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J. Roy Lewis Collection

1910-1949

1 box (0.25 linear feet)

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A native and long-time resident of Holyoke, Mass., J. Roy Lewis was a prominent businessman in the lumber trade and a model of civic engagement during the decades prior to the Second World War. A 1903 graduate of Phillips Academy, Lewis worked as an executive with the Hampden-Ely Lumber Company and was active in trade associations as well as civic and political groups such as the Kiwanis Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Tax Association, and the Holyoke Planning committee. Locally, he may have been best known as the writer of hundreds of letters and opinion pieces to the editors of the *Holyoke Transcript-Telegram* and the *Springfield Republican*. An ardent conservative, Lewis was a vocal opponent of women's suffrage, prohibition, and anything he deemed contrary to the interests of business.

This small collection, consisting of a scrapbook and a handful of miscellaneous letters from J. Roy Lewis are a testament to the mindset of a conservative businessman during a progressive age. Lewis's letters to the editor and his small surviving correspondence touch on a wide range of political and social issues of the day, most notably women's suffrage, prohibition, business support, the New Deal, and the Depression.

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Background on J. Roy Lewis

A native and long-time resident of Holyoke, Mass., J. Roy Lewis was a prominent businessman in the lumber trade and a model of civic engagement during the decades prior to the Second World War. A 1903 graduate of Phillips Academy, Lewis worked as an executive with the Hampden-Ely Lumber Company and was active in trade associations as well as civic and political groups such as the Kiwanis Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Tax Association, and the Holyoke Planning committee. Locally, he may have been best known as the writer of hundreds of letters and opinion pieces to the editors of the *Holyoke Transcript-Telegram* and the *Springfield Republican*. An ardent conservative, Lewis was a vocal opponent of women's suffrage, prohibition, and anything he deemed contrary to the interests of business. When Franklin D. Roosevelt first took office in 1933, Lewis was particularly incensed at what he deemed "a real bloodless revolution" and the threat of redistribution of wealth. "The keynote of the inauguration was the removal of fear," he wrote. "If they have not put the fear of God into business, who has?"

Lewis's pugnacious style elicited a steady response from opponents and apparently more than a little resignation. As early as 1915, one writer commented that "every now and then J. R. Lewis pops up with some [com]plaint about the democracy of which he was born a part." Lewis appears to have died prior to 1955.

Scope of collection

This small collection, consisting of a scrapbook and a handful of miscellaneous letters from J. Roy Lewis are a testament to the mindset of a conservative businessman during a progressive age. Lewis's letters to the editor and his small surviving correspondence touch on a wide range of political and social issues of the day, most notably women's suffrage, prohibition, business support, the New Deal, and the Depression. A note in the scrapbook suggests that Lewis's letter writing began prior to 1910, although he notes that he retained none of these early writings.

Inventory

City Manager plan, "by Anti-Bicameral"

undated

Correspondence

1933

Letters to and from the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce and others regarding the Tax Association (whose object was to "reduce the cost of government in the cities, towns, in the counties and in the nation") and opposition to Roosevelt's policies.

Hampden-Ely Company Auditor's Report

1949

Scrapbook

1910-1945

Includes clippings of dozens of letters to the editor of the *Holyoke Transcript*, *Springfield Republican*, and other newspapers on local politics in Holyoke and Springfield, national politics (opposing women suffrage, prohibition), and current affairs. Includes a few letters to Lewis and clippings of letters responding to Lewis's writings.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Provenance unknown.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, Aug. 2013.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

Depressions--1929

Holyoke (Mass.)--History

Tax Association

United States--Economic policy--1933-1945

Contributors

Lewis, J. Roy [main entry]

Genres and formats

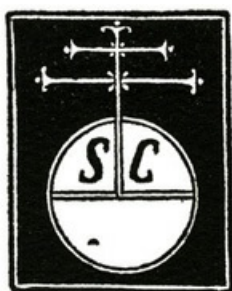
Letters to the editor.

Scrapbooks.

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154 Hicks Way : Amherst, Mass. 01003-9275

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