William H. Richardson
Papers

(1909-1937, with research material dating to 17th Century)

Descriptive Summary
Quantity: 2 cubic feet
Access: No restrictions
Processed by: Helen Kay Kennedy with guidance from Cynthia Harris.
Biographical sketch:

William H. Richardson was born in Norristown Township, Montgomery, PA., on January 24, 1864, to John C. and Ellen Rittenhouse Richardson. He died in his residence at 92 Summit Ave., Jersey City, NJ, April 25, 1937 and was buried in the Lutheran Cemetery, Old Trapp, PA. He was survived by his wife, Jennie Shortt Richardson, their children - Dr. William R. Richardson of Schenectady, New York, Isabel (Mrs. Joseph B. Gordon) of Marlboro, New Jersey, and Jane (Mrs. M.M. Kallman) of Fort Shafter, Hawaii – and grandchildren, Richard and Jane Gordon and Barbara and Jane Richardson.

He became the official historian of Jersey City in 1930 when he was appointed by Mayor Frank Hague to be the general director of the celebration of the tercentenary of the founding of Jersey City (Pavonia). In 1931 he was named to a salaried position as head of the department of historical research of the Jersey City Board of Education, where he worked under Assistant Superintendent of Schools Dr. K.L. Thompson. In this position he produced papers distributed to public school students, gave lectures, and continued to write feature articles for the local newspapers. His donated books and pamphlets formed the nucleus of an historical reference library for the Board of Education, a collection that was later moved to the Jersey City Free Public Library. In 1933 Governor A. Harry Moore named Richardson to represent New Jersey at the 155th anniversary of the evacuation of Valley Forge in PA.

Richardson had long been an active researcher and writer about historical topics prior to his official appointment and while an active businessman. Before moving to Jersey City in 1902 as Superintendent and General Manager of the Riegal Sack Company’s Jersey City plant, Richardson had been editor of The Miller’s Review, a trade paper of the flour miller industry, and had also written feature articles for the Philadelphia Times and the Philadelphia Record on local historical subjects. He was an amateur photographer and a member of the Philadelphia Consistory Ancient, Accepted Scottish Rite of Free Masonry. In 1886 he published Historic Churches of America.
After moving to Jersey City, Richardson wrote a number of articles for *The Jersey Journal* and other Hudson County newspapers, including a series of articles in 1909 in connection with the opening of the Hudson and Manhattan tubes and again in 1927 in connection with the opening of the Holland Tunnel. In 1910, he was one of the leading figures in the 250th Bergen anniversary celebration. Jersey City was first established as the town of Bergen in 1660. In 1917 he contributed a description of 1867 Jersey City to the 50th anniversary edition of *The Jersey Journal*. He was a member of the Rotary Club and the editor of *The Rotary Call* from 1918 until his death. Deacon of The First Congregational Church, secretary of the YMCA board of directors and master of Charity Lodge, F. and A.M., of Morristown were among his other duties. He was also a member of the Archaeological Society of New Jersey, the Lincoln Association of Jersey City, the Pennsylvania Society of New York, the Theodore Roosevelt Association of Jersey City, and many local and area historical societies.

In 1922 he left Riegel Sack Company and founded the Richardson Garrett Bag Factory with Victor Garrett. The company folded in 1929 after the stock market crash and the remaining years of Richardson’s life were devoted to the full-time pursuit of history and a passion for commemorating and rectifying the reputation of his city and state.

Scope and Content note:

The William H. Richardson Papers are organized into four series – correspondence, planning of commemorative events, resources and writings – and are contained in two manuscript boxes. These papers were the personal possession of Mr. Richardson and were given by him to the Jersey City Board of Education. They were later transferred to the New Jersey Room of the Jersey City Free Public Library.

The series organization reflects the activities of Mr. Richardson as a local historian – corresponding with experts and peers about activities and interests, planning and documenting commemorative events, collecting
documentary resources, and communicating his findings and historical perspective through both published and unpublished writings.

Considerable material is included from the planning of the 1930 Pavonia Tercentenary, from research on General Washington’s activities in northern New Jersey, and the disputed rights to the invention of the first steamboat, to items of biographical and local interest to Jersey City residents.
Richardson’s correspondence includes many challenges to printed material. One particularly comprehensive rebuttal involved a map of George Washington’s travels through New Jersey printed by the National Geographic Society. For this, Richardson enlisted the aid of the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission and the Library of Congress. Other correspondence chronicles Richardson’s work with Jersey City’s Congresswoman Mary Norton in a failed attempt to get a stamp produced for the city’s Pavonia Tercentenary Celebration in 1930. In verifying his writings Richardson often sought facts from the best sources of the time. In addition to those mentioned above, there is correspondence with professors of such academic institutions as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Various historical societies and museums were also consulted. There is considerable personal correspondence including several letters recording the memories of Erianne Smith’s time in Jersey City by her son and also memories of balladeer John Rogers Thomas penned by his daughter. Correspondence with Governors A. Harry Moore and Harold Hoffman and Mayor Frank Hague is also represented.

Box 1 Folder 1 American Indian Organizations, 1919-31
   2 Auto Club of Hudson County, 1931
   3 Book Orders, 1931
   4 Businesses: Jersey City, Banks, 1918-32
   5 Businesses: Jersey City, Colgate, 1918-31
   6 Businesses: Jersey City, Dixon Crucible, 1925
   7 Businesses: Jersey City, Lorillaed, 1917-18
   8 Businesses: Jersey City, Insurance Agencies, 1923-29
   9 Businesses: Jersey City, Miscellaneous Companies, 1909-28
  10 Businesses: Jersey City, Riegel Sack Co., 1915
  12 Businesses: New York, Miscellaneous, 1910-28
  14 Businesses: New York, Steamship Lines, 1927-29
  16 Churches: Jersey City, 1912-37
  17 Colleges & Universities: Drew, 1932
  18 Colleges & Universities: Harvard, 1926-29
  19 Colleges & Universities: Michigan, 1932
  20 Colleges & Universities: Miscellaneous, 1929-37
  21 Colleges & Universities: New York State, 1930-32
  22 Colleges & Universities: Princeton, 1931-32
23 Colleges & Universities: Union College, NY, 1925
24 Colleges & Universities: Yale, 1927-35
25 Cosmos Club (re: Cornelia Bradford), 1917-26
26 Genealogical Society of NJ, 1932
27 Geological Survey of NJ, 1907-31
28 Governor: NJ, Hoffman, Harold G., 1931-35
29 Governor: NJ, Moore, A. Harry, 1928-32
30 Highway Commission, State of NJ, 1932
31 Historic Sites Commission, 1932
32 Historical Societies: Gloucester County, 1932-33
33 Historical Societies: Miscellaneous NJ Counties, 1929-32
34 Historical Societies: Monmouth County, 1932
35 Historical Societies: New Jersey State, 1927-31
36 Historical Societies: Out-of-State, 1918-35
37 Historical Societies: Pennsylvania, 1931-32
38 Hoboken Land and Improvement Company, 1931-32
39 Holland Society, 1930-31
40 Jersey City: Board of Education, 1909-32
41 Jersey City: Chamber of Commerce, 1919-31
42 Jersey City: City Clerk Election (Fagan), 1917
43 Jersey City: Commissioner of Revenue Election (Stewart), 1917
44 Jersey City: Fire Department, 1918-20
45 Jersey City: Library, 1927-32
46 Jersey City: Mayor Frank Hague, 1929-35
47 Jersey City: Mayor Otto Wittpenn, 1909-10
48 Jersey City: Organizations, 1916-28
49 Jersey City: Parks and Public Safety Departments, 1921
50 Jersey City: Police Department, 1911-17
51 Jersey City: Schools, 1932
52 Jersey City: Shade Tree Commission, 1911-12
53 Journal Square Association, 1930
54 Libraries, Miscellaneous, 1912-32
55 Library Commission, State of NJ, 1932
56 Library of Congress, 1925-35
57 Library of Congress, Maps Division, 1930-34
58 Library, State of NJ, 1930-31
59 Lincoln Association, 1930
60 Loew’s Theater, 1930-31
61 Masonic Societies, 1930
62 Museums, 1931-32
63 National Geographic Society, 1932
64 News media: Herald Tribune, 1932-35
News media: Jersey Journal and Observer, 1917-32
News media: Minkakwa, 1931
News media: New York Times, 1933-34
News media: Radio Station WHOM, 1930
Organizations: Miscellaneous, 1915-37, undated
Personal: Brett Family, 1919-23
Personal: Colgate, Russell, 1930
Personal: Currie, Mungo, 1920
Personal: De Boer, Louis (Van Vorst Family Archivist), 1935
Personal: De Land, Clyde, 1931
Personal: Durant Family, 1927-29
Personal: Everitt, Ada (re: Van Chief), 1932
Personal: Frasse, H. F. (re: E. A. Smith), 1918
Personal: Gregory, David Henderson, 1919-27
Personal: Hart, Albert Bushnell, 1926-31
Personal: Heppenheimer, William G., 1928-31
Personal: Honeyman, A. V., 1931
Personal: Lyon, Adrian, 1932
Personal: Miscellaneous, A-E, 1921-32
Personal: Miscellaneous, F-K, 1925-35
Personal: Miscellaneous, L-R, 1913-36
Personal: Miscellaneous, S-Z, 1916-32
Personal: Norton, Mary, 1932
Personal: Patton, William, 1932
Personal: Philhower, Charles, 1931-32
Personal: Pickersgill, H. E., 1932
Personal: Runyon, Henry (re: Sip Manor), 1931
Personal: Sandberg, Carl, 1927
Personal: Schroers, Erwin, 1932-36
Personal: Smith, E. M., 1917-18
Personal: Smith, Philip H. Waddell, 1932
Personal: Stewart, Frank H., 1927-35
Personal: Thomas (John R.) Family, 1916-17
Personal: Tiffany, J. Raymond, 1929-31
Personal: Van Laer, A. J. F., 1932-34
Personal: Van Winkle, Edward, 1932
Roosevelt Association, 1919-31
Secretary of State of NJ, 1931
Societies, 1927-36
Solon Borglum Memorial Fund, 1922
State of NJ: Department of Conservation and Development, 1937
State of NJ: Department of Public Instruction, 1931
108  United States: George Washington Bicentennial Commission, 1927-31
109  United States: National Museum, 1927
110  United States: Navy (Blue Valley Mountain), 1928
111  United States: Post Office, 1925-32
112  United States: War Department, 1931
Planning of Commemorative Events Series

Series description – Planning of commemorative events files (1919-1935), 30 folders
Arranged alphabetically

The bulk of the notes, lists, manuscripts, and correspondence concerning the planning of commemorative events is connected to the Pavonia Tercentenary Celebration of 1930. In his appointment to direct this event Richardson moved from being a businessman with a strong interest in history to being Jersey City’s paid historian. His papers from the planning of that event include lists of committee members and prominent citizens, writings on notable persons and events in the history of Jersey City (Pavonia) and the script of a pageant, “The Land of the Peacock,” performed for the celebration. Folders of planning for earlier commemorative events include those for the Lincoln Association 55th Annual Dinner, Dickinson Centenary Celebration, 151st Independence Day, and the Pulaski Sesqui-Centennial. Also included is a theatrical production written for the 300th Anniversary of the Secondary School in America in 1935.

Box 1 Folder 1 151st Independence Day: “A Nosegay of Remembrance,” 1927
2 300th Anniversary of the Secondary School in America: theatrical production, 1935
3 Dickinson Centenary Celebration: 1919, 1920, 1927
4 Lincoln Association 55th Annual Dinner: 1921
5 Pavonia Tercentenary: “Articles Suitable for Exhibition,” 1930
6 Pavonia Tercentenary: Citizens Committee, 1930
7 Pavonia Tercentenary: Committee Descriptions, 1930
8 Pavonia Tercentenary: Correspondence: Business, 1930
9 Pavonia Tercentenary: Correspondence: Jersey City Municipal Departments, 1930
10 Pavonia Tercentenary: Correspondence: Mayor Frank Hague, 1930
11 Pavonia Tercentenary: Correspondence: Norton, Mary (US House of Representatives), 1930-31
12 Pavonia Tercentenary: Correspondence: Organizations, 1930
13 Pavonia Tercentenary: Correspondence: Personal Miscellaneous, A-K
14 Pavonia Tercentenary: Correspondence: Personal Miscellaneous, L-Z
15 Pavonia Tercentenary: Events Schedule, 1930
16 Pavonia Tercentenary: Illustrations, 1930
17 Pavonia Tercentenary: “J.A.K.,” 1930
18 Pavonia Tercentenary: “The Land of the Peacock,” 1930
19 Pavonia Tercentenary: list of Dutch settlers and descendants, 1930
20 Pavonia Tercentenary: lists of notable citizens, 1930
21 Pavonia Tercentenary: “Little Hoboken – Little Old Jersey City, 1930”
Resources Series

Series description – Resource files, 44 folders
Arranged alphabetically by century

Included in the Resources series are copies and translations of primary source materials used by Richardson for his research. Thus a rich collection of 17th through 20th century documents relating to Jersey City history has been brought together. These include individual legal documents, wills, personal correspondence, documents following long-running disputes or individual lives, organizational manuscripts, war correspondence of General Washington and Richard Varick, etc. Richardson did not generally indicate in his writing the specific sources used in forming his opinions about the history of the area and the implications of such for his own time. This series, however, allows one to discover what many of those sources were. Additionally, most have a note indicating where the original document is located.

Box 1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>17th century: Carteret</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Great Remonstrance, New Netherlands, 1634-1652</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Melyn, &quot;Broad advice to the United Netherlands Provinces,&quot; 1647</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Miscellaneous documents</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Pauw, Michiel (1627, 1634)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Tice, Christian, last will and testament, 1638</td>
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<td>Fitch, John</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Flying Camp, 1776-80</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Hasenclever, Peter (1716-1793)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Ind. N.Y. Gazette, 1783</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Miscellaneous documents</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Revolutionary War documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Varick, Richard, secretary to General George Washington</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Washington, George: correspondence, 1776</td>
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Writings Series:

Series description – Writings files (1910-1937), 101 folders
Arranged alphabetically

The Writings Series covers a vast array of Richardson’s writings on topics dating from Jersey City’s earliest days in the 1600’s through the Jersey City of 1936. The bulk of the writings is historic in nature and often is the result of a perceived error in another author’s work. Richardson goes to great length to unearth the proof necessary to refute such errors. Included in this series are lists of revisions made to various texts due to his perseverance as well as information on historic sites and, of considerable local interest, the history and reasons for the naming of various streets in Jersey City. There are biographies of such luminaries as Jersey City’s first mayor, Dudley S. Gregory, and
Revolutionary War leader Richard Varick. This series provides much insight to events of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Box 2

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<tr>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>1 American Indians, undated</th>
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<td>2 American Revolution: Flying Camp, undated</td>
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<td>3 American Revolution: Governor Livingston, undated</td>
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<td>4 American Revolution: John Fitch, undated</td>
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<td>5 American Revolution: Lt. James McMichael, undated</td>
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<td>6 American Revolution: Masonic background, undated</td>
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<td>7 American Revolution: Medication &amp; Surgery, undated</td>
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<td>8 American Revolution: Powles Hook, undated</td>
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<td>9 American Revolution: Staten Island, undated</td>
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<td>10 American Revolution: Washington’s Letter to Lord Stirling, undated</td>
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<td>11 Biography: Dickinson, Gordon Kimball, undated</td>
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<td>12 Biography: Durant, Charles Ferson, 1929</td>
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<td>13 Biography: Gregory, Dudley S., undated</td>
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<td>14 Biography: Monnette, Dr. O. E., ca. 1936</td>
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<td>15 Biography: Rhea, Jonathan Sampson, undated</td>
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<td>16 Biography: Rudulph, Michael, undated</td>
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<td>17 Biography: Varick, Richard, 1931</td>
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<td>19 City Organization Models, 1910</td>
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<td>20 Great Remonstrance of 1649, undated</td>
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<td>21 Hoboken: “Hoboken’s Traditions,” undated</td>
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<td>22 Hoboken: “Romance of Aert Teunissen van Putten’s Widow,” undated</td>
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<td>23 “Jan Evertsen Bout &amp; the States General of Holland,” undated</td>
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<td>24 Jersey City: “Evening Post in Bergen,” undated</td>
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<td>25 Jersey City: “Godey’s &amp; Our Attic Treasury,” undated</td>
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<td>26 Jersey City: “High Brows Half a Century Ago” (Tabernacle YMA), undated</td>
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<td>27 Jersey City: “Jersey Bank,” undated</td>
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<td>28 Jersey City: “Jersey City,” 1936</td>
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<td>29 Jersey City: “Jersey City’s Renaissance,” undated</td>
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<td>30 Jersey City: “Jersey City…the Spoil of a Jackson Victory,” undated</td>
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<td>31 Jersey City: “Kieft &amp; Stuyvesant, Some Popular Opinions,” undated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>32 Jersey City: “More about Bergen’s Real Treasures” (re: postmaster), undated</td>
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<td>33 Jersey City: “Old Campaign Songster,” undated</td>
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<td>34 Jersey City: “Our New Hall of Fame in Historic Bergen Square,” undated</td>
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<td>35 Jersey City: “Pavonia in the Jesuit Relations,” 1930</td>
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<td>36 Jersey City: “Pavonia Indians, Picturesque Pageant Staged by,” 1930</td>
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<td>37 Jersey City: “Pioneer Days in Pavonia,” undated</td>
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38 Jersey City: “Plantation of Pavonia & the Growth of Jersey City,” undated
39 Jersey City: “Problems of the South Cove,” 1927
40 Jersey City: “Stoffelsen’s House, The Burning of ,” undated
41 Jersey City: “Treasures from an Old Bergen Attic,” 1925
42 Jersey City: “Two Fundamental Documents on the Founding of Jersey City,” 1931
43 Jersey City: “When Hudson City Was a Real Place,” undated
44 Jersey City: “When Slavery was an Institution in Hudson County,” 1935
45 Masonic Organization, undated
46 Melyn’s Frame-up & Appeal, undated
47 Minkakwa, Native Americans, undated
48 Miscellaneous, undated
49 New Jersey: The Garden State, undated
50 New Jersey: “NJ in America,” undated
51 New Jersey: “NJ vs. the NY Pretender Andros,” 1934
52 Notes, Handwritten, Miscellaneous, undated
53 Rebuttals: “Age of Revelation” (Boudinot, 1801), undated
54 Rebuttals: “Battles of the American Revolution” (Carrington), undated
55 Rebuttals: “Description of the Province of New Albion” (Plantagenet, 1648), undated
56 Rebuttals: “Discourses at the 50th Anniversary of the First Reformed Church” (Westerfield, 1880), undated
57 Rebuttals: Ferguson’s Address re: Port Authority, 1935
58 Rebuttals: “George Washington” (Marshall), 1935
59 Rebuttals: “George Washington & Jersey City,” undated
60 Rebuttals: “History of the American People” (Beard, 1933), 1935
61 Rebuttals: Jackson, Pres. Andrew & Jersey City visit, undated
62 Rebuttals: Lafayette, 1935
63 Rebuttals: Levin Handy Letter, undated
64 Rebuttals: Maps, unidentified, undated
65 Rebuttals: Miscellaneous, undated
66 Rebuttals: Narrative of New Netherlands (Jameson, 1905)
67 Rebuttals: National Geographic Society, Sites visited by Washington mapped, undated
68 Rebuttals: National Geographic Society, Sites visited by Washington listed, undated
69 Rebuttals: “NJ: People, Resources, & Industries,” undated
70 Rebuttals: “NJ: Story of Progress” (Cornish, 1931), undated
71 Rebuttals: NJ vs. NY, waterway ownership, undated
72 Rebuttals: NJ vs. NY, waterway ownership, supporting documentation
73 Rebuttals: NJ vs. NY, waterway ownership, supporting documentation, Gordon, 1828
74 Rebuttals: NJ vs. NY, waterway ownership, supporting documentation, Whitehead, 1865
75 Rebuttals: “Pavonia & the Buchellius Chart,” undated
76 Rebuttals: “Pageant of America,” undated
77 Rebuttals: “Port Authority in the Air,” 1929
78 Rebuttals: “Province of NJ” (Tanner, 1908), 1933
79 Rebuttals: “R. E. Lee: A Biography” (Freeman, 1934), 1935
80 Rebuttals: Suggested References, undated
81 Rebuttals: Textbooks in Jersey City Public Schools, 1934-37
82 Rebuttals: Text Inaccuracies & Revisions, 1934-36
83 Rebuttals: “Thomas Jefferson, Apostle of Americanism” (Warren), undated
84 Rebuttals: “Washington’s Travels in NJ” (National Geographic, 1932), 1932
85 Religious Groups, 1930-35
86 Roosevelt’s […], undated
87 Sites: Historic, undated
88 Sites: Historic Markers, undated
89 Speech: “City Beautiful,” undated
90 Speech: Dickinson Family, undated
91 Speech: “Jersey City’s Commercial & Industrial Birthright,” 1935
92 Staten Island, undated
93 Streets: Nomenclature, undated
94 Streets: Nomenclature, Markers, 1933
95 Town Meeting, 1927
96 Washington & Arts/Education, undated
97 Washington & Pennsylvania Mutiny, undated
98 Washington at Princeton Commencement, undated
99 Washington’s Birthday, undated
100 Washington’s Presidency, undated
101 Weehawken: “First Citizens,” ca.1930

Appendix:
Cataloged items in the New Jersey Room collection