

Wellesley Cooperative Clothing Exchange Collection
Wellesley Historical Society

Repository Identifier

mawelhs

Local Identifier

2015.16

Name and Location of Repository

The Wellesley Historical Society

229 Washington Street

Wellesley, MA 02481

(781) 235-6690

www.wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org

Title

Wellesley Cooperative Clothing Exchange Collection

Date

1977-2006, bulk 1986-2004 [check index cards to see if some are older]

Extent

1.5 linear feet; 1 document box, 2 custom boxes for index cards

Name of Creator

Wellesley Cooperative Clothing Exchange

Historical Note

The Wellesley Cooperative Clothing Exchange “began in 1945 during World War II as the result of the difficulty in obtaining good, new clothing for children. It was started by a group of cooperative-minded faculty wives at Wellesley College, headed by Esther Houghton (Mrs. Walter Houghton). Although the first sales were limited to children’s clothing, it soon became necessary to add men’s and women’s by popular demand” (*A History 1945-1977*, in collection).

The sale has been held in many venues throughout town during its operation, but settled on Wellesley College and then Mass Bay Community College. There was what was called “The Sale” (in August), as well as a smaller Spring (March) Sale.

The Exchange was completely staffed by volunteers; by the mid-1990s the event was selling approximately 25,000 items of clothing, with the help of 250 volunteers (*The Wellesley Townsman*, July 28, 2005, p. 1). Volunteers fell into three categories, and wore corresponding colored aprons during the bi-annual sale events: Pink, Green, and Blue. Pink Smocks were General Committee, Green Smocks were Departmental Committees, and the Blue Smocks were floor workers at the sales.

By 1995 the Exchange counted over 500 Wellesley families who submitted clothing, with thousands coming to the event to buy. “The Wellesley Cooperative Clothing Exchange for fifty

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years [1995] has been a kind of folk festival, a celebration of friendship, and an honored town tradition” (*A Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration—1995*, in collection).

The Exchange dissolved in 2006. Over the years it had used profits to fund scholarships for Wellesley students; since dissolution, those funds have been administered by the Wellesley Scholarship Foundation.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains papers and items relating to the operations of the Wellesley Cooperative Clothing Exchange. Much of the operations were geared toward mobilizing a large staff of volunteers to run the sales.

System of Arrangement

The materials in this collection are in four series, organized by type. The materials in Series II are organized chronologically, and the materials within each year group have been organized by type.

- I. Organizational Histories
- II. Committee Business
- III. Ephemera
- IV. Index Card Records

Library of Congress Index Terms

Clothing and dress
Cooperative societies
Wellesley (Mass.)

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

Immediate Source of Acquisition

2013.49
2014.11

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Accruals

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

Related Materials

Costume & Textile: WCCE Smocks: 2014.11.1 (pink), 2015.16.1 (pink), 2015.16.2 (blue)
Photograph Collection: Clubs & Organizations A-H: Co-op Clothing Exchange

Description

DACS-compliant Finding Aid created in May 2019 by Alden Ludlow. Processing of this collection was made possible through a grant from the Wellesley Community Preservation Committee.

Bibliography

Wellesley Scholarship Foundation. URL:
<http://www.wellesleyscholarshipfoundation.org/wellesley-community-awards.html#clothing>

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Container List

***I.* Organizational Histories**

This series contains two versions of the Cooperative's history, one written in 1977, the other for the 50th anniversary in 1995.

Box 1

Folder 1: 1977 & 1995

***II.* Committee Business**

This series contains papers pertaining to the business of the "Pink Smocks," or general executive committee, of the Cooperative. It includes committee reports, correspondence, volunteer lists, event planning, and other materials.

Box 1

Folder 2: 1986

Folder 3: 1987

Folder 4: 1988

Folder 5: 1990

Folder 6: 1991

Folder 7: 1992

Folder 8: 1993

Folder 9: 1994

Folder 10: 1995

Folder 11: 1996

Folder 12: 1997

Folder 13: 1998

Folder 14: 1999

Folder 15: 2000

Folder 16: 2001

Folder 17: 2002

Folder 18: 2003

Folder 19: 2004

Folder 20: 2005-2006

Folder 21: Undated

***III.* Ephemera**

Box 1

Folder 22: Clothing Sale Tag, Name Tag, Event Flyer

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IV. Index Card Records

This series contains index cards used by the Cooperative to track volunteers and committee members for the sales events. The materials in these boxes retain their original order; there are two boxes, each alphabetized A-Z. The cards track volunteer information and contact information, as well as the level of activity within the organization.

Custom Archives Box 2

Index Card Records, A-Z

Custom Archives Box 3

Index Card Records, A-Z