

**Anthony J. Stonina Collection Finding Aid**  
**Chicopee Public Library**  
**Chicopee Archives Online**  
**April 29, 2019**  
**Archivist: Charles Abel**  
**Archives Intern: Scott Barnard**  
**Finding Aid by Scott Barnard**

**Title**

Anthony J. Stonina Collection

**Extent**

Two boxes, Ten folders; Six scrapbooks

**Location**

Chicopee, MA

**Abstract**

This collection includes correspondence, newspaper clippings, programs, and other ephemera concerning the city of Chicopee, MA. The items mostly relate to Anthony J. Stonina, the city's former mayor from the years 1932-1933 and from 1936-1939. These materials also strongly relate to Westover Air Reserve Base and the role of mayor Stonina in bringing the base to Chicopee.

**Language**

This collection is in English with the exception of one item, which is in Polish.

**Acquisition Information**

This collection was donated by Amy Berestka Versaggi and her family on March 1, 2018. This collection has an associated deed of gift that was signed on March 1, 2018. This collection was accessioned on March 18, 2018, given the accession number 030118 and the accession title "Mayor Anthony Stonina."

**History**

Chicopee's history can be traced back to its beginnings as a community that had begun to separate itself from the neighboring city of Springfield in the early 1800s before adopting its own town charter in 1848. The city of Chicopee has always had great industrial potential owing to the presence of the Chicopee and Connecticut Rivers. This would result in Chicopee becoming a manufacturing center and remaining so for most of its history. The city would host many industrial companies such as the Ames Manufacturing Company, a major manufacturer of military equipment and other items for much of the nineteenth century, and the Fisk Tire Company, a major manufacturer of tires for much of the early twentieth century.

This collection relates most specifically to the period of Chicopee's history during the administration of its former mayor, Anthony J. Stonina. Mayor Stonina, who held the office from 1932 to 1933 and again from 1936 to 1939. Stonina was the first Polish mayor to be elected in all of New England and was instrumental in the selection of Chicopee, MA as the location of the Northeast Army Air Base. The base was established as part of an expansion of Army Air Force bases across the country. It was mandated that a base be established in the Northeastern United States. Several potential locations were candidates for the opportunity to serve as host for the base, but Chicopee was ultimately chosen, owing to, among other factors, the persistence of the city's former mayor, Anthony Stonina. The base was fully opened on April 6, 1940. It has served as a large contributor to the local economy since its opening.

The base acquired the name "Westover" in honor of the former chief of the Army Air Corps, Major General Oscar Westover. Westover had died in a plane crash on September 21, 1938, about a year and a half before the opening of the base. The base would be renamed several more times over its history, becoming Westover Air Force Base in 1948 when the Air Force became a separate branch of the military, and has been known as Westover Air Reserve Base since 1974, when it would fall under the command of the Air Force Reserve.

### **Scope and Content**

This collection includes various materials relating to the city of Chicopee and its former mayor, Anthony J. Stonina. Stonina was mayor of Chicopee from 1932 to 1933 and from 1936 to 1939. These mostly relate to the establishment of Westover Air Base, but several series relate to other aspects of the city's history and culture. This collection offers a detailed glimpse into the establishment of the base that would come to be known as Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee.

The correspondence in this collection is divided into three series. The first consists of letters from Charles Speaks, the president of the Fisk Rubber Corporation, to Anthony Stonina concerning what he believes to be the best strategies to encourage the decision-makers in the military to locate the proposed Northeastern Airbase in Chicopee. The second consists of letters mostly to Anthony Stonina from officials in Washington D.C. about the prospect of Chicopee hosting the Northeastern airbase. Finally, the last series concerns letters between Anthony Stonina and others, such as officials from other cities, concerning Westover Air Base.

The next series is concerned with miscellaneous items concerning the Westover airbase such as a directory to the base from 1959, a newspaper clipping, a prepared timeline of events, a copy of the petition for the airbase submitted by Anthony Stonina, a program from the celebrations of the 25 anniversary of Westover Field, and a copy of the Springfield Republican newspaper honoring the very same anniversary. Due to size constraints, the latter two items are stored in a separate box better suited to their large size.

The collection contains a series dedicated to material from the dedication ceremony of six bomber aircraft at Westover on September 1, 1943. This series includes two copies of the program of the event and a copy of a radio broadcast covering the event.

Also housed in this collection is a scrapbook concerning the visit of United Nations General Assembly President Stanislaw Treczynski to Chicopee on November 11, 1972. Anthony Stonina was a member of the honorary committee. This book contains newspaper clippings, photographs, schedules, and notes from the event. Two of the photographs are stored separately from the rest of the series in Box 2 due to their size.

There is also a series dedicated to programs and other related materials that cover a wide range of celebrations in Chicopee such as balls, dances, anniversaries, and dedications.

Another series within this collection consists of materials from local newspapers concerning Mr. Stonina and/or the city of Chicopee. This includes two clippings from June 9-10, 1938 detailing Mayor Stonina's two month long trip to Europe, the May 29, 1948 issue of the Chicopee Herald celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the founding of Chicopee, the Chicopee section of the August 11, 1966 Transcript-Telegram featuring the history of Szot Park.

The next series consists of miscellaneous materials relating to mayor Stonina and the city of Chicopee. This includes the mayor's business card, the geographic location of the station "Stonina" named in honor of the mayor, copies of the mayor's address from several years, the Chicopee school superintendent's report for 1931, a geographic map of Chicopee, a listing of the 1939 city government, and a commemorative booklet about the city from 1969.

The tenth series of this collection consists of miscellaneous materials that were originally found in the scrapbook dedicated to Westover Field, itself discussed in the next paragraph. These materials were different enough in format that they were worthy of inclusion in their own series. These items include various materials created by the engineers assigned to the construction of Westover Field, including maps and correspondence, a business card from a local inn, a program for a military ball, and a certificate given to Anthony Stonina by the United States Selective Service, establishing him as a member of the local board for that organization. The maps and the certificates are stored in Box 2 due to their size.

The final two series consist of several large scrapbooks. The first of these two series is a collection of five scrapbooks, each of which contains many newspaper clippings from various local papers concerning the politics and governance of the city of Chicopee. The years featured in these books are 1932, 1933, 1936, 1938, and 1939. The second series consists of only one scrapbook. This book is in a much worse condition than the others. The pages have come loose from the book and the paper is very fragile and prone to crumbling. The bulk of this scrapbook was compiled by William H Huntington of the Office of Constructing Quartermaster for the Northeast Air Base. It contains many newspaper clippings, photographs, and other ephemera detailing the establishment of Westover Air Base. Due to the very degraded condition of these scrapbooks, they were destroyed rather than preserved, but these series are available digitally through the Chicopee Public Library.

## **Subjects**

- Chicopee (Mass.)
- Stonina, Anthony J. (1898-1974)
- Westover Air Reserve Base

**Related**

Several photographs related to this collection can be found within the Historic Photographs Collection of the Chicopee Public Library. They include pictures of Anthony J. Stonina as well as pictures of Westover Air Base. Their identifier numbers can be found below.

CPL-PHCOL-383  
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**Contents Listing**

BOX 1

Folder #/Series #	Description
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- 1/1 Correspondence from Charles E Speaks
- 2/2 Correspondence with Federal Officials
- 3/3 Other Correspondence
- 4/4 Westover Miscellanea - Two Items Are Located in Box 2
- 5/5 Bomber Dedication Materials
- 6/6 Stanislaw Trepczynski Materials - Two Items Are Located in Box 2
- 7/7 Programs/Event Materials
- 8/8 Loose Newspapers
- 9/9 Chicopee Miscellanea
- 10/10 Ephemera

BOX 2

Series #

- 4 Program for the 25th Anniversary of Westover and the 09/13/1964 Springfield Republican
- 6 Two Photographs of Stanislaw Trepczynski
- 10 Two Maps and Two Official Certificates

SCRAPBOOKS - Scrapbooks Are Available Digitally

Book #/Series #

- 1/11 Scrapbook Containing Newspaper Clippings from the Year 1932
- 2/11 Scrapbook Containing Newspaper Clippings from the Year 1933
- 3/11 Scrapbook Containing Newspaper Clippings from the Year 1936
- 4/11 Scrapbook Containing Newspaper Clippings from the Year 1938

- 5/11 Scrapbook Containing Newspaper Clippings from the Year 1939
- 6/12 Scrapbook Dedicated to Westover Field