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**Collection 57**  
**First National Bank of Trenton**

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**History**

The First National Bank of Trenton was founded in 1804, and despite the lack of historical documentation of the bank's operation, it was significant because it was the beginning of banking in New Jersey.

The first banks originally used residential structures for their affairs. The Mechanics National Bank; which was among the earliest banking institutions in New Jersey, used a stone structure that was originally the home of John Dagworthy, built in the early 1730s on Second Street in Trenton. The Trenton Banking Company merged with the Mechanics National Bank in 1958, which explains most confusion between the once different institutions.

**Scope and Content Notes**

Although there is a lack of information concerning the First National Bank of Trenton, the documents in this collection are records of shareholders, where they resided, and how many shares they possessed. There is an abundance of promotional items that the bank distributed throughout its years of operation that helps to show the evolution of advertising and marketing. This collection has the potential to shed light on the history of New Jersey banking.

The collection of the First National Bank of Trenton later known as the Mechanics National Bank of Trenton consists of documents ranging from bank receipts, envelopes, promotional items, and shareholder record sheets. The information is valuable to understanding the operation of the bank as well as how it evolved throughout its years of operation to conform to the changing economy around the city and country. The largest part of this collection contains

folders containing shareholder records and corporate tax return documents from people who had holds in the First National Bank of Trenton.

The collection will be valuable to anyone trying to analyze tax records and shareholder stocks in the First National Bank, or even comparing the holdings in this bank to other banks throughout Trenton operating during the same time. The documents are also useful in showing how the bank used different methods of money management, specifically safe deposit boxes and check cashing.

## **Series Description**

### **Series 1. Corporate Tax Returns and Shareholders Lists, 1903-1904, 1906-1909**

This series contains two folders of corporation tax returns as well as shareholder lists from the bank. Included is an envelope from the Commissioners of Assessment of Taxes to the First National Bank (1904) that is believed to have contained the corporate tax return and shareholder information which was assessed in City Hall and sent to the bank upon completion. Other items contain information about the stockholders, such as names, addresses, and number of shares the person held. The second folder contains more information concerning stockholders and general information about the bank's assets and profits. There is also a letter from a cashier pertaining to a shareholder who they had previously believed to be a resident of Philadelphia, but who was actually a resident of New Jersey.

### **Series 2. Banking Documents**

This series includes three receipts; two receipts from April 1871 that include the bank's seal stamped on the backside of the document. The second receipt is dated December 1902 and is left blank of the front side, but signed and dated with a numerical amount of the backside of the receipt. Also included are various envelopes used by the bank, including money folders that were used as a way for depositing or withdrawing cash. They also have information on the outside describing the different operations of varying office branches under the control of the bank. Another envelope [postal] contains a 3-cent postage stamp. There is a red bill fold with the seal of the First National Bank stamped on the front in gold lettering.

### **Series 3. Informational Items**

This folder contains a 3"x5" card from the First National Bank that describes how someone would go about renting a safe or vault in the bank for personal use, c.1925; a tri-fold pamphlet (1958) that details the value of assets of the First National Bank and its employees, listing their respective positions; and a holiday card sent to patrons (1927). It has the Bank's seal on the card, but is a different design than other seals found on other items in the collection.

#### **Series 4. Promotional Items**

This folder consists of items that would have been given out either at the bank itself, or around the city to promote the First National Bank. A “Pocket Pig” coin collecting sleeve has poems printed on the inside of the fold out pig that describe the value of saving coins each day. Another coin folder aimed at an older demographic of coin savers is for saving dimes.

#### **Container List:**

Box 1, Folder 1	Corporate Tax Returns and Shareholders, 1903-1904, 1906
Box 1, Folder 2	Stock and Stockholders, 1907-1909
Box 1, Folder 3	Banking Documents
Box 1, Folder 4	Informational Items
Box 1, Folder 5	Promotional Items

#### **Bibliography**

French, Bruce H. *Banking and Insurance in New Jersey: A History*. Van Nostrand, 1965.

Godfrey, Carlos Emmon. *Mechanics Bank, 1834-1919, Trenton in New Jersey: A History*. Forgotten Books, 2016 [reprint].