**Town Clerk’s Department Source Sheet No. 30**

**Functions**

The Town Clerk’s Department was the administrative hub of the Corporation from 1852 until 1982. In addition to providing clerical and ceremonial support for the Lord Mayor and the Council, its chief role was to carry out a range of municipal responsibilities which the Corporation was empowered to perform by legislation, and which included the power to make by-laws regulating the day-to-day affairs of the City.

The Town Clerk’s Department dealt with an assortment of important functions such as the promotion of public health, care of the Park Lands, supervision of the Council’s markets, and the licensing of public conveyances. It was also responsible for regulating a host of common commercial activities which went on around the City, from selling in the streets to hiring pleasure boats on the Torrens Lake.

**Organisation**

To administer these various functions, the Department was divided into several sections, presided over by their respective head officials, each of whom reported directly to the Town Clerk. This organisational structure evolved during the nineteenth century in response to the growing demands of urbanisation and the consequent widening of the Council’s role in governing the City. Thus, by the turn of the century the Town Clerk’s Department was well organised into a number of quite clearly discernible areas of activity, namely:

**Town Clerk’s Office**, headed by the Chief Clerk, responsible for routinely attending to the minutes and correspondence of the Council, looking after various deeds, leases and other important legal documents, dealing with matters of protocol and hire of the Town Hall, organising Mayoral functions and other special events;

**Health Office**, under the control of the Medical Officer of Health since 1877, responsible for applying the provisions of the Public Health Act, especially in regard to the detection and suppression of infectious diseases, the testing of foodstuffs and other substances offered for sale within the City, and the maintenance of satisfactory standards of public sanitation;

**City Inspector’s Office**, headed by the City Inspector and Licensing Officer, responsible for inspection and licensing of public vehicles and operation of the street traffic by-law, regulation of street vendors, dog registration and the testing of weights and measures used by places of

business within the City;

**Parks and Gardens Branch**, supervised by the City Gardener, responsible for the creation and maintenance of the City’s public parks, gardens and squares, regulating depasturing and the use of the Park Lands for sporting and recreational activities.

In addition to these functions the Town Clerk’s Department also supervised the City Market and Fish Market, and until 1913 the North Terrace Sheep and Cattle Markets and old City Slaughterhouse located on the north Park Lands.

This administrative structure remained substantially intact for well over 100 years, during which time each functional area developed its own record keeping systems for dealing with the everyday business of the Town Clerk’s Department. Many of these records have survived and are now held by the Adelaide City Archives where they can be made available for research by the public.

**Records**

Principal record series include ***Annual Reports*** which summarised the Council’s activities (called Mayor’s Reports before 1900), ***Digests of Proceedings*** which contain Minutes of Council and Local Board of Health meetings, and reports of Council Committees, ***Town Clerk’s Dockets*** which were the main correspondence series of the Town Clerk’s Department from 1865 until 1976, and ***Town Clerk’s Special Files*** which were created for matters of major importance which required ongoing administrative attention from about 1905 to 1976.

In addition to these major series there is a large collection of other records reflecting the wide diversity of functions performed by the various branches of the Town Clerk’s Department: *letterbooks, newspaper clippings, instructions books, licence registers, minute books, orders and notices, correspondence registers and indexes, health returns, inspectors’ reports, by-laws volumes, contracts books, lease registers, deed books, copies of agreements and related legal documents, diaries, yearbooks, permit applications, employee duties books and other staff records and photographs* are some of the records held by the Archives.

**Finding Aids**

Information about the history, functions, administrative structure and records of the Town Clerk’s Department can be found in the Context Unit Manuals - see especially Context Unit Registrations C15 *Town Clerk’s Department*; C54 *City Inspector’s Office*; C24 *Health Office*; and C33 *Parks and Gardens Branch* (for information about Context Units see City Archives Source Sheet No. 8 *Context Unit Registrations*).

**Further Information**

**City Archives:** Topham Mall, off Currie and Waymouth Streets, Adelaide 5000

**Counter / telephone enquiries:** 9**.**00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday

**Search Room open for public research:**10.00 am to 4.00 pm Tuesday to Thursday

**Telephone:** +618 8203 7439

**Email:** [cityarchives@cityofadelaide.com.au](mailto:cityarchives@cityofadelaide.com.au)

**Web:** <https://cityofadelaide.com.au/cityarchives>