

Special Collections and
University Archives

UMass Amherst Libraries 

John B. Thomes Contract Bridge Collection

1929-1936

5 vols. (0.75 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 874



[About SCUA](#)

[SCUA home](#)

[Credo digital](#)

[Scope](#)

[Admin info](#)

[Download](#)

[xml version](#)

[print version \(pdf\)](#)



[Read collection overview](#)

An enthusiast for contract bridge, John Bidwell Thomes was at his playing peak when the new game was sweeping the nation in popularity. In 1931, Thomes and his fellow Portland aficionados organized what may be the first state-wide contract bridge conference in their native state of Maine, just three years after formation of the American Bridge League and prior to creation of the present-day New England Bridge Conference.

John Thomes indicated that these five typewritten volumes were originally intended as a means of preserving a record of "some hands that were quite remarkable," holding out hope that his project might develop into a book that might be called "Adventures at the bridge table." Simultaneously a record of the games themselves and the strategy and tactics pursued, these volumes are

equally a record of the early formation of a bridge conference in New England and its first tournaments. The league included both men's and women's teams.

See similar SCUA collections:

Maine

Sport

Background on John B. Thomes

An enthusiast for contract bridge, John Bidwell Thomes was at his playing peak when the new game was sweeping the nation in popularity. In 1931, Thomes and his fellow Portland aficionados organized what may be the first state-wide contract bridge conference in their native state of Maine, just three years after formation of the American Bridge League and prior to creation of the present-day New England Bridge Conference.

Born in Gorham, Me., on Aug. 20, 1889, Thomes was educated at Dartmouth, graduating cum laude in 1909, and Harvard, from which he received his law degree two years later. After marrying Bertha R. Lang of Portland in October 1912, he settled down to practice law on Exchange Street and to try his hand at bridge.

The date of Thomes entry into competitive card play is not recorded, but at about the time that Harold Vanderbilt's revisions of the scoring system gave rise to modern contract bridge in 1925, Thomes was playing regularly with a shifting group of Portlanders that included his fellow Harvard Law graduate (1906) and frequent partner, Leon V. Walker.

After full-slate seasons playing in Portland and surrounding towns in 1929 and 1930, Thomes and Walker were among the organizers of a formal state league and championship. With three teams of eight already established in the city, Thomes' club distinguished themselves as the Shepard Club, adopting the name of the writer whose system they followed, Edward Valentine Shepard. Playing at a fairly high level, though not necessarily elite, the Shepard Club competed throughout the state and New England for the several years. The contract bridge conference Thomes helped to found grew to include as many as 18 teams during the early 1930s. Thomes remained active in bridge circles for many years. He died in Portland on April 18, 1977.

Scope of collection

John Thomes indicated that these five typewritten volumes were originally intended as a means of preserving a record of "some hands that were quite remarkable," holding out hope that his project might develop into a book that might be called "Adventures at the bridge table." Simultaneously a record of the games themselves and the strategy and tactics pursued, these volumes are equally a record of the early formation of a bridge conference in New England and its first tournaments. The league included both men's and women's teams.

Each volume is bound simply in matching quarter-leather over pebbled black cloth with gilt title reading "Bridge Hands." The volumes include one or more brief commentaries on the contents, a synopsis of the year in bridge play (typically running from September through the following summer), and occasionally notes on the state of the game. Some volumes contain correspondence relating to tournament play, as well as photographs, news clippings, some match results (including a few score sheets themselves), and a smattering of correspondence, nearly all of which relates to tournaments in the state.

Notably, volume 3 includes a brief exchange of letters between Thomes and E.V. Shepard, along with a handful of others regarding organizing and improving the state conference. Volumes 3-5 clearly demarcate a record of the adventures of the Shepard Club from a discussion of individual hands.

Vol. 1: Bridge hands, 1929 Dec. 20-1931 Oct. 3 (201p.)

Vol. 2: Bridge hands, 1931 Oct. 8-1933 Sept. 26 (112p.)

Vol. 3: Bridge hands, 1933 Oct. 14-1934 Sept. 3 (126p.). Includes a photograph and some correspondence.

Vol. 4: Bridge hands, 1934 Sept. 27-1935 July 15 (ca.179p.). Includes correspondence.

Vol. 5: Bridge hands, 1935 Sept. 27-1936 April 27 (156p.). Includes photographs.

Administrative information

Access



Shepard Bridge Club, Portland, ca.1934: Thomes is standing, second from the right

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of William Lenville, June 2014.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, July 2015.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

Cite as: John B. Thomes Contract Bridge Collection (MS 874). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

Contract bridge

Contract bridge--Tournaments--Maine

Shepard Club (Portland, Me.)

Contributors

Thomes, John B. **[main entry]**

Shepard, E. V. (Edward Valentine), 1866-

Genres and formats

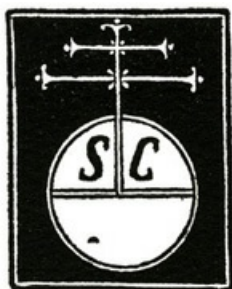
Correspondence

Photographs

Link to similar SCUA collections

Maine

Sport



Special Collections & University Archives
University Libraries : UMass Amherst
154 Hicks Way : Amherst, Mass. 01003-9275
Ph. 413-545-7282 (545-SCUA)

