flushing reports, circa 1907
12		Structure of NYC government, 1976
13		Synopsis of the stated meeting of the NY Academy of Medicine, 1907
6	1	Richard S. Childs lectures, 1980s-1990s
	2	Term limits



**Series III. Addresses, memorabilia, and related City Club material,  
1901-1996**

This small series contains a variety of City club material including an address of Governor Alfred E. Smith before the Women's City Club and City Club, 1923; a report on the pollution of New York harbor, notes for the City Club Bulletin, a biographical sketch of Edmund Kelly and memorabilia from a dinner of the City Club for mayor-elect Seth Low (1901).

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
6	3	Address of Gov. Alfred E. Smith before the Women's City Club and City Club, 1923
		Pollution of New York Harbor, 1907
4		James H. Killough vs George B. McClellan et al, 1909
5		Notes for City Club Bulletin
		Biography of Edmund Kelly by Richard Welling (with photograph), n.d.
		City Club Notes, 1996
		Printed matter, 1906-1907
6		Dinner of the City Club of New York to Seth Low Mayor-Elect, 1901

#### **Series IV. Video recordings, 2001-2004**

<u>Unit ID</u>	
1904	Linda Fairstein, 2001 May 10
1913	Food & Water Supply, 2001 Jun 8
1845	The New Regents Graduation Standards, 2001 Jun 15
1856	NYC Planning Commissioner Joseph B. Rose , 2001 Oct 19
1855	Safe Drinking Water: Filtration Avoidance & Watershed Issues, 2001 Oct 26
1864	Maurice "Mickey" Carroll, 2001 Nov 16
1857	Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jane Steiner Hoffman, 2001 Nov 30
1858	Ninfa Segarra, 2001 Nov 2
1911	The Year in Review / Ken Auletta, 2001 Dec 14
1852	NYC Assemblyman Roger L. Green, 2001 Dec 6
1907	William Thompson, 2002 Jan 25
1870	Rebuilding New York's Energy Future, 2002 Jan 11
1862	C. Virginia Fields & Marty Markowitz, 2002 Feb 22
1860	NYC Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum, 2002 Feb 1
1861	Gillian Martin Sorensen, 2002 Feb 8
1847	Transportation Issues Facing NYC, 2002 March 8
1908	Charles B. Rangel, 2002 Mar 1
1869	Kathryn Wylde, 2002 Mar 22
1909	NYC's Office & Commercial Real Estate Market, 2002 Mar 15
1863	Dr. Benjamin Chu, M.D.. President, HHC, 2002 Apr 5
1872	A. Gifford Miller, 2002 Apr 12
1893	Ernesto Butcher, 2002 Apr 19
1886	Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, 2002 May 31
1888	Lynn Sagalyn, 2002 May 22
1887	Commissioner Robert W. Walsh, 2002 May 17
1844	State Senator Liz Krueger, 2002 May 10
1879	Hon. Dennis Walcott, 2002 Jun 14
1877	NY State Senate Debate: Eristoff and Krueger, 2002 Sep 26
1871	Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, 2002 Sep 20
1914	Andrew Alper NYC EDC, 2002 Oct 1
1900	The September 11th Fund / Joshua Gotbaum , 2002 Oct 1
1885	NYS Assemblyman Scott Stringer, 2002 Oct 9
1882	Issues Facing Rebuilding of Lower Manhattan / Craig Whitaker , 2002 Oct 9
1912	NYC Dep. Commissioner Chris Ward, 2002 Nov 13

1843 Wayne Barrett, 2002 Nov 4  
1854 Capital Punishment Under Seige, 2002 Nov 4  
1853 Tolls on East River Bridges / Sam Schwartz , 2002 Nov 13  
1851 Ken Auletta, 2002 Dec 17  
1865 Financial Squeeze on Housing, 2003 Jan 23  
1866 Jay Kriegel NYC & the 2012 Olympics, 2003 Jan 23  
1890 NY's Energy Future, 2003 Jan 9  
1883 Plans in Progress / Craig Whitaker, 2003 Jan 28  
1867 The Budget, Redux / Diana Fortuna, 2003 Feb 13  
1848 The Future of NYC's Parks / Adrian Benepe, 2003 Feb 20  
1846 Insurance Trends / Gordon Stewart, 2003 Feb 13  
1906 Robert Moses: Visionary or Villian / Dr. Floyd Lapp, 2003 March 11  
1850 Community Boards in the 21st Century, 2003 Mar 11  
1891 Accountability in the Schools / Jill Levy, 2003 Mar 20  
1874 NYC Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, 2003 Apr 2  
1894 NYC Dep. Commissioner Chris Ward, 2003 May 12  
1905 Alan Hevesi, 2003 Jun 20  
1876 Bronx President Adolfo Carrion, 2003 Jun 4  
1898 UFT President Randi Weingarten , 2003 Jun 4  
1896 Eliminate Political Party Primaries, Yea or Nay?, 2003 Sep 8  
1892 NYC's Affordable Housing Future / William Traylor, 2003 Oct 8  
1899 Beyond the Tests: Accountability for the Public Schools, 2003 Nov 11  
1902 The Year In Review / Clyde Haberman, 2003 Dec 2  
1903 New Policies for Waste Management, 2003 Dec 2  
1895 Stanley Crouch, 2004 Feb 10  
1881 Craig Whitaker, 2004 April 15  
1910 On the Waterfront: A Brawl Between Industry and Housing?, 2004 May 25  
1849 Feeding NY: Making Food Fresher & More Local, 2004 jun 3