

Unitarian Society of Wellesley Hills Collection (1876-1963)
Wellesley Historical Society

Repository Identifier

mawelhs

Local Identifier

unavailable

Name and Location of Repository

The Wellesley Historical Society

229 Washington Street

Wellesley, MA 02481

(781) 235-6690

www.wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org

Title

Unitarian Society of Wellesley Hills Collection

Date

1876-1963, bulk 1891-1929

Extent

1 box, 0.5 linear feet

Name of Creator

Repository Collection

Historical Note

Unitarian Society of Grantville, [1869] 1871-1885.

Unitarian Society of Wellesley Hills, 1885-1961.

Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills, 1961-Present.

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills (UUSWH) has its roots in the New England Congregational church tradition. The society, officially organized on February 27, 1871 as the Unitarian Society of Grantville, was formed by a number of parishioners who broke away from the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church, as well as some Unitarians who had moved to the Wellesley area.

This breakaway group held their first meetings in 1869 in Maugus Hall, on land that is now known as 309 Washington Street in Wellesley Hills. Maugus Hall was a public meeting house in what was then known as Grantville, a part of Needham until 1881 when the town of Wellesley was incorporated. However, the congregation was not satisfied with a public shared space, and they bought Maugus Hall and the land on Washington Street in 1871. Photographs after 1871 in the Wellesley Historical Society collections refer to this building as the Unitarian Chapel.

In 1885, as the congregation grew, they changed their name to the Unitarian Society of Wellesley Hills. In anticipation of constructing a new stone church on the site, the wooden-framed chapel, formerly Maugus Hall, was moved from Washington Street in 1887 and became a

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private residence at 56 Forest Street. The stone church was built on the site in 1888 and was dedicated on November 20, 1888. The parsonage was completed in 1890-91, and a new parish hall was added in 1929. The campus continued to grow on the original Washington Street site, with an addition in 1959 and renovations in 1996.

The Unitarian and Universalist traditions merged in 1961 and the organization was renamed the Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills. Almost all of the items in this collection pre-date the merger. The Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills is located at 309 Washington Street, Wellesley Hills, at its original historic site.

Scope and Content

This collection comprises materials from the Unitarian Society of Wellesley Hills, primarily from 1891 to 1929. Generally, items in the folders are arranged chronologically. The materials include: annual reports, by-laws, entertainment programs, church service programs, the Sunday School library catalog, the Unitarian calendars, and other printed materials. Many of the items in the collection are unique in that they have personal annotations recorded on the materials.

The annual report folders contain assorted reports from 1892-1929; however, the series is incomplete. The annual reports contain committee and treasurer reports, and in later years reports from associated groups, including the Wellesley Hills Branch of the Women's National Alliance, the Wellesley Unitarian Club, and the Sunday School committee. The annual reports from 1895 forward include detailed membership lists.

The By-Laws, dating from 1891, 1896, and 1901, trace the development of congregational polity in the years following the construction of the 1888 stone church building.

The collection also contains assorted entertainment programs dating from 1876-1941. The earliest item in the collection is an 1876 lecture program detailing an evening's entertainment for the "Unitarian Chapel in Grantville." Additionally, there are several programs for performances by the "Parish Players" and "The Scissors and Paste Society" from the 1930s.

The collection contains two copies of the Unitarian Sunday School Library Catalog, one unmarked, and one heavily annotated. The catalog is undated, but most of the books listed in the catalog date from the second half of the eighteenth century. The annotated copy tracks changes in books added to the collection, as well as books discarded.

This collection also contains the report of the 1928 Committee on the Parish House, as well as the small format blueprints outlining the expansion plans which took place in 1929. The folder also contains a printed pamphlet, "The New Parish House: A Message to You," dating from the same period, drawing on materials outlined in the report.

The Unitarian Calendars, dating from 1905-1912, contain monthly accounts of announcements, church service notes, literary quotes, and short essays written by Unitarian Society and other denominational ministers from churches across the country.

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The Wellesley Unitarian Club materials, dating predominantly from circa 1905-1917, contain several speaker programs and dinner menus. Several of the items contain interesting watermarks created during the paper manufacturing process.

System of Arrangement

The folders are arranged alphabetically by subject. Date ranges are provided when available.

Conditions Governing Access

The Unitarian Society of Wellesley Hills Collection is open for research purposes by appointment only. Please contact the Wellesley Historical Society for more information.
info@wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org
(781) 235-6690

Physical Access

Some of the materials are fragile.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Copyright restrictions may apply.

Languages and Scripts of the Material

English

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Unknown. Some items from accession numbers 2013.49, 2015.21.

Accruals

The Historical Society may add materials to this collection in the future.

Existence and Location of Originals

Wellesley Historical Society

Related Materials

Wellesley Historical Society Photograph Collection: Churches: A-U: Unitarian Church.

See also accession 2001.15.1, which contains a handwritten manuscript journal written by Louisa Eaton Austin. The manuscript contains a circa 1913 account of the history of the Unitarian Society of Wellesley Hills up to that time. It can be found in the Wellesley Historical Society Individual and Family Archives: Austin, Louisa Eaton.

Description

DACS-compliant Finding Aid created in December 2015 by Alden Ludlow.

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Appendix: Box and Folder List

Box 1: Unitarian Society of Wellesley Hills

Folder 1: Annual Reports 1892-1911

Folder 2: Annual Reports 1912-1929

Folder 3: By-Laws 1891-1901

Folder 4: Church Programs: Church Fair

Folder 5: Church Programs: Church Services

Folder 6: Church Programs: Entertainment

Folder 7: Church Programs: Installations

Folder 8: Manuscripts 1958: Unitarian Society of Wellesley Hills histories

Folder 9: Printed Materials: General

Folder 10: Reports, 1928 Parish Hall report manuscript and brochure

Folder 11: Reports, 1928 Parish Hall report blueprints

Folder 12: Unitarian Calendar 1905-1912

Folder 13: Unitarian Sunday School: Library Catalogue

Folder 14: Unitarian Sunday School Society: Certificate

Folder 15: Wellesley Unitarian Club