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## Hampshire Regional YMCA Records

1891-1978

16 boxes (11.25 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 9



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Read collection overview

Hampshire Regional YMCA founded in 1890. Contains minutes, constitution and by-laws, reports, board correspondence, ledgers, publications, scrapbooks, and youth, recreation, and wartime program files. Also includes material relating to building campaigns and properties. Additionally documents the long career of Errol V. Ridgwell.

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## **Background on Hampshire Regional YMCA (Northampton, Mass.)**

In February and March 1890, Smith College Professor J.H. Pillsbury organized several meetings for interested Northampton citizens on the work of the Young Men's Christian Association. Within a month, prominent local men, including C.H. Lyman, A.L. Williston, George Washington Cable, and F.N. Kneeland, established an Executive Board and committees with representatives from all the Protestant churches to raise funds and secure a building to begin the Northampton YMCA. By December, the Executive Board had leased the Smith Charities Building to start gymnasium classes, and in January 1891, Thomas Johnson was hired as the first general secretary. Incorporation followed shortly thereafter, in January 1892.

In the first decade, the YMCA established a Boy's Department under the direction of Robert L. Williston, started a Women's Auxiliary, and began a building fund that resulted in the purchase of property from A.L. Williston on King Street at "a nominal sum". The building, costing \$30,500, was dedicated on October 15, 1904. By 1912, the YMCA had also raised an additional \$25,000 for its summer camp, Nonotuck.

Throughout its history, the YMCA responded to local needs during periods of crisis or transition. During World Wars I and II, it established recreation programs for factory workers and soldiers stationed in the area. In 1942-44, the Hampshire YMCA became heavily involved in U.S.O. work, and, in the post-war era, developed programs with low-cost membership dues for returning servicemen. In 1936, the YMCA helped organize local flood relief, and during the depression it served as headquarters for the National Youth Administration. Similarly, the YMCA adapted to new groups in the area. In the 1920s it changed membership requirements to meet the needs of new immigrant groups entering Northampton and Easthampton to work in local factories. In the 1950s and 1960s, the YMCA began special programs on civil rights and desegregation.

Cutbacks in support from the Northampton Community Chest in the 1950s resulted in a decline in service in the post-war era. In 1960 the YMCA even considered a merger with the People's Institute. When the proposed merger collapsed, however, the YMCA established a new building fund drive that revived the Association and allowed it to build a more modern facility on Prospect Street at a cost of approximately one million dollars in 1966.

Over the years, a number of prominent local figures have played a role in the Hampshire Regional YMCA's history. Calvin Coolidge, George Washington Cable, and A.L. Williston were among the early board members. Robert L. Williston served on the board for nearly forty years, and Oliver L. Bradley for 36. Errol V. Ridgwell directed the YMCA's activities through four decades, serving as Executive Director from 1943 through 1969.

## **Scope of collection**

Records of the Hampshire Regional YMCA document the organization from 1891 to 1978. Materials include minutes, reports, board correspondence, program files (1937-1970), ledgers, publications and scrapbooks. Records were maintained by the various Executive Directors.

The papers occupy approximately 11.25 linear feet, and are divided into five series, including Administration (1891-1978), Reports (1908-1978), Correspondence (1923-1978), Programs and Activities (1937-1967), and Publications, Ledgers, and Scrapbooks (1912-1969).

## **Arrangement**

This collection is organized into five series:

**Series 1. Administration, 1891-1978**

**Series 2. Reports, 1908-1978**

**Series 3. Correspondence, 1923-1978**

**Series 4. Programs and Activities, 1937-1967**

**Series 5. Publications, Ledgers, and Scrapbooks, 1912-1969**

## **Series descriptions**

**Series 1. Administration**

1891-1978

Includes the constitution and by-laws of the Association, historical sketches of the Hampshire YMCA completed in 1952 and 1969 by Errol Ridgwell, and minutes of the Board of Directors, the Annual Meeting, and the Ladies' Auxiliary. The early Board and Annual Meeting minutes are combined in a single volume (1891-1909), followed by relatively complete separate runs through 1978.

#### **Series 2. Reports**

1908-1978

The reports are arranged chronologically by year for each category.

Comprised of the reports of officers and various YMCA committees and departments. For a typical year, the committee and department reports include the Membership, House, and Camp committees, and the Boys', Businessmen's, Women's, and Activity Departments. The bulk of the officers' reports originate from the monthly reports of the general secretary, but some reports from other officers or professional staff are included. These reports are particularly thorough for the years 1935 to 1970. A third sequence is comprised of the financial committee's monthly statements and reports. For the years 1937 to 1970, there also exist published annual reports of the Association's programs and activities.

#### **Series 3. Correspondence**

1923-1978

Consists largely of the correspondence of the Executive Board or the General Secretary, concentrated primarily between the years 1930 and 1960. Most of the letters reflect routine YMCA business, but some highlight the social and cultural ideas which influenced or shaped YMCA policies.

#### **Series 4. Programs and Activities**

1937-1967

Alphabetically arranged by topic.

Includes correspondence, newsletters, publications, and information about the variety of programs implemented by the Hampshire YMCA, including social action as well as recreational, cultural, and club activities, especially during the 1940s and 1950s. The files also include material about building campaigns, funding agencies, properties, and the proposed merger with the People's Institute.

#### **Series 5. Publications, Ledgers, and Scrapbooks**

1912-1969

Contains early financial ledgers (1912-1921), miscellaneous YMCA publications and newsletters (1945-1960), and several scrapbooks documenting the 1920s, World War II, the 1965 building campaign, and the long career of Errol V. Ridgwell.

## **Inventory**

### **Series 1. Administration**

1891-1978

Constitution and By-Laws

1936, 1964

Box 1

Historical Sketch of the Northampton YMCA

1952, 1969

Box 1

Board of Directors Minutes

1909-1939

Box 1

Board of Directors Minutes

1940-1963

Box 2

Board of Directors Minutes

1964-1978

Box 3

Annual Meeting Minutes

1891-1978

Box 3

Ladies Auxiliary Minutes

1905-1913, 1917, 1920

Box 3

Series 2. Reports

1908-1978

The reports are arranged chronologically by year for each category.

Officers Reports

1925-1969

Box 4

Committee and Department Reports

1915-1947

Box 4

Committee and Department Reports

1948-1978

Box 5

Finance Committee and Statements

1908, 1922-1939

Box 5

Finance Committee and Statements

1940-1978

Box 6

Annual Reports

1937-1969

Box 7

Series 3. Correspondence

1923-1978

Board Correspondence

1923-1961

Box 8

Board Correspondence

1962-1978

Box 9

Series 4. Programs and Activities

1937-1967

Alphabetically arranged by topic.

Activities and Clubs

1941

Box 10

Boys Workers Forum

1938-1939

Box 10

Brief Outlines of Services

1956

Box 10

Building Campaign

1962-1965

Box 10

Building Committee

1964-1967

Box 10

Camp Hodgkins

1956-1957

Box 10

City Bureau Program

1965-1966

Box 10

Civil Rights

1964

Box 10  
Community Chest  
1951  
Box 10  
Community Youth Program  
1958-1960  
Box 10  
Cosmian Hall  
1945-1954  
Box 11  
Cost Analysis Workshop  
1958  
Box 11  
Day Camp  
1955-1959  
Box 11  
Fund Raising  
1960-1961  
Box 11  
Hi-Y Ceremony  
1952  
Box 11  
Junior Hi-Y  
1945  
Box 11  
Juvenile Delinquency  
1943  
Box 11  
Kiwani's Underprivileged Child Committees  
1954  
Box 11  
Leaders Club  
1966-1967  
Box 11  
Merger with People's Institute  
1960-1963  
Box 11  
Northampton Community Survey  
1963  
Box 11  
Northampton Recreation Program  
1948-1949  
Box 11  
Northampton YMCA Survey  
1936  
Box 11  
Older Boys Conference  
1937-1947  
Box 11  
Organized Labor  
1944  
Box 12  
Other Y's  
1959-1965  
Box 12  
Overseas Work  
1945, 1948  
Box 12  
Program Ideas

1949  
Box 12  
Program Planning  
1944  
Box 12  
Returning Servicemen Program  
1943-1945  
Box 12  
Segregation  
1965  
Box 12  
Services to Youth  
1943-1945  
Box 12  
Sex Education  
1945-1949  
Box 12  
Speeches  
1955-1956  
Box 12  
Talks and Discussions  
1946-1947  
Box 12  
Training and Leadership  
1943, 1948  
Box 12  
U.S.O. Work  
1942-1955  
Box 12  
YMCA Men's Club  
1940-1947  
Box 12  
YM-YWCA Relations  
1960  
Box 12  
Y-Weds Club  
1949-1966  
Box 12  
Young Adult Conference  
1952  
Box 12  
Series 5. Publications, Ledgers, and Scrapbooks  
1912-1969  
Miscellaneous Publications  
1945-1960  
Box 13  
Photographs  
undated  
Box 13  
Building Campaign Clippings  
1965  
Box 13  
Scrapbook  
1942-1943  
Box 13  
Ledgers  
1912, 1915-1918  
Box 13  
Ledgers

1919-1921  
Box 14  
Scrapbook  
1924  
Box 14  
Scrapbook  
1925  
Box 15  
Ridgwell Scrapbook  
1936-1951  
Box 15  
Scrapbooks  
1960s  
Box 16

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## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Acquired from Susan Walker, 1984

### Processing Information

Collection processed by Kenneth Fones-Wolf, 2003.

### Language:

English

### Acknowledgments

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### Copyright and Use (More information )

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## Search terms

### Subjects

Associations, institutions, etc.--Massachusetts --Northampton--History--Sources.  
Hampshire Regional YMCA (Northampton, Mass.)--Archives.  
Northampton (Mass.)--Social conditions--Sources.  
People's Institute (Northampton, Mass.)  
Recreation--Massachusetts--Northampton--History--Sources.  
Ridgwell, Errol V.  
Social service and race relations--Massachusetts --Northampton--History--Sources.  
Young Men's Christian Association (Northampton, Mass.)--Archives.

### Contributors

Hampshire Regional YMCA (Northampton, Mass.) **[main entry]**  
Young Men's Christian Association (Northampton, Mass.)

### Genres and formats

Scrapbooks.

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Civic organizations  
World War II



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University Libraries : UMass Amherst  
154 Hicks Way : Amherst, Mass. 01003-9275  
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