



BHC-MSS 077

Guide to the Records of the Save the Merritt Association

By Meg Rinn, June 2020

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Save the Merritt Association

Title: Records of the Save the Merritt Association

Dates: 1973-1976

Quantity: 3 manuscript boxes/1 linear foot

Abstract: Running from Greenwich to Milford, Connecticut, the Merritt Parkway is one of Connecticut's most unique places and one of the few highways to be placed on the National Historic Register. In 1973, a proposal was brought up that would extend the Merritt an additional two lanes on either side, making it an eight sided highway. This caused outrage, and the Save the Merritt Association was founded on June 20, 1973. It was successful in its attempts to prevent this from happening, and dissolved in 1976 with the creation of the Merritt Parkway Commission.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Administrative history

Running from Greenwich to Milford, Connecticut, the Merritt Parkway is one of Connecticut's most unique places and one of the few highways to be placed on the National Historic Register. This four lane highway first opened on June 29, 1938, with the original route running from Greenwich to Norwalk. Additional construction continued in 1940.

One of the Merritt's defining features is its bridges, all unique and distinct from each other. The signage is likewise different from other highway signs in the state, and the scenic element is considered one of the most important parts of the highway itself. This is due in no small part to its original purpose of alleviating Boston Post Road/route 1 traffic.

In 1973, a proposal was brought up that would extend the Merritt an additional two lanes on either side, making it an eight sided highway. This caused outrage, and the Save the Merritt Association was founded on June 20, 1973. President David Rosow and Secretary Lisa Newton worked within the community and with other local organizations to fight the project. The association collected signatures, attended legislative sessions and local hearings, and wrote extensively in order to preserve the Merritt as a four lane scenic highway.

The interchanges for routes 25 and 8 were especially contentious, although those interchanges were eventually built. Most importantly, the group prevented the widening of the highway, and won a seat at the table in the Merritt's future. The Merritt Parkway Commission was created in 1976, which saw six Fairfield County residents join Department of Transportation officials in order to plan and prepare the Merritt's future. The Save the Merritt Association dissolved amicably due to the commission's creation.

Worth noting in this collection is that there is discussion starting in 1974 of placing the Merritt on the National Register, which would eventually come to pass.

Scope and Content note:

The contents of the Records of the Save the Merritt Association primarily take the form of the “documents and correspondence” files (see arrangement note), as well as public transcript hearings. These help provide insight into day-to-day activity of the Association, as well as public response to both the Merritt project and the Association’s impact on it. The newspaper clippings, while only running from 1973-1974, are invaluable in tracking the real time efforts of the organization as well.

Arrangement Note:

In 1997, some arrangement and foldering was done on the Save the Merritt records. However, it is unclear if original order was retained, as the 1997 inventory lists the material in alphabetical order only.

As such, the series imposed on this collection is a best attempt to find groupings and keep like information together. It is also why the “documents and correspondence” folders have not been further parsed out – there is a chance that this material has some original order within, and as such must be maintained.

Series 1, General Operations include the organization’s by laws, photographs from the first meeting, and most importantly, the documents and correspondence files. These files contain the bulk of the Save the Merritt’s work, but further organization and refinement has not been done. (See above.)

Series 2, Research reflects the organization’s approach to community organizing and the history of the Merritt itself.

Series 3, Transcripts and Legislation contains transcripts of community hearing sessions in regards to the Merritt expansion and the routes 25 and 8 interchanges, as well as correspondence and legislative records.

Series 4, Community organizing reflects the grass roots element of the Save the Merritt Association. It includes newsletters, petitions, a bumper sticker, and newspaper clippings.

Administrative information:

Provenance: Donation of Lisa Newton, secretary of the Save the Merritt Association. Accession # 1977.01

Preferred Citation:

Records of the Save the Merritt Association (BHC-MSS 0077) Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

Names and Subject Tracings

Personal names

Newton, Lisa
Rosow, David

Corporate names

Connecticut. Merritt Parkway Commission
Save the Merritt Association

Subject tracings

Connecticut Route 15 (Conn.)
Merritt Parkway (Conn.)
Roads

Detailed box and folder listing

Box 1

Series 1, General operations

1. Constitution and bylaws, 1973
2. Logo, 1973
3. Meeting notes by Lisa Newton, 1973
4. Documents and correspondence, 1973
5. Documents and correspondence, 1973
6. Documents and correspondence, 1973
7. Documents and correspondence, 1973
8. Documents and correspondence, 1973
9. Documents and correspondence, 1973
10. Documents and correspondence, 1973
11. Documents and correspondence, 1974
12. Documents and correspondence, 1974
13. Documents and correspondence, 1975
14. Documents and correspondence, 1976
15. Publicity and releases, 1973
16. Photographs of first meeting, 1973

Box 2

Series 2, Research

1. Research featuring articles from the 1930s, compiled 1972-1975
2. Planning study improvement of Merritt Parkway Interchanges, Fairfield-Trumbull, 1968
3. Research regarding Route 25 and Route 8 interchange, 1975-1976
4. Research log by Lisa Newton, 1973
5. Research 1972-1974
6. Route 59 interchange and General Electric Company, 1971-1973
7. Research on other issues, 1972-1974

Series 3, Transcripts and legislation

8. Public hearing transcript, Routes 8 and 15 Bridgeport-Trumbull-Stratford, May 5, 1970
9. Public hearing transcript, routes 25 and 15, Trumbull, June 25, 1970
10. Public hearing transcript, Merritt Parkway, Fairfield-Easton-Trumbull-Bridgeport, December 13, 1972

11. Legislation, 1973
12. Legislative debate on S.B. 1698, April 17, 1973

Box 3

1. Transportation committee, 1973

Series 4, Community organizing

2. Newsletter, 1973
3. Mailing and membership, 1973
4. Card file of contributors and supporters, 1973-1975
5. Petitions, Bridgeport, c. 1973
6. Petitions, Easton and Fairfield, c. 1973
7. Petitions, Stratford and Stamford, c. 1973
8. Petitions, Trumbull and Westport, c. 1973
9. Petitions, Various and blank, c. 1973
10. Citizens for balanced environment and transportation Inc., 1974
11. Bumper stickers, c. 1973-1975
12. Newspaper clippings, 1973
13. Newspaper clippings, 1973
14. Newspaper clippings, 1974
15. Newspaper clipping, labeled McKinney, Stewart from the London Times, 1973