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Introduction

The constitutional conventions held in the Northern Mariana Islands generate many documents beyond the final constitutional language put to the public for a vote. It is the entire record of a convention that sums up its efforts and serves as a platform for future efforts.

Daily journals record the debates of the convention. Position papers, background papers, and proposed constitutional language lay out the hopes and reasoning of the delegates. Committee reports and recommendations reflect the fashioning of compromises. Public hearings and comments from the public record the reaction to proposed actions by the Convention.

Over time, these valuable records that support and explain the actions of the constitutional conventions may be dispersed or disappear altogether. This collection, in fully searchable digital format, is an effort to bring all of these documents together in one place for use by citizens, educators, students, historians and other scholars, judges, lawyers, legislators, and policy makers. Putting the documents into fully searchable digital format makes the use of voluminous materials easier and more convenient. A standard archiving software, Adobe Portable Document Format, has been used to make the collection widely accessible.

Content of the Collection

A. Sources

During each constitutional convention, the support staff personnel try to keep complete files with respect to the documents generated by the convention. At the end of each convention, these documents are delivered to the Commonwealth Archives.

However, funding for constitutional conventions usually ends abruptly with the vote on the proposed constitutional language. There is no funding for the effort to collect, arrange, and store the documents. Similarly, the Archives has limited funding to process the documents that it receives, so it may not be known for some time whether documents are missing from the set delivered to the Archives.

The documents collected for this DVD came from the personal files of Deanne Siemer and Howard Willens, legal consultants to the First Constitutional Convention and the Third Constitutional Convention; from the personal files of Herman T. Guerrero, who served as President of the Second Constitutional Convention and the Third Constitutional Convention; and from the files of the Legislative Bureau and the Attorney General's Office which provided staffing for the Second Constitutional Convention. These document collections were compared with the collections at the Commonwealth Archives to locate any missing records.

B. Arrangement of content

The DVD contains a file for each individual document. Each file has been scanned into Portable Document Format (PDF). PDF files are accessible with the free Adobe Reader, which can be downloaded from the Adobe website: www.adobe.com.

The file name for each document contains the year, month, and day. The file name also indicates the type of document – memo, letter, report, journal, index, delegate proposal, amendment – and in most cases also indicates the person or committee responsible for preparing it. The dates in the file names make the documents sort chronologically by date and alphabetically within the same date.

The individual files have been organized into folders. The DVD has three principal folders, one for each constitutional convention.

The documents are arranged in chronological order within each folder. A researcher can read all of the documents for a particular month, or other time period, by clicking on each document icon in turn.

In order to make searching easier for the documents from the Third Constitutional Convention, which generated many more documents, the folder contains four subfolders – for Pre-Convention documents, Convention documents, Post-Convention documents, and Financial Records. This way, researchers can focus only on the collection of interest and search times are faster.

Each file has been processed with optical character recognition (OCR) software so that it may be searched. Instructions on searching the files are set out below.

The ReadMe file on the DVD contains the information set out in this booklet.

C. Conventions on dates

Constitutional conventions often generate documents, such as committee reports, which bear a date on which the committee finished its work. The same document may come back to the convention at a later point for consideration and a vote, and a separate copy of the same document may bear that subsequent date. In general, separate copies of documents with different dates have been included in the collection.

D. Duplicates

Because the documents came from multiple sources, the overall collection contained many duplicates. Identical duplicates were removed from the collection because they do not add any information. Non-identical duplicates were retained unless they differed only in inconsequential marks. In some cases, duplicates with handwritten comments are included in the same digital file.

E. Best copies

The quality of paper used for constitutional convention records was not suitable for archival purposes, so documents have deteriorated over the years. The documents from the First Constitutional Convention were 30 years old when this collection was prepared, and the documents from the Second Constitutional Convention were 20 years old.

In organizing the documents, duplicates were compared to select the best copy for scanning. Not every document had a “best copy” and some documents are somewhat faded or have other defects.

F. Missing documents

In some cases, documents that existed at the time of the constitutional convention either were not preserved or have been lost in the intervening years.

First Constitutional Convention: So far as is known, this document collection is complete.

Second Constitutional Convention: The following documents are known to be missing –

Resolutions: No. 11, 12, and 14.

Committee Reports: No. 63

Order of Business outlines: Days No. 2, 14, 19, 25, 32

Third Constitutional Convention: The following documents are known to be missing –

Delegate proposals: No. 12, 26, 28, 34, 52, 57, 63, 84, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 143, 144, 145, 153, 154, 155, 168, 170, 171, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 220, 222, 226, 232, 237, 241, 243, 244, 245, 249, 250, 251, 253, 260, 261, 266, 276, 277, 284, 312, 329, 336, 353, 354, 356, 370, 406, 409, 410, 413, 419, 423, 424, 429, 446, 450, 459, 462, 487, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 511, 518, 525, 544, 545, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 565, 567, 590, 602, 603, 604

Most of these missing documents are described in indices of delegate proposals, committee reports, and floor debates reported in the journals.

G. Location of paper originals

All of the paper originals used to compile this collection have been delivered to the Commonwealth Archives and are available there.

Searching the DVD

The DVD is fully searchable. All of the documents are in PDF format. Searches can be done within one document, within one folder, or on the entire DVD.

A. The PDF file format

The PDF file format is an archiving standard because all of the information, including text and graphics, in the original document is preserved and cannot be altered. A PDF document retains the appearance of the original document.

The PDF format has been chosen by many archives and by the U.S. Government as an archiving standard because a PDF document can be read with free viewer software on almost any computer system. The format is stable and cannot be changed in any way by viewers.

B. Viewing PDF files

Anyone can view and print PDF documents using the free Adobe Reader software, available on the Adobe website, www.Adobe.com. PDF documents can be viewed on Windows, Mac, or UNIX systems.

For example, to read a document from the Second Constitutional Convention, do this:

1. Make sure you have the Adobe Reader software on your computer. If you do not have it, go to the Adobe website (see above) and download it.

2. Open the DVD. It displays folders for the First Con-Con, Second Con-Con, and Third Con-Con.
3. Click on the folder for the Second Con-Con to open it. It displays a list of files, arranged by date, that were generated by the Second Constitutional Convention.
4. Click on the icon for the file that you want to open. Once any of these documents is on the screen, you can print it in the normal way.

C. Searching PDF files

All of the documents on the DVD have been processed with optical character recognition (OCR) software so that they can be searched using digital search capability.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Some of the documents in this collection have content that can be read visually (using the Viewing capability described in Section B above), but cannot be accessed using the search capability because their content is too blurry, faded, or skewed for the OCR software to recognize individual letters. This is often the case with historical documents that have been kept in operational files and not preserved professionally for archival purposes.

To search for words within one PDF document

You can search for specific words in the text of an open PDF document using Adobe Acrobat or your Web browser.

1. Open the PDF document you want to search.
2. On the toolbar, click on the Search tool, or choose Edit>Search.
3. Type the word or part of a word you want to search for.
4. Click on the Search button. Each instance of the word (search term) will be displayed on the document.

To search all PDF documents in a folder or on the DVD

You can search for specific words in the text of all of the documents in a particular folder or all of the documents on the DVD using either Adobe Acrobat software or the software provided on the DVD.

Follow the instructions on the screen.

Other works in the series about Micronesia

Oral Histories of the Northern Mariana Islands: Political Life and Development (1945-1995), Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities and CNMI Office of Historic Preservation (2005) (print version and CD version)

The Secret Guam Study: How President Ford's 1975 Approval of Commonwealth Was Blocked by Federal Officials, Micronesian Area Research Center and CNMI Office of Historic Preservation (2005)

The Secret Guam Study: The Documents, Micronesian Area Research Center and CNMI Office of Historic Preservation (2005)

From the White House: Documents on the Northern Mariana Islands and Micronesia (1945-1995), Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities (2005) (CD version)

Northern Mariana Islands: Original Historical Documents on Development as a Commonwealth (1960-1977), Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities (2005) (CD version)

The "Infamous" Solomon Mission Report of 1963: A Reappraisal After 40 Years, Micronesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, www.mjhss.com (2003)

An Honorable Accord: The Covenant between the Northern Mariana Islands and the United States, University of Hawaii Press (2001)

National Security and Self-Determination: United States Policy in Micronesia (1961-1972), Praeger (2000)

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