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Massachusetts Indian Association. Stockbridge Auxiliary Records

1886-1909
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Organization formed by prominent local women who sought to aid in educational and missionary work for and among Indians, and to "abolish all oppression of Indians within our national limits." Records include minutes that document the group's committees, meetings, dues, and contributions to Indians on reservations nation-wide, accounts, membership lists, and a letter.

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Background on Massachusetts Indian Association

The Stockbridge Auxiliary of the Massachusetts Indian Association was formed in 1886 by prominent local women in an effort to harness growing interest in the national Indian reform movement at that time. Both state and local Indian associations were outgrowths of the Women's National Indian Association, founded in 1879 by Mary Bonney, and expanded through the work of Amelia Quinton. They generally operated with the same purpose and under the same guidelines, "to awaken, by every means in its power, a Christian public sentiment which will move our government to the abolition of all oppression of Indians within our national limits, and to the granting them the same protection of law that other races among us enjoy; and to aid in educational and mission work for and among Indians."

Scope of collection

Minutes, accounts, membership lists and a letter documenting the activities of the Stockbridge Auxiliary of the Massachusetts Indian Association from 1886 to 1909.

Although the documents in the collection do not specifically outline the goals and objectives of the association, it is evident from the activities described in the minutebook, 1894-1907, and from sources on other auxiliaries which were forming simultaneously, that it maintained nine committees: Pioneer Mission Work, Indian Education, Home Building, the Press, Distribution of Literature, Leaflets, Petitions, Practical Farming, and an Advisory Committee, comprised of gentlemen.

The Stockbridge Auxiliary held meetings every few months, at the home of one of the ladies, usually Mrs. Averill. Membership ranged from 30-60 women, many of whom were the wives and daughters of statesmen and religious leaders, including such names as Lawrence, Bidwell, Fields, Byington, Brewer, Williams, and Sedgewick. Mrs. Goodrich sponsored the Housatonic Memorial in honor of the Stockbridge Indians who were forced to leave the valley.

Meetings often included a speaker, who reported on work being done in the field. For example, Miss Thackara, who established a hospital for Indians at Fort Defiance Arizona, came to speak several times about the "White House," as it was called. When a speaker was not present, articles and letters were read by different members on Indian affairs. For example, on March 28, 1900, Miss Byington read pieces of an article on native industries, "one of an Indian who had sold his blanket, that he intended at his death to be wrapped in, and bought a mowing machine to go to work with." Other reports were given about missionary work the association was helping to sponsor, as well as about individual Indian students whose education the members were supporting. Both Hampton and Carlisle Institutes were mentioned on several occasions. The association also sent money, food, clothing, and boxes of gifts to tribes on reservations in the Southwest and the Dakotas. It appears that each State and local association was in charge of a different tribe or region. Arizona was the special charge of the Massachusetts branch.

Membership status was based on annual dues, which went to various projects or to other branches of the association. In this auxiliary, the annual fee was \$0.50 for women and \$5.00 for men, who were given honorary membership and were not allowed to vote. Substantial contributions were made by individuals, such as \$200.00 given by Mrs. S.B. Cone in July 1886.

Each year an annual meeting was held at which officers were elected. A report was usually given by the President and/or Vice President on the Mohonk Conference, an important event in Indian affairs.

It is not clear when the Stockbridge Auxiliary became defunct; however, the dates of the account book as well the minutes indicate that it ceased to function after 1909. A special meeting was called on February 19, 1909, in order to allocate the funds which had been left in the treasury. Twelve dollars were given to the Stockbridge Indians, relocated to Wisconsin, who were in a "needy condition." Twenty more dollars were also donated to the cause. There was no mention of the reasons why the auxiliary had stopped operating, although it mirrored a similar trend nationwide. Indian reform movements and organizations were losing momentum about this time throughout the country (although the National Indian Association remained in existence until 1950).

Inventory

Minutes
1894-1907
Account book
1886-1909
Membership list
1886-1905
Letter from Lucie B. White to John C. Carter re: Henry J. Carter
June 14, 1925

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

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Search terms

Subjects

- Carter, Henry J.
- Indians of North America--Arizona--Social conditions--Sources.
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- Indians of North America--Missions--History--Sources.
- Indians of North America--Social conditions--Sources.
- Indians, Treatment of--United States--History--Sources.
- Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian and Other Dependent Peoples.
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- Massachusetts Indian Association. Stockbridge Auxiliary--Archives.
- Stockbridge Indians--Social conditions--Sources.

Contributors

- Massachusetts Indian Association [main entry]

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