

William H. Hollis Collection, 1912-1975  
Wellesley Historical Society

**Repository Identifier**

mawelhs

**Local Identifier**

2017.9

**Name and Location of Repository**

The Wellesley Historical Society  
229 Washington Street  
Wellesley, MA 02481  
(781) 235-6690  
[www.wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org)

**Title**

William H. Hollis Collection, 1912-1975

**Date**

1912-1975, bulk 1920-1960

**Extent**

3 linear feet, 2 boxes

**Name of Creator**

Hollis, William H. (1881-1975)

**Biographical Note**

*William H. Hollis, June 19, 1881-December 11, 1975*

Hollis was a lifelong Wellesley Hills resident, life member of the Wellesley Historical Society Board of Directors, keen amateur historian, and dedicated member of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Newton Lower Falls. He was a mechanic and then machinist with the Gamewell Fire Alarm Telegraph Company, Newton Upper Falls, where he began work in March 1900; he retired after 50 years with the company. His legacy includes hundreds of pages of handwritten history manuscripts.

In his Wellesley Townsman obituary, it is noted that Hollis was “the sixth child and fifth boy born in the newly incorporated Town of Wellesley in 1881” (Wellesley Townsman, December 18, 1975, p. 20). His father, William Hollis, was from Lynn; his mother, Ida Louise (Shaw) Murphy was from Newton. His maternal grandparents lived on Cedar Street in Wellesley. Hollis himself noted in his journals that he attended the Old North School under Annie F. Warren, and then the newly opened Fiske Grammar School, then located on Cedar Street where Ouellet Park is now. The Wellesley List of Residents indicate that Hollis lived in Wellesley Lower Falls his entire adult life; from 1929 until his death he resided at 66 River Street.

Hollis was a lifelong communicant at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, just over the Wellesley Town border at Newton Lower Falls. As a child, he sang in the boys' choir, and continued to sing in the

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choir as an adult. In later decades he served as a vestryman, parish clerk, and parish historian; Hollis is buried in the churchyard. The extensive manuscripts included in this collection reflect his lifelong interest in the history of his church. Using St. Mary's church history as a starting point, Hollis developed his interests further, expanding his historical research to include biographies of church members, other Wellesley families, histories of the notable homes, and general Wellesley-area history.

In his research, Hollis drew from his own memories, articles in the *Wellesley Townsman* and other periodicals, and the recollections and memories of friends and relatives as sources for his writings.

*St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Concord Street, Newton Lower Falls.*

Incorporated in 1813, the Federal-style church building, completed that year, is one of the oldest in the city of Newton, and the first Episcopal Church established in Massachusetts west of Boston. For several years prior to the building of the church, the congregants gathered at the Lower Falls school house and Hoog's Tavern on Washington Street in Wellesley Lower Falls. The architects were Thomas Durant and John Pulcifer. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The adjacent graveyard has graves dating back to 1812, with burials of Revolutionary War and civil War veterans. Early founders and parishioners were involved in the paper making industry in the Lower Falls area, and while the church was in Newton, it was a central focus for many Episcopalians in the Wellesley area.

**Scope and Content Note**

The collection contains the historical writings and notes of William H. Hollis, and contains handwritten manuscripts and notes documenting the history of Newton Lower Falls and the Wellesley area. Hollis wrote on the area's historic homes and families, drawing from personal memories, newspaper articles, and the reminiscences of friends and family. In addition, Hollis wrote extensively on the history of St. Mary's Episcopal Church. The manuscripts are often illustrated with unique photographs and postcards of both people and places. Some of these manuscripts are presented in typewritten transcriptions dating from the early 1970s; these transcripts often contain tables of contents and indices.

Much of the material in the manuscripts duplicates itself; Hollis continually reworked his materials, and it is helpful to think of much of his work as different editions or iterations of the same material. Some of the church history journals contain transcriptions of early nineteenth century records, copied by Hollis and including the condition and location of the original sources. Additionally, there are documents and notebooks which reflect the process of Hollis's research.

Related to the manuscripts are two printed pamphlets documenting the history of St. Mary's, created for the use of the church and its parishioners. These pamphlets contain materials drawn from the manuscripts.

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In addition to the manuscripts, the collection contains a series of Hollis's records from the time he served as vestryman for the St. Mary's parish, a series of correspondence in Spanish, and a small series of photographs and negatives.

See Series-level Scope and Content Notes for more details.

#### **System of Arrangement**

The Collection is organized into five series, organized by subject.

- I. Manuscripts: St. Mary's Church and Wellesley Area History, -1969
- II. Records: St. Mary's Church, 1920-1939
  - Gifts to St. Mary's Church, terminal date 1935
  - Private Records of St. Mary's Vestry Meetings, 1920-1939
  - Constitution and By-Laws of St. Mary's Church, 1929 revision
- III. Pamphlets: St. Mary's Church History
  - Through the Years with St. Mary's Church, undated first edition
  - Through the Years with St. Mary's Church, 1963 Sesquicentennial edition
- IV. Correspondence, Spanish language
  - Letters to Hollis
  - Drafts of letters from Hollis to various recipients
- V. Photographs and Negatives
  - Unidentified Photographs
  - Negatives relating to Hollis' artwork

#### **Index Terms**

*(Library of Congress Subject Headings)*

Church History—Newton Lower Falls (Mass.)

Clergy—History—Newton Lower Falls (Mass.)

Genealogy

Historic buildings

Indians of North America

Newton Lower Falls (Mass.)—History

Paper mills

St. Mary's Episcopal Church (Newton Lower Falls, Mass.)—History

St. Mary's Episcopal Church (Newton Lower Falls, Mass.)—Manuscripts

Scrapbooks

Wellesley (Mass.)—History

Wellesley Hills (Mass.)—History

Wellesley Historical Society (Wellesley, Mass.)

*(Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus subjects)*

Albums (books)

Architectural history

Church history

Historic houses

History and related disciplines

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Manuscripts (documents)  
Rectors (pastors)  
(RDA)  
Hollis, William H. (1881-1975)

**Conditions Governing Access**

The 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, some correspondence in Spanish

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Accession H.3 (Hollis), 1955  
2012.14.1  
Wellesley Historical Society: Repository Subject Files

**Accruals**

The Historical Society may add materials to this collection in the future; however, no further accruals are currently expected.

**Existence and Location of Originals**

Wellesley Historical Society

**Related Materials**

Photograph Collection: Churches: St. Mary's Episcopal Church [Interior, exterior, people]  
Postcard Collection: L-Z: Lower Falls  
Accession H.3 (1955).  
Accession 1982.30, Hollis portion of Photograph Collection, St. Mary's Church, 1962-c.1974

**Description**

DACS-compliant Finding Aid created in January 2016 by Alden Ludlow. Processing of this collection was made possible through a grant from the Wellesley Community Preservation Committee.

**Bibliography**

*The Townsman* (Wellesley). "Recent Deaths: William H. Hollis," December 18, 1975, p. 20

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Urann, Margaret. "Town's Oldest Native Still Living Here." *The Townsman* (Wellesley), March 8, 1973: p. 20.

Mass. Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) #NWT.71, St. Mary's Church

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**Container List**

**Box 1**

**I. Manuscripts: St. Mary's Church and Wellesley Area History, -1969**

This series contains a set of manuscripts covering the history of the Newton Lower Falls and Wellesley area. The manuscripts, fall broadly into three categories, covering the history of old houses and families of the area, various aspects of St. Mary's Episcopal Church history, and a volume of notes on New England and Massachusetts Native American history. For his sources, Hollis used newspaper accounts, his own memories, and the reminiscences of area residents. These manuscripts overlap in content, and many could be thought of as different "editions" of the same material. Many of the manuscripts are represented in two formats: most are handwritten, but some versions are present as typewritten transcriptions. The transcriptions often have tables of contents and indices. Many of the handwritten manuscripts contain unique photographs and old postcards as illustrations. Of note: Item 3 contains a transcription of early church records dating from 1820-1829.

- Item 1: "History of Old Houses, Families and Land in Wellesley and Lower Falls"
- Item 2: [History of Old Houses, Families and Land...] "Volume III"
- Item 3: "Chronicles of St. Mary's Church and Parish" [Contains Baur transcription 1820-1829]
- Item 4: "Chronicals [sic] of Old St. Mary's Church, Newton Lower Falls, 1813-1960"
- Item 5: "Indians" [of Massachusetts and New England, notes from various sources]
- Item 6: "Reminiscences and Other Items of Interest Regarding Lower Falls and Also Wellesley"
- Folder 1: "Book I: Reminiscences..." Unbound typescript
- Folder 2: "Book II: Reminiscences..." Unbound typescript
- Folder 3: "Volume III: Reminiscences" Unbound typescript
- Folder 4: "Chronicles of St. Mary's Church and Parish" notebook and related notes
- Folder 5: "Chronicles of St. Mary's Church and Parish Part II" notebook and related notes

**Box 2**

**I. Manuscripts: St. Mary's Church and Wellesley Area History, -1969 (continued)**

- Item 1: "The 33 Founders and Other Early Members of St. Mary's Church, NLF, 1812-1945"
- Item 2: "The 33 Founders and Other Early Members of St. Mary's Church, NLF, 1812-1950"

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- Item 3: "Founders of St. Mary's Church, Newton Lower Falls, 1811-1941"  
notebook
- Item 4: "Rectors of St. Mary's Church, Newton Lower Falls, Mass." Terminal  
date 1969
- Folder 1: Manuscripts: Related notes and drafts

#### **II. Records: St. Mary's Church, 1920-1939**

This series contains records relating to St. Mary's Church and Hollis's time as vestryman and parish clerk.

- Folder 2: "Private Records of St. Mary's Vestry Meetings," 1920-1939
- Folder 3: Gifts to St. Mary's Church, terminal date 1935
- Folder 4: "Constitution and By-Laws of St. Mary's Church," revised 1929

#### **III. Pamphlets: St. Mary's Church History, -1963**

This series contains two editions of a pamphlet authored by Hollis, celebrating the history of St. Mary's Episcopal Church. Much of the content in these pamphlets is drawn from the journals.

- Folder 5: "Through the Years with St. Mary's Church," undated first ed.  
"Through the Years with St. Mary's Church," 1963 Sesquicentennial ed.

#### **IV. Correspondence, c.1920**

This series contains correspondence, almost entirely in Spanish. The correspondence falls into two categories: letters written to Hollis from correspondents in Latin American countries, and drafts of letters from Hollis to correspondents. Hollis clearly did not speak Spanish, and the notes reflect his step-by-step translation process. The letters are connected with his church activity as well as his involvement with the YMCA.

- Folder 6: Correspondence

#### **V. Photographs and Negatives**

This series contains two unidentified photographs. Additionally, Hollis took up oil painting in his retirement years, and this series contains a set of 35mm negatives documenting some of his work. Note: This collection includes many photographs, however, they are integrated into the journals.

- Folder 7: Photographs and Negatives  
35mm color negatives of "Hollis Estate Paintings owned by the family"