

RG.13 BALTIMORE CITY LAW DEPARTMENT 1819-PRESENT

From its incorporation in 1796 Baltimore's municipal government has required legal assistance. During its early years the government contracted with private lawyers. In 1838 it was adopted that "there shall annually be appointed from the members of Baltimore bar, a counselor of the City of Baltimore, to act as its attorney, with whom the Mayor and City Council and the officers of the corporation may advise and consult, as occasion may require." A quarter of a century later, in 1864, the additional position of solicitor became a regular salaried position of the municipal government, appointed by the Mayor, and functioning as attorney for all municipal agencies and as a member of the Board of Estimates.

For additional information consult Ord. 6 (1838); Ord. 71 (1864); and Simon E. Sobeloff, "The City Solicitor's Office, The government of a Great American City, comp. Frederick Philip Stieff (Baltimore: H. G. Roebuck and Son, 1935), pp. 78-83.

**Series 1. Opinions of the City Solicitor
1903-1968**
13 microfilm reels (BCA 113-125)
Arranged chronologically

Official opinions representing professional decisions or advice rendered. There are published indexes to these opinions for the years 1903 to 1963 compiled by Charles Pielert, Horace E. Flack, and Carl N. Everstine. The Baltimore City Archives has copies of these indexes from 1903 to 1931 on microfilm (BCA 199) and 1931 to 1963 in published form in the reference library.

Series 2. Case Files 1903-Present
2374 cu. ft. (2374 boxes)
Arranged sequentially by file numbers
assigned by the Law Department

Notes, memos, opinions, and miscellaneous materials regarding court case involving the municipal government. Files are arranged by number and a subject index covers files numbered from approximately 20,000 to 60,000; there are currently over 130,000 files in storage at the Baltimore City Archives.

Permission to examine these files must be secured from the City Solicitor's office. Researchers are advised that these records have not been examined by professional archivists.

Index on microfilm only (BCA 126-134)

Series 3. HRS Indexed Records 1819-1864
 .45 cu. ft. (1 box)
 Arranged sequentially by HRS
 assigned numbers

Assorted collections of opinions, correspondence, and legal documents by the City Counselor.

See separate item index at the Baltimore City Archives.

Series 4. Street Improvement Property Records
 1873-1944
 82. 0 cu. ft. (82 boxes)
 Arranged by sub-group and
 thereunder by street numbers

Material relates to street openings, closings, condemnations, extensions, and widenings. Other types of municipal property such as schools, fire houses, and park lots also are included. Responsibility for verification and abstraction of property titles acquired by the municipality resided originally with an examiner of titles; the 1898 city charter transferred this duty to the Law Department.

This series consist of four sub-groups identified by date and area covered. Sub-group (a) dates from 1873 to 1903 and concerns properties within the 1888 Baltimore City boundary lines. For each property covered there is usually a copy of the municipal ordinance authorizing acquisition and a title abstract. Plats are included in many instances.

Sub-group (b) dates from 1904 to 1907 and covers the area destroyed by the February 1904 fire. Included are

title abstracts and copies of related correspondence to and from the Law Department. Plats appear regularly.

Sub-group (c) dates from 1921 to 1926. All parts of the city are covered, but emphasis is upon the area added in 1918. Included are notes, title abstracts, settlement sheets, related correspondence and plats. This material is arranged in a numerical case file sequence and is not indexed.

Sub-group (d) dates from 1926 to 1944 and mostly concerns the area annexed to the municipality in 1918. Title abstracts, settlement sheets, related correspondence and plats are usually available for each property.

See separate listing of streets covered in sub-groups a, b, c, and d available at the Baltimore City Archives.

Series 5. Administrative Subject Files 1900-1971
 3.15 cu. ft. (7 boxes)
 Arranged by subject

Correspondence, reports, and legal documents relating primarily to real estate matters and legal representation of the municipality. Many items relate directly to specific case files (Series 2). Internal management of the department and the City Solicitor's service with various municipal organizations are reflected as well.

See file folder listing available at the Baltimore City Archives.

Series 6. Administrative Chronological Files
1930-1949
1.80 cu. ft. (4 boxes)
Arranged chronologically

Mostly incoming and copies of outgoing correspondence pertaining to all aspects of Law Department activity, especially real estate matters. Many items relate directly to specific case files (Series 2).

Series 7. Property Acquisition Files
ca. 1900-1980
195.0 cu. ft. (195 boxes)
Arranged by project

Material relating to municipal purchase or condemnation of property for urban renewal, street improvement and school construction projects. The files for each project mostly consist of deeds, agreements, title abstracts and reports, and other legal documents associated with transfer of property ownership. Occasionally plats and correspondence to and from other city agencies, title companies, and private individuals appear as well. There are also references to Law Department case file numbers for properties which the municipality had to enter litigation to obtain. All of this material is contained in groupings of folders, one for each property located in a project area.

Boxes 164 through 189 are arranged by street address. But a listing of the projects involved is included.

See separate container listing available at the
Baltimore City Archives.

Series 8. Real Estate Division, Subject Files
1944-1959
1.10 cu. ft. (2.5 boxes)
Arranged by subject

Correspondence, legal documents, and reports generated by division activities, including acquisition and disposition of property, granting of easements and rights of way, and disputes concerning municipal property fees. Items are grouped together alphabetically.

Series 8a. Real Estate Division, Chronological Files
1940-1974
3.6 cu. ft. (8 boxes)
Arranged as separate reading files and
chronologically thereunder

Incoming and copies of outgoing correspondence relating to title report and option reviews, property acquisition and disposition settlements, and lease agreements. Included are reading files of Assistant City Solicitors Eskin T. Boden (1968-73), Harold J. Kaufman (1967-69), Raymond S. Lippens (1968-72), Lloyd McAllister (1944-50, 1964), Harry K. Needle (1972-73), Wilbur J. Preston (1940-43), and H. M. Sandrock (1966-74). Also includes correspondence directed to the Board of Estimates (1971-74) and copies of legal documents (1966-74).

Series 9. Friendship Airport Files 1939-1971
 1.80 cu. ft. (4 boxes)
 Arranged by subject

Assorted collections of items relating to Law Department involvement in the planning, construction, and operation of the airport. Most of the subjects covered concern legal matters, especially cases before the U.S. Civil Aviation Board.

See Series 7 for airport property condemnation files and RG.14, Series 1 for related material. See file folder listing available at the Baltimore City Archives.

Series 10. Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Track Route
 Ground Rent Files 1911
 1.80 cu. ft. (4 boxes)
 Arranged by file number

Grouping of title examination documents relating to property affected by proposed relocation of railroad tracks and construction of roadway bridges authorized by Ord. 387 (1909). The area covered is adjacent to Camden Station and the track routes leading to the station, roughly bounded by Camden Street to the north, Eutaw Street to the west, Henrietta Street to the south, and Sharp Street to the east. The material provides no street address numbers for property examined; items are divided into geographic groupings of various sizes which are identified by a file number.

Series 11. Case File Dockets 1898-1903; 1934-1978
2.0 lin. ft. (11 vols.)
Arranged chronologically by date
of court filing

Volumes include case file number, name of plaintiff and defendant, court of hearing, date, amount claimed, nature of action, and disposition. There is a name index in the front of each volume. The record covering 1898-1903 concerns an available case file series that is separate from the one currently in use by the Law Department. The later volumes start their coverage with case file number 61,771. A separate card index (described in Series 2) covers the case files numbered from around 20,000 to around 60,000.

Series 12. Voucher Register and Journal 1910-1924
1 volume
Arranged chronologically by
date of purchase

Listing of Law Department charges for salaries, travel, title searches, court costs, and related expenditures.