The Tocks Island dam site is located in Warren County, New Jersey, on the Delaware River between New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

In August 1955, the Delaware River Valley was hit by Hurricanes Connie and Diane in the space of two weeks. The two hurricanes produced mass flooding in which over 100 people died, including 38 children attending a religious summer camp.

In response to the tragedy, The Army Corps of Engineers proposed building the Tocks Island Dam, creating a 40 miles reservoir to protect against future flooding. The dam would also provide a valuable water source for the surrounding area. However, the proposed dam would displace over 600 local residents living on the proposed site. Over the next few years many local residents were forced to sell family farms, taking a large toll on the region.

Congress passed the Flood Control Act of 1962, authorizing the creation of the dam and the 80-square-mile Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson authorized construction of the dam. However, opposition to the dam emerged, citing the environmental risks of the dam and the heavy cost of building it. Protestors formed the Delaware Valley Conservation Association to fight against the dam. The heavy costs of the Vietnam War caused the project to be postponed for several years.

When the local residents were removed from the Tocks Island area, groups of people from New York City began squatting on the proposed dam site. Civil unrest emerged between the “River People” and the residents of the Poconos. In 1971, a Federal Raid was carried out against the squatters and after a protracted legal battle. In 1974, sixty-five squatters were removed from the area and their shelters demolished.

By 1975, there was little public support for the dam and lawmakers worried about the escalating costs of building the dam. The Delaware River Basin Commission, with representatives from the governors of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Delaware, voted to de-authorize the project.

In 1978, Congress designated that area of the Delaware as a “Wild and Scenic River.” This designation preserved the natural state of the river and would prevent any dams from being built in the future. The lands were transferred to the National Park Service, thereby creating the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and preserving the land. In 1992, the plan to build the dam was officially de-authorized by Congress.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The “Tocks Island Collection” is housed in 1 box and consists of 23 folders of newspaper clippings and relevant documents about the Tocks Island Dam Project dating from 1942 to 1981.
The clippings follow the plan to build a dam on the Delaware River from its earliest conception to the eventual abandonment of the project in 1975. Compiled from local newspapers, the clippings mostly deal with the reaction of the local community to the project and the efforts of the Tocks Island Regional Advisory Council (TIRAC) to combat the dam. The clippings detail the efforts of local environmental activist Nancy B. Shukatis to fight the construction of the dam, as well as the actions of local politicians Robert. B. Meyner, Nancy Meyner, and U.S. Representative Fred B. Rooney.

The collection contains a composition book entitled “Early clippings re: area around proposed Tocks Island Park.” This composition book contains clippings from newspapers such as the Newark Evening News and Easton Express about plans to build a national park in the Delaware Water gap region. The clippings mention early opposition to the dam, including the re-formation of the Association to Preserve the Delaware River Valley, and expert studies on the dam. Some articles cite the benefits of the dam to the region.

The Tocks Island Collection also contains a scrapbook of clippings, “Data on Tocks Island” from 1966-1969. The clippings from this era follow the official establishment of the dam project as well as the eventual postponement as the country diverted funds away from building projects because of the Vietnam War.

The collection consists of clippings from local newspapers such as the Easton Express Times, the Newark News and the Blairstown Express. The earliest clippings from 1942-1954 cover initial plans to build a state park on the Delaware River and the involvement of New Jersey Governor Robert B. Meyner with the project. The next set of articles from 1955-1960 covers the U.S. Congress passage of legislation to build a dam on the Delaware River. Articles from 1961-1965 cover the possible dam sites and the eventual selection of the Tocks Island Area. The reaction to the dam in the press and among the people was overall positive and many articles discuss the possible benefits of the dam on the local community.

Clippings from the late 1960’s and early 1970’s cover postponement of the dam project and its effect on the local population. They cover the influx of squatters who migrated to the area and how they clashed with the local population and efforts to get rid of them. Many articles also discuss opposition to the project and the effort of the local community to end the project. In this period, local coverage of the dam was negative in tone and most articles advocated for ending the project.

Articles from 1976-1979 discuss the end of the Tocks River Dam project and question what to do with the land. Some articles mention the potential economic consequences of ending the project, including possible loss of jobs. A set of clippings from 1980 details the classification of that sector of the Delaware River as a “Free and Wild River” by the National Park service preventing any future construction. Other clippings show how the controversy over the dam persisted, with New Jersey State Senator Wayne Dumont ’35 advocating for the reimplementation of the project.

The Tocks Island Collection also includes special editions of newspapers, magazines, and promotional pamphlets about the construction of the dam. It includes the May 1980 cover story
of the *New Jersey Monthly* “Death of a Valley,” the “Land Acquisition Procedure for Tocks Island Dam and Reservoir and Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area” from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and several reports from the Tocks Island Regional Advisory Council (TIRAC).

The collection also contains additional undated articles about the Tocks Island Dam project from the early 1970’s. Among other topics, the articles deal with the squatters at the dam site, the political fight around the dam construction, and the work of the Tocks Island Regional Advisory Council (TIRAC).

The collection also has a number of letters to the editor from local newspapers. Most of the authors of the letters were against the project, although some such as Rep. Fred Thompson argued that the project would be beneficial for the community. The collection also contains editorials exhibiting local opinions about the Tocks Dam project. Many of the editorials were of the opinion that the project should be given further study before the construction on the dam began.

**INVENTORY**

Box 1 of 1

Folder:

1. Clippings, 1942-1954
2. Clippings, 1955-1960
3. Clippings, 1961-1965
5. Clippings, 1970
6. Clippings, 1971-1
7. Clippings, 1971-2
8. Clippings, 1972
9. Clippings, 1974-1
10. Clippings, 1974-2
11. Clippings, 1975-1
12. Clippings, 1975-2
13. Clippings, 1975-3
14. Clippings, 1976
15. Clippings, 1977
16. Clippings, 1978
17. Clippings, 1979
18. Clippings, 1980
20. Undated Articles
21. Newspapers, Magazines and Pamphlets
22. Letters to the Editor
23. Editorials
PROVENCANCE NOTE

The newspaper clippings were compiled and donated by William M. Cornwell, class of 1916. Additional work on the collection was completed by Jessica Held, class of 2003. Processing was completed by Elizabeth Hannigan, class of 2014.