

MS-247

Discussion Club of Dayton Collection

**Special Collections and Archives
Wright State University Libraries**

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Introduction

The Discussion Club of Dayton's Collection was given to the Wright State University Special Collections and Archives in 1993, totaling a number of 2 boxes. The donor then gave an additional box of papers, books, and photographs to the Archives in 2007.

The collection includes newspaper clippings, correspondence, photographs, ledger books, financial record books, membership information, administrative documents, and program information. Most items relate to meeting information, such as bulletins and official reports and minutes.

The Discussion Club of Dayton's Collection dates between 1931 and 2006, with a majority of the documents dating from the 1930s to the 1940s, and the 1980s onward. This collection documents Dayton civic and cultural history as reflected in the meeting topics and its members.

There are no restrictions on the use of the Discussion Club of Dayton Collection.

The Discussion Club of Dayton Collection is arranged into four series:

- Series I: Administrative
- Series II: Membership
- Series III: Correspondence
- Series IV: Financial

Organizational Sketch

History of the Discussion Club of Dayton
History prepared in March, 2006, by Joey Thiele and Charles Lewis

Early records of the Discussion Club of Dayton are few as there are no official archives for the Club. Our Club was probably founded in early 1931. The earliest record consists of a financial log which shows that the Club spent \$50.70 for 39 dinners at the Dayton Woman's Club, and that Edwin Todd received \$10.00 per his expenses as speaker. Converting 1931 dollars into today's money that would be about \$18.75 per meal and \$110.50 for the speaker. Dues were five dollars a member.

The log further shows that the Club met in April, June, and August of 1931. By August the Club had 56 members. The Club had expenses for stenographic work, letter heads, and envelopes. The stenographic expense probably is evidence that the all male and mostly professional members did not include someone willing, or able, to type.

Paul Rice seems to have been the Club's first secretary- treasurer holding that position until February, 1936.

There are many notable Dayton names on the roster: A.B. Brower, L. Custer, R.K. Kemper, F.L. Shively, C.H. Shook, C.L. Seasholes, R.K. McConnaughey, Irving Bieser, Siegfried Weng, and C. R. Murray.

The financial records become less detailed with that change in officers. They continued to meet at the Dayton Woman's Club with dues remaining at five dollars. In 1938 there were 57 members. and the dinner costs remained moderate as the Dayton Woman's Club was paid \$52. 53 for 51 dinners (or \$1.03 a meal) on Dec 2, 1941. Dues went up to \$6.00 in January 1943, and then to \$9.00 in January, 1944. Dinners had risen to \$1.75 by April 1945. By 1949 dues had risen to ten dollars for a half year while one hundred stamps cost \$3.00. A member paid \$2.25 for a guest's dinner.

By 1952 the log ceases to carry the members names and a record of their dues paying. However, in 1979 the membership list and dues records return. Some familiar names are Dan Elliott, Charles and Ellie Lewis, Ralph Heyman, Wayne Staley, George Stillwagon, John Coleman, John Bell, Alan Klein, and Julian de Bruyn Kops. By 1980 the dues rose to \$45 a half year.

In July 1981, after much discussion by the Board, and not on the first ballot, the Board recommended the admission of members' spouses. By a split vote the recommendation was approved, and dues were set at \$45.00 for the male members and \$30.00 for their spouses. Some of the women listed were Catherine Zahrt, Jean Coleman, Marjorie Fehr, and Joey Thiele. By 1985 other women who joined were Ellie Lewis, Ellie Heilbrunn, Betsy Jefferis and Cathy Brown. By November of 1985 the membership roster had increased to 86 with there being 20 women. It wasn't until 1988 that the dues were made the same for men and women! At an officers meeting held on December 8, 1982, it was decided to list the women separately from their husbands and to indicate their vocations.

The Club had an "Off the Record Policy" which meant that anything said during a meeting was considered confidential, and would never be leaked to the press. This was necessary as the membership included editorial staff from the Dayton Daily News.

Topics for the meetings were to be chosen as current issues with diverse viewpoints. The Club meetings have never lacked for heated and salty opinions (at least not until women got in) as some long time members recall the contributions of Bill Chait, Julian de Bruyn Kops and Carl Lohrey.

Carl Lohrey served as secretary -treasurer for decades and operated like an administrative director. The secretary- treasurer was allowed to serve as long as willing, while other officers had limited terms. Long standing members remember Carl Lohrey hand delivering the monthly newsletter to their business offices in downtown Dayton on foot! Carl had a way with words and would speak mischievously of Ivan the Horrible when announcing the upcoming program. When Carl's health declined, he entrusted his role of secretary -treasurer to Dr. Dan Elliott who continued for the next ten years in this guiding position until his death in 2004.

The ledger ceases to have Club records after 1988; however, there are well kept records of the speakers and their topics. Many of the topics being discussed today were also pertinent twenty- five years ago. Examples are the RTA, Success or Failure; Vice in Dayton; Downtown Dayton; Nuclear Energy; Women in Politics; Legal Ethics and Bizarreness and the Law; The 45 Million Dollar Arcade Project; the Wright State School of Medicine; Issues Facing the State of Ohio; and General Motors in Dayton. It may have been easier to answer some of these issues twenty -five years ago than at the present moment; just think of the Arcade and downtown Dayton.

What has happened in Dayton and throughout the United States is a change in demographics, women's rights and racial rights, and the cost of living. The Discussion Club of Dayton has changed along with the rest of society in these respects but not in its mission which is to provide an amiable social opportunity for the purposeful interchange of information and ideas for the intellectual stimulation of each member.

Scope and Content Note

The Discussion Club of Dayton Collection documents the history of an important part of Dayton civic culture in the 20th and 21st centuries. By studying this collection, researchers may gain insight into Dayton society and world events, based on the monthly meeting topics.

Series I: Administrative

The administrative papers of the collection focus primarily on the meeting bulletins, which were issued to every member and served as a reminder of the time, date, and place that the next meeting of the Discussion Club would be held. The bulletins also gave a short biography of the meeting's scheduled speaker and a synopsis of his or her discussion topic. This series also includes minutes, reports, meeting letters, a preference vote on discussion topics, meeting notes, and miscellaneous program files.

Series II: Membership

The membership part of the collection is comprised mainly of applications to join the Discussion Club. There is also a list of members by occupation, two constitutions, a small collection of 75th Anniversary celebratory documents and photographs, and a folder for Irving Bieser's personal papers.

Series III: Correspondence

A large portion of the correspondence series is made up of letters between Discussion Club members and potential speakers for the meetings. There were also letters between members, both business in nature and regarding potential members. There were several miscellaneous letters that did not fall into any of the aforementioned categories.

Series IV: Financial

The financial series is the smallest of the collection, having only five books. Four books are records books, dating from 1931-1949, 1949-1988, 1989-1997, and 1998-2005. A ledger book of dues covers the years 1973-1974 and 1988.

Container Listing
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Series I		Administrative	Date
Box	File	Item	
1	1	Meeting Bulletins	1934
	2	Meeting Bulletins	1935
	3	Meeting Bulletins	1936
	4	Meeting Bulletins	1937
	5	Meeting Bulletins	1938
	6	Meeting Bulletins	1939
	7	Meeting Bulletins	1940
	8	Meeting Bulletins	1941
	9	Meeting Bulletins	1942-44
	10	Meeting Bulletins	1945
	11	Meeting Bulletins	1946
	12	Meeting Bulletins	1947
	13	Meeting Bulletins	1948
	14	Meeting Bulletins	1949
	15	Meeting Bulletins	1950
	16	Meeting Bulletins	1951
	17	Meeting Bulletins	1952
	18	Meeting Bulletins	1953
	19	Meeting Bulletins	1954-55
	20	Meeting Bulletins	1966, 1969
	21	Meeting Bulletins	1970-71
	22	Meeting Bulletins	1972
	23	Meeting Bulletins	1973-75, 1977
	24	Meeting Bulletins	1978-79
	25	Meeting Bulletins	1980
	26	Meeting Bulletins	1981
	27	Meeting Bulletins	1982
	28	Meeting Bulletins	1983
	29	Meeting Bulletins	1984
	30	Meeting Bulletins	1985
	31	Meeting Bulletins	1986
	32	Meeting Bulletins	1987
	33	Meeting Bulletins	1988
	34	Meeting Bulletins	1989
	35	Meeting Bulletins	1990
	36	Meeting Bulletins	1991
	37	Meeting Bulletins	1992
	38	Meeting Bulletins	1993
	39	Meeting Bulletins	1994
	40	Meeting Bulletins	1995
	41	Meeting Bulletins	1996

Administrative, cont'd

Box	File	Item	Date
1	42	Meeting Bulletins	1997
	43	Meeting Bulletins	1998
	44	Meeting Bulletins	1999
	45	Meeting Bulletins	2000, 2002
	46	Meeting Bulletins	2003
	47	Meeting Bulletins	2004
	48	Meeting Bulletins	2005

2	1	Minutes	1947-1949
	2	Reports	1946-1949
	3	Meeting Letters	1985-1987, 1989, 1991
	4	Preference Vote	1934
	5	Meeting Notes	1987-1992
	6	Misc. Program Files	No date

Series II Membership

			Date
2	7	Applications	1940, 1952- 53, 1977-79
	8	Applications	1980-83
	9	Applications	1984-89
	10	Applications	1990, 1994
	11	Member Lists by Occupation	1942, 1947- 1949, 1950, 1953
	12	Constitutions	No date
	13	75 th Anniversary	2006
	14	Bieser File	1941-1942

Series III Correspondence

			Date
2	15	Between D.C.D. Members	1934-41, 1947-48, 1952
	16	Between D.C.D. Members and Speakers	1934-35
	17	Between D.C.D. Members and Speakers	1936-37
	18	Regarding Potential Members	1938, 1940- 1941, 1944, 1948-1949, 1953
	19	Misc.	1935, 1987- 1989, 2002, No dates

Series IV	Financial	Date
3	1 Dues	1973-1974, 1988
	2 Record Book	1931-49
	3 Record Book	1949-88
	4 Record Book	1989-97
	5 Record Book	1998-2005