BHC-MSS 0050
Guide to the Records of the Contemporary Club
By Lisa Furchtgott, July 2019

Descriptive Summary
Creator: The Contemporary Club
Title: Records of the Contemporary Club
Dates: 1894-2015
Quantity: 4 manuscript boxes (1.67 linear feet)
Abstract: The Contemporary Club was a Bridgeport social group meeting from 1894 until 2015, hosting lectures and musical performances several times per year. These collections reflect the Club's costs and member composition as well as the content of its meetings.
Language: English
Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Administrative History:
The Contemporary Club was founded in 1894 by Bridgeport elites – as its constitution stipulated, "distinguished men and women." Its founder and first president, Thomas Cook Wordin, was descended from a family made wealthy by its drugstore emporium and management of real estate. Original membership featured the Hon. Morris Beach Beardsley, a judge with prominent roles in Democratic city and state politics; William Darius Bishop, inheritor and founder of several major railroad lines; and members of the Warner family, owners of the profitable Warner Brothers underwear company.

Meetings featuring concerts or lectures were held five or six times per year. After 1896, following two years of gathering in private homes, members typically assembled in the Brooklawn Country Club, located in the neighboring town of Fairfield, or in downtown Bridgeport's Algonquin Hotel.

The Club disbanded in 2015, donating its remaining money to the non-profit Bridgeport Public Education Fund.

Scope and Content note:
The collection includes the Club's constitutions, minutes of officer meetings, yearly members' handbooks presenting officer lists and performance titles, and membership rolls joined by application and resignation/death dates. The Club's care in maintaining dues is on display in materials making up the Financial Records series. These records offer insight into cultural interests of Bridgeport's affluent residents during the late 19th and early 20th century and show how the Club evolved as the city's demographics changed.

Arrangement note:
Three series make up the collection: executive committee materials, membership mailings and name lists, and financial records. Index cards have been disbanded and rearranged to be flat in folders.

Administrative information:

Provenance: Donated in part by Elizabeth Witsil, then the Club's secretary, in April 1959. In January 1980, Minnie L. Perry, also then acting as secretary, deposited a set of papers. Lynne Penczer contributed additional materials in July 2015.

Preferred Citation:
Records of the Contemporary Club (BHC-MSS 0050), Bridgeport History Center.

Names and Subject Tracings:
Corporate names
Beardsley, Morris Beach
Bishop, William Darius
Contemporary Club (Bridgeport, Conn.)
Wordin, Thomas Cook

Subject tracings
Clubs
Societies and clubs

Detailed box and folder listing
Series I, Executive Committee materials
Box 1

1. Contemporary Club History, 1939, 1994
2. Constitutions, undated, 1944
3. Contemporary Club Executive Committee, 1906-1932
4. Minutes of Meetings of the Contemporary Club, 1894-1920
5. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Contemporary Club of Bridgeport. Conn., 1932-1957
6. Officer Guide, 2007

Series II, Membership mailings and name lists

7. Annual handbooks, 1894-1897
8. Annual handbooks, 1898-1901
9. Annual handbooks, 1902-1905
10. Annual handbooks, 1906-1909
11. Annual handbooks, 1910-1913
12. Annual handbooks, 1914-1917

Box 2

1. Annual handbooks, 1919-1921
2. Annual handbooks, 1923-1925
3. Annual handbooks, 1926-1929
4. Annual handbooks, 1930-1933

5. Annual handbooks, 1934-1938
6. Annual handbooks, 1938-1942
7. Annual handbooks, 1944-1949
8. Annual handbooks, 1950-1958
9. Annual handbooks, 1958-1966
10. Annual handbooks, 1965-1968
11. Annual handbooks, 1967-1971
12. Annual handbooks, 1971-1973
13. Annual handbooks, 1973-1975
14. Annual handbooks, 1976-1978
15. Annual handbooks, 1978-1980
16. Annual handbooks, 1980-1982
17. Annual handbooks, 1982-1984
18. Annual handbooks, 1984-1986

Box 3

1. Annual handbooks, 1986-1989
2. Annual handbooks, 1989-1981
3. Annual handbooks, 1991-1993
4. Annual handbooks, 1992-1995
5. Annual handbooks, 1994-1997
6. Annual handbooks, 1996-1999
7. Annual handbooks, 1998-2001
8. Annual handbooks, 2000-2003
9. Annual handbooks, 2003-2005
10. Annual handbooks, 2006-2011
11. Annual handbooks, 2011-2015
12. Annual handbooks, 2013-2015
13. Meeting invitations, 1939-1940
14. Meeting invitations, 1941-1942
15. Meeting invitations, 1942-1944
16. Meeting invitations, 1945-1947
17. Meeting invitations, 1947-1950
18. Meeting invitations, 1950-1953
19. Meeting invitations, 1953-1955
20. Meeting invitations, 1956-1958, 1966-1970
21. Meeting invitations, 1977-1979
22. Meeting invitations, 2013-2010
23. Program notes, 2004-2008
24. Program notes, 2007-2013
25. Program notes, 2012-2015
26. Mailings to prospective members, 2007, 2012, undated
27. Membership records, A-B
28. Membership records, B
29. Membership records, B-C
30. Membership records, C-D
31. Membership records, D-G
32. Membership records, G-H

33. Membership records, H-H
34. Membership records, H-L
35. Membership records, L-M
36. Membership records, M-P
37. Membership records, P-R

Box 4

1. Membership records, R-S
2. Membership records, S-T
3. Membership records, T-W
4. Membership records, W
5. Membership applications, 1940-1945
6. Membership applications, 1945-1947
7. Membership applications, 1947-1950
8. Membership applications, 1950-1952
9. Membership applications, 1953-1954
10. Membership applications, 1954-1956
11. Membership applications, 1956-1958

Series III, Financial records

12. The Contemporary Club Ledger, 1914-1946
13. The Contemporary Club Treasurer's Account, 1923-1945
14. Contemporary Club's Treasurer's Accounts, 1945-1951
15. Postage accounts, 1924-1951
16. Dues records, A-B
17. Dues records, B-C
18. Dues records, C-F
19. Dues records, G-H
20. Dues records, H-L
21. Dues records, L-P
22. Dues records, P-S
23. Dues records, S-W
24. Donation receipt, 2015
25. Cancelled checks, 1944-1946
26. Cancelled checks, 1946
27. Cancelled checks, 1947
28. Cancelled checks, 1947-1948
29. Cancelled checks, 1948
30. Cancelled checks, 1948
31. Cancelled checks, 1949
32. Cancelled checks, 1949
33. Cancelled checks, 1949-1950
34. Cancelled checks, 1950
35. Cancelled checks, 1950-1951
36. Cancelled checks, 1951

37. Check stubs, 1946-1947
38. Check stubs, 1947
39. Bank check containers, 1940s