

## **First Spiritual Church of Methuen Collection, 1887-1974**

### **General Information**

**Repository:** Lawrence History Center

**Creator:** First Spiritual Church of Methuen

**Dates:** 1887-1974, bulk 1900-1950

**Accession Number:** 2002.016

**Quantity:** One Banker's Box

**Processed By:** Veronica Denison

**Access:** Open for research

**Provenance:** These records were created by the First Spiritual Church of Methuen. They were donated to the Lawrence History Center by Mary Hagopian on May 1, 2001. The records were originally given to the donor by Mr. Thomas Hadfield, the President of the Spiritual Church.

**Related Materials:** The Lawrence History Center also holds the records of the following two collections; "First Universalist Society of Methuen Collection, 1824-1959" 2002.088 and "Church of the Good Shepherd Unitarian Universalist Collection, 1847-1980" 2002.087.

**Historical Note:** On March 17, 1898 at 25 Broadway, Methuen, MA, a group of Spiritualists met to organize a spiritualist society, originally called The Progressive Spiritualist Society of Lawrence, MA. As defined by the Society, "Spiritualism is the science, philosophy and religion of continuous life, based upon the demonstrated fact of communication, by means of mediumship, with those who live in the Spirit World." At the first meeting, a constitution and bylaws were adopted. The Progressive Spiritualist Society held Public Circles, Member Circles (for members only), and had a Medium Committee. A Medium is defined as a person who is sensitive to vibrations from the spirit world and is able to convey messages and produce the Phenomena of Spiritualism. The Medium Committee was often in charge of securing mediums for the society and would hold Medium Services. There was also a Lyceum organized by the society. A Spiritualist Lyceum, which can be considered the equivalent to Sunday School, functions as a support system for the teaching of Spiritualist history and doctrine. The Lyceum would often donate money and coal to the church. In 1902, the Society bought land in Methuen for \$1100 to build a church. After the church was completed, The Progressive Spiritualist Society changed their name to the First Spiritual Church of Methuen--the government, committees, and organizations remained the same.

The Society had many clubs and organizations. The Ladies Aid Society was organized in 1900 as a means to help the society financially by making and selling clothing, aprons, and pillow slips. They would often donate money to the church and prepare and serve refreshments at church functions. The Sunflower Club was organized around 1914 or 1915 and held meetings until 1924, however no records were kept until the club was reorganized in 1930. The Sunflower

Club was organized to work for the benefit of the church and Lyceum, and to provide assistance to the Ladies Aid when they were in need of younger helpers. The Enterprise Dramatic Club, which was organized in 1918, produced plays, concerts, and minstrel shows. There was also the Men's Club, formed in 1930, and the All Star Club, which was formed in 1935. In the Fall, the church would often have a Harvest Festival and Dinner, where the women of the church would provide the food. The church would also hold annual fairs to raise money. At the fair, the different clubs and organizations would set up their own tables and games.

The records of the First Spiritual Church of Methuen go until 1974. It is unclear what became of the church and society.

**Scope and Content:** This collection contains the records of The First Spiritual Church of Methuen, the bulk of which date from 1900-1950. There are meeting minutes as well as the constitution and bylaws of the church and society. There are also the records of the Lyceum, including annual meeting reports and a listing of the teachers of the Lyceum. There are member marriage lists, member appreciation cards, and membership lists. There are also five Hymnals that were used by the members of the church, as well as the meeting minutes and financial reports of the Ladies Aid and Sunflower Club, two different church organizations. There are also two pamphlets regarding Spiritualism from two Spiritualist Associations. There is a pamphlet of definitions of Spiritualism written by the National Spiritualist Association, and the constitution and bylaws of the Massachusetts State Association. A majority of the records were kept in ledgers and composition notebooks.

**Arrangement:** These records have been arranged into six series, one of which has been further arranged into subseries. The series and subseries arrangement of the records is as follows:

Series 1: Government, 1898-1964

Series 2: Lyceum, 1901-1944

Series 3: Membership. 1916-1920, 1932

Series 4: Hymnals, 1887, 1911, 1947

Series 5: Church and Society Organizations, 1900-1953

Subseries 1: Ladies Aid, 1900-1950

Subseries 2: Sunflower Club, 1929-1953

Series 6: Spiritualist Associations, 1931

### **Series 1: Government, 1898-1964**

This series contains the governmental records of the church and society. There are meeting minutes, including minutes from the first meeting of the Progressive Spiritualist Society in 1898 and when they decided to change their name in 1905. There is also the constitution and bylaws, as well as a composition book listing the names of Society Presidents and Pastors, Lyceum Conductors, and the Presidents and Officers of the Society's clubs and organizations: Ladies Aid, Sunflower Club, Men's Club, All Star Club, and Enterprise Dramatic Club. There is also

the call to Martha A. Whitehead, a church medium, asking her to become the new pastor, her response, and a certificate, certifying Whitehead as possessing genuine mediumship.

Folder

1	Constitution and Bylaws of the First Spiritual Church, Methuen undated
2	Call to Martha A. Whitehead as pastor and medium, Certificate Certifying Whitehead as Possessing Genuine Mediumship undated
Ledger	Meeting Minutes of the Progressive Spiritualist Society, including Annual and Treasurer Reports, Constitution, and Bylaws 1898-1905
Ledger	Meeting Minutes, including Annual and Treasurer Reports, Constitution and Bylaws 1905-1931
Ledger	Meeting Minutes, including Annual and Treasurer Reports, Constitution and Bylaws 1932-1957
Ledger	Meeting Minutes, including Annual and Treasurer Reports, and a list of Trustees in the back 1957-1974
Composition	Titled "Members Book" List of Society Presidents and Pastors, Lyceum Conductors, and Presidents and Officers of Various Clubs, and a List of Members and Fair Proceeds undated
Ledger	Financial: Income and Expenses of the Church 1940-1958

**Series 2: Lyceum, 1901-1944**

This series consists of the records of the Lyceum. There is "The Lyceum Officers' Manual," which details Spiritual teachings, poems, and musical readings. There is a ledger containing annual meeting minutes which has a list of teachers who taught at the Lyceum. There is another ledger detailing the income and expenses of the Lyceum, the resignation letters of Dan Moore, Lyceum Conductor, and Elizabeth Short, Lyceum Secretary, and an "Index to Titles," which is a page of unknown origins that appears to be torn from a book.

Folder

Book	"The Lyceum Officers' Manual," includes Spiritual Teachings, Poems, and Musical Readings 1926
Ledger	Lyceum Annual Meeting Minutes, and Teacher Lists 1925-1944
Ledger	Finance Committee: Income and Expenses of the Lyceum 1901-1939
3	"Index to Titles" (page torn out of book)
4	Secretary and Conductor Resignations 1943

**Series 3: Membership. 1916-1920, 1932**

This series contains membership records. There are Member Appreciation cards for members to pledge money to support the Society, and a ledger detailing member marriages performed by the church from 1916-1920. There are also the meeting minutes of a member meeting held in 1932.

Folder

5	Member Appreciation Cards undated
6	Member's Meeting Minutes 1932
Ledger	Members' Marriages Performed 1916-1920

**Series 4: Hymnals, 1887, 1911, 1947**

This series contains five Hymnals, three of which have been placed in folders. These were the Hymnals bought and used by church members, one of which, "Gospel Hymns No. 5" dates to 1887, before the church and society were formed.

Folder

7	"The Hymnal: Not to be Taken Away" Published by Star Publishing Co. undated
8	"Gospel Hymns No. 5" by Ira Sankey, James Granahan, and George Stebbins Published by The John Church Co. and Biglow and Main 1887
9	"Spiritualist Hymnal" Published by National Spiritualist Association 1911
Book	"Spiritualist Hymnal" Published by National Spiritualist Association 1911
Book	"Treasury of Gospel Hymns and Poems" Compiled by Edward MacHugh Published by The Rodeheaver Co. 1947

**Series 5: Church and Society Organizations, 1900-1953**

**Subseries 1: Ladies Aid, 1900-1950**

This subseries consists of the meeting minutes of the Ladies Aid, a church organization. These minutes were written in two composition notebooks and two ledgers. The meeting minutes discuss the activities in which the Ladies Aid were involved, such as the Harvest Festival and Annual Fair. Along with the meeting minutes, the money collected by the Ladies Aid is also detailed.

Folder

Composition	Meeting Minutes and Money Collected 1900-1902
Ledger	Meeting Minutes and Money Collected 1907-1916
Ledger	Meeting Minutes and Money Collected 1919-1941
Composition	Meeting Minutes and Money Collected 1942-1950

**Subseries 2: Sunflower Club, 1929-1953**

This subseries contains the records of the Sunflower Club, including club bylaws. There is also one ledger and one composition notebook with club meeting minutes, and two ledgers detailing the income and expenses of the club. The meeting minutes detail the activities that the club was

involved in, such as the Harvest Festival and Annual Fair.

Folder

10	Club Bylaws undated
Ledger	Meeting Minutes 1930-1947
Composition	Meeting Minutes 1947-1953
Ledger	Financial: Income and Expenses 1929-1938
Ledger	Financial: Income and Expenses 1938-1946

**Series 6: Spiritualist Associations, 1931**

This series contains two pamphlets regarding Spiritualism from two Spiritualist Associations. There is a pamphlet of definitions of Spiritualism written by the National Spiritualist Association, and the constitution and bylaws of the Massachusetts State Association of Spiritualists.

Folder

11	National Spiritualist Association "Definitions of Spiritualism" undated
12	Massachusetts State Association of Spiritualists Constitution and Bylaws 1931