



BHC-MSS 0206

Guide to the Select Records of the Bridgeport Area Chamber of Commerce  
by Meg Rinn  
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**Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Bridgeport Area Chamber of Commerce

**Title:** Select Records of the Bridgeport Area Chamber of Commerce

**Dates:** 1915-1960

**Quantity:** 1.5 linear feet/3 boxes

**Abstract.** The Bridgeport Area Chamber of Commerce was founded between 1915 and 1916, when the city itself was a major industrial center of Connecticut. With good profits, high employment, and a desire to attract more business, the organization was founded in order to accomplish these goals and to prove that Bridgeport was a desirable place to have a business. This collection contains minutes, showing the inner workings of the organization, as well as a subject file which reflects the organization's interests from its founding into the 1960s.

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Bridgeport History Center

**Biographical History:**

The Bridgeport Area Chamber of Commerce was founded between 1915 and 1916, when the city itself was a major industrial center of Connecticut. With good profits, high employment, and a desire to attract more business, the organization was founded in order to accomplish these goals and to prove that Bridgeport was a desirable place to have a business. Many members throughout the years were a part of the large Bridgeport industrial players, such as the Warner Brothers Company, Bridgeport Brass, AVCO Lycoming, and others. A junior chamber of commerce was also created for smaller and younger businesses.

A 1920 *Bridgeport Life* article (found in the newspaper clipping collection, box 150), accuses the early incarnation of the Chamber of Commerce of being focused on increasing the profit and pocketbooks of these industrial players rather than equitably promoting the city and creating business opportunities for all. The Chamber of Commerce would go on to organize all manner of promotions and events in order to correct this, promoting businesses through events like Air Mail Week in the 1930s, hosting dinners and events with noteworthy speakers, and regular luncheons for members for networking purposes.

Sometime in the 1970s, the Bridgeport Area Chamber of Commerce began to drift in focus from the city of Bridgeport proper to the outlying areas. This is likely in part due to the city's deindustrialization, as many former manufacturers chose to leave the city and pay a cheaper workforce overseas. This deindustrialization also contributed to Bridgeport's economic decline and higher crime rate and the perception that the city is unsafe, a reputation that has remained

with the city into the 2010s and beyond.

In 1982, the group renamed itself as the Business/Industry Council of the Bridgeport Economic Region. It is unclear, but likely, that the Bridgeport Regional Business Council is a continuation of the same organization. If not, it fills the same niche of promoting businesses, big and small, in Bridgeport and greater Fairfield County.

**Scope and Content note:**

The material provides some insight into how the organization worked, but does not cover all functions. Minutes in series I are more helpful in understanding the general function of the organization, whereas series II contains highlights of work the Chamber of Commerce was interested in from its' founding into the 1960s.

**Arrangement Note:**

Material in series I contains minutes. Series II contains subject files arranged alphabetically.

**Administrative information:**

**Provenance:** 1977.22, gift of the Bridgeport Area Chamber of Commerce

**Preferred Citation:**

Select Records of the Bridgeport Area Chamber of Commerce (BHC-MSS 0206), Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

**Names and Subject Tracings**

*Corporate names*

Bridgeport Area Chamber of Commerce

*Subject tracings*

Chamber of Commerce

Industry

Businesses

Manufacturing

**Detailed box/folder listing**

Box 1

Series I, Minutes

1. Minutes, 1915-1944
2. Minutes, 1944-1956

Box 2

1. Minutes, 1957-1960

Series II, Subject files

2. Air mail, 1938-1939
3. Air mail week, 1938
4. By-laws, 1953
5. Bridgeport Ordnance District, 1918-1919

6. Bridgeport income, population, etc. 1957
7. Chamber policies, undated
8. Chance Vaught, 1947-1952
9. Chance Vaught clippings, 1950-1953
10. Chase aircraft, 1948-1950
11. Bridgeport-Stratford facts and history, 1924-1926
12. Chronology, 1915-1936
13. Crawford, George, undated
14. Financial statements, 1948-1958
15. Financial statements, 1959
16. Luncheon schedule, 1941-1942

Box 3

1. Manufacturers division, 1955
2. Manufacturers, list of, 1959
3. More houses for Bridgeport, 1916
4. Planning Council, 1943-1946
5. Port development brief, 1944
6. Port development, 1944-1954
7. Returns and tabulations, Industrial Dispersion Committee, 1952-1953
8. Publications, 1945-1946
9. Radio stations, 1948
10. Sikorsky Aircraft property, 1953-1955
11. Smoke Nuisance Committee, 1947-1950