

Municipal World Inc. fonds (1850-2001)

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By Gina Coady

The records of Municipal World Inc. were in the custody of Municipal World Inc. at its corporate offices in Union, Ontario, until they were donated to the Elgin County Archives by deed of gift in March, 2006.

The Municipal World Inc. fonds consists of records created, collected and maintained by the company and its predecessor, Municipal World Limited in the course of operating a publishing and printing business in St. Thomas and Union, Ontario, 1850-2001. Included are the records of K.W. McKay, W.S. McKay and Michael J. Smither, important contributors to the company. The administrative records include financial records, correspondence, insurance, advertising, agreements and contracts.

The records will be of interest to researchers seeking information on the history of publishing and printing businesses in Ontario. The records can also give insight on the history of municipal government in Ontario.

K.W. McKay became clerk of Elgin County on 15 December 1882, and served as clerk until 1 December 1939. In his

day, he was considered a leading expert on municipal government. In January 1891, George E. Neilson began publishing *The Municipal Miscellany* in Arnprior, Ontario. After publishing twelve issues, Neilson sold his journal to K.W. McKay, who moved its operations to St. Thomas and in January 1892 resumed its publication under a new name, *The Municipal World*. He was the first editor of the magazine.

Municipal World Limited originally operated from an office in the Journal Building on the northwest corner of Talbot and Hiawatha Streets, St. Thomas. The Journal building was demolished in 1936. In 1895, the company moved its operations to a small cottage located at 28 Elgin Street, St. Thomas, adjacent to the home of K.W.

The Elgin County Archives
 450 Sunset Drive, St. Thomas, Ontario
 (519) 631-1460
 <<http://www.elgin.ca/>>
 The Archives is the official repository of records of the County of Elgin since its incorporation in 1852 as well as those of its current and former constituent municipalities. The Archives also houses a number of private collections documenting the County's history and its citizens.

McKay. Municipal World moved into a large two-storey building on Talbot Street in September 1901 that became known as the Municipal World Building. This served as the company's base of operations until 1988.

W.S. McKay (1899-1985) joined *Municipal World* as Associate Editor in 1927, rising to become editor following K.W. McKay's retirement in 1941.

In addition to publishing *Municipal World* magazine, Municipal World Limited designed, printed and distributed forms, stationery, ledgers, elec-



The Municipal World building in St. Thomas in the 1930's. Photo courtesy of Elgin County Archives, Scott Studio fonds, Box 18, #976.

Kenneth Weir McKay, ca. 1920s. Photo courtesy of Elgin County Archives, Scott Studio fonds, Box#9 N#20292.

tion materials, seals, dog tags and other supplies to municipalities and municipal officials in Canada and the United States.

Until 1968, *Municipal World* maintained its own on-site printing facilities. From 1951 to 1968, the printing division operated under the name "The Printing World." In 1968, the



The Municipal World bindery, 1940. Photo courtesy of Elgin County Archives, ScottStudio fonds, B#85, N#26640.

printing division was sold to Phibbs Printing, St. Thomas.

In 1964, Michael J. Smither joined *Municipal World* as associate editor. He became editor in 1974 following the retirement of W.S. McKay, and editor and publisher in 1984.

In 1988, *Municipal World* relocated to a retrofitted school house in Union, Ontario.

Susan M. Gardner joined *Municipal World*

in 1989. She was appointed assistant editor in January 1994 and became executive editor in 2001, following the retirement of Michael J. Smither.

Today, *Municipal World* is the oldest continuously published monthly municipal magazine in the world.

Further information and images can be found at <www.elgin.ca>.