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**Collection 338**  
**Governor Edward C. Stokes (1860-1942)**  
**Collection**

**By Laura M. Poll**  
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**Biography**

Edward Casper Stokes (22 December 1860 – 4 November 1942) served as Governor of New Jersey from 1905 to 1908, and was a member of the Republican Party. Born in Philadelphia to parents originally from New Jersey, the family eventually settled in Millville, New Jersey, where he would attend public schools. He also attended the Friends School in Rhode Island, and graduated Brown University in 1883. Returning to New Jersey, he took a position in the Millville National Bank, where his father was employed, and became superintendent of schools in 1889 until 1898. He was elected to the New Jersey General Assembly for two terms (1891-1892), and three terms in the State Senate from Cumberland County (1893-1901), being the Senate President in 1895. He lost a bid for the United States Senate in 1902.

Stokes was a supporter of conservation legislature. By the time he left office, a State Board of Forest Park Reservation Commissioners had been established, and the state had bought or contracted for over 10,500 acres of woodland; a State Water Supply Commission had been given supervision over potable waters and their diversion from the state prohibited; and the purchase of freshwater lakes had been authorized.<sup>1</sup> Stokes State Forest in Sussex County is named after him.

He also pushed for educational advance and urged better training of teachers. He lectured his fellow legislators on the need for the state's immigrants to be taught the obligations and duties of citizenship in their own language.

As the Republican nominee for governor again in 1913, he lost, but became Chairman of the New Jersey Republican State Committee, 1919-1927. He ran again for the United States Senate in 1928 but finished third in the GOP primary; he chaired the state's GOP general election campaign that year.

Stokes was the president of Mechanics National Bank in Trenton (1899), and the first president of the New Jersey Bankers Association. He lost much of his own money in the stock market crash, and the New Jersey Legislature voted to give him an annual pension in 1939 that he turned down. Instead, he took a state job as assistant counsel to the New Jersey Council, the state's public information office.

He never married, died age 81 in Trenton's Mercer Hospital after being there for several weeks, and is buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Millville.

### **Scope and Content Notes**

This collection consists of items that belonged to Stokes and were left to friends upon his death. They are marked with accession #2020.014. Items that were already in files in the collection are not marked with an accession number.

The collection consists of one box.

### **Series Description**

#### **Series I. Personal Papers**

This series contains a copy of his will (1942), an announcement of his death to the trustees of the First-Mechanics National Bank, and a poem that may have been a sympathy card. Also included in this series is information when he was president of the Mechanics National Bank of Trenton, including correspondence (1911). An envelope that contained "Old Stokes Letters" (2020.014) is filed here.

#### **Series II. Political Office**

This series contains items related to his time in political office, including a ticket to the 1905 inauguration as governor and the bible that was used when he was sworn in. On the cover of the bible is embossed "On this bible, Edward C. Stokes took the oath as Governor of New Jersey, January 17, 1905." Also included are letters thanking him for his various appearances at the end of 1908, as well as one from Camp Edward C. Stokes, Headquarters of the Morris Guards. A copy of a letter to Governor Woodrow Wilson on letterhead of the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, was presumably from Stokes on behalf of the Committee on the reception of

President Taft (1911). A 7/8" pinback political button, "For Governor" with his photo is located in the Memorabilia folder

### **Series III. Photographs**

This series contains photographs of the officers and directors' dinner of the First National Bank and Mechanics National Bank merger dinner (1928), and the house where he was born. The bank merger photo identifies all persons in the picture, which includes many well-known Trenton names of the day. It had been cut into two pieces, as if trimmed. Also included is an album of photographs taken on the S. S. Monterey off the coast of Cuba in March 1919 with the "Sunshine Shriners"

### **Series IV. Newspaper clippings**

With the exception of one article about his visit to the state senate on opening day of the new legislature (1940), all clippings in this series are his obituary which ran in several different newspapers. The original fragile clippings were photocopied.

**Provenance:** Accessions #2020.005 and #2020.014, as well as from the Trentoniana vertical files.

**Restrictions:** None

### **Container List**

#### **Box / Folder / Title**

- 1 / 1 / Personal Papers - Will
- 1 / 2 / Personal Papers - Mechanics National Bank
- 1 / 3 / Political Office
- 1 / 4 / Political Office - Letters
- 1 / 5 / Political Office - Memorabilia
- 1 / 6 / Photographs
- 1 / 7 / Photographs - Album, Cuba (1919)
- 1 / 8 / Newspaper clippings
- 1 / Swearing in Bible (1905)

## **Processing Notes**

The bible was received in a Chas. A. Stevens cardboard box (an upscale Chicago department store), wrapped in tissue paper. Since it is unknown whether Stokes himself stored the bible in this box, it was decided to rewrap the bible in acid-free tissue and return the bible to the box to be kept in the collection as is.

## **Bibliography**

<sup>1</sup>Records of Governor Edward C. Stokes, New Jersey State Library. Bureau of Archives and History, Trenton, N.J.

[http://www.njstatelib.org/NJ\\_Information/Digital\\_Collections/Governors\\_of\\_New\\_Jersey/GSTOK.pdf](http://www.njstatelib.org/NJ_Information/Digital_Collections/Governors_of_New_Jersey/GSTOK.pdf) [accessed 24 January 2021]

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Cumberland County: Our People of the Century

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[accessed 28 March 2021]