

Collection of Wellesley Improvement Organizations Records
Wellesley Historical Society

Repository Identifier

mawelhs

Local Identifier

2019.08

Name and Location of Repository

The Wellesley Historical Society

229 Washington Street

Wellesley, MA 02481

(781) 235-6690

www.wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org

Title

Collection of Wellesley Improvement Organizations Records

Date

1905-1958, bulk 1905-1929

Extent

0.5 linear feet; 1 document box

Names of Creators

The Wellesley Village Improvement Association

Wellesley Fells Improvement Society

Hills and Falls Village Improvement Society of Wellesley

Historical Note

This collection contains the records of two Wellesley community improvement organizations, as well as the Constitution of a third. All three organizations were formed at roughly the same time, and all shared the same goals: the improvement and beautification of their respective Wellesley communities and neighborhoods. All three groups attended to business, but the meetings were also opportunities for more relaxed social engagement.

The Wellesley Village Improvement Association, founded 1905

“The objects of this Association shall be ... To beautify Wellesley Village by removal or concealment of unsightly objects” through tree and shrub planting and maintenance, and “to stimulate a general interest in improving the environment of our homes and community” (Bylaws, Article II). Constitution and Bylaws accepted May 31, 1905.

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The Club did not meet from 1927 through 1938. The *Wellesley Ledger* reported that the Association re-formed to primarily deal with the destruction wrought by the hurricane of 1938, which had done extensive damage to the village cemetery and many headstones therein (*Ledger*, November 9, 1939, as well as in *The Townsman*, November 10, 1939). The club, inactive in the years 1927-1957 (with brief activity in 1939-1940), elected to transfer their remaining funds to the Wellesley Historical Society, which was done in January 1958.

Wellesley Fells Improvement Society, founded circa 1912

The Wellesley Fells Improvement Society worked toward the betterment of the Fells area of Wellesley, roughly the northwest area of the town bordering Natick and Weston. One of the prominent projects the organization undertook was the repurposing of the schoolhouse in the creation of the Fells Branch Library in 1923. The Society sponsored entertainments and lectures throughout the year. They also acted as a neighborhood watch, offering rewards for the “arrest of persons found destroying property or committing other nuisances in the vicinity.” They installed trash bins at the crosswalks, and advocated with the town for the installation of electric lighting on the streets. Major issues included the safety of the Worcester Street/Weston Road intersection, and the desire for bus service on the Weston Road. They also encouraged residents to be good neighbors and cultivate gardens.

Hills and Falls Village Improvement Society of Wellesley, circa 1906

The Hills and Falls Village Improvement Society of Wellesley was organized into 10 districts covering Wellesley Hills, Falls, and Farms. Each district was overseen by elected members living in those neighborhoods. The neighborhood committees concerned themselves with the beautification of their neighborhoods, taking care of rubbish and the proper placement of signs and bulletins. According to their map, the Society districts covered the Hills and Falls area bounded by Kingsbury Street/Wellesley Avenue and the Weston/Newton/Needham borders.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains the records of two Wellesley community improvement organizations, the Wellesley Village Improvement Association, and the Wellesley Fells Improvement Society. It also contains a booklet containing only the Constitution of a third organization, the Hills and Falls Village Improvement Society of Wellesley. The bulk of the collection is from the Wellesley Village Improvement Association. See Scope and Content Note for each Series for more information.

System of Arrangement

The collection is organized into three series, one for each organizational entity.

Collection of Wellesley Improvement Organizations Records

Wellesley Historical Society

- I. The Wellesley Village Improvement Association Records
- II. Wellesley Fells Improvement Society Records
- III. Hills and Falls Village Improvement Society of Wellesley, Constitution

Library of Congress Index Terms

Community development
Community policing
Historic districts
Neighborhoods
Societies and clubs
Wellesley (Mass.)
Wellesley Hills (Mass.)

Conditions Governing Access

The Collection is open for research purposes by appointment only. Please contact the Wellesley Historical Society for more information.
info@wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org
(781) 235-6690

Physical Access

Some of the materials are fragile.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Copyright restrictions may apply.

Languages and Scripts of the Material

English

Finding Aids

Legacy finding aids were included in the unprocessed box, derived from the accession notes. There are three legacy accession numbers associated with this collection: M-1 is associated with the Wellesley Village materials, while M-2 is associated with the Fells materials; both of these accession numbers are associated with accession S-9. The numbers are problematic, because in the actual accession files, M-1 and M-2 do not list any of these materials; however, they are listed with S-9. The legacy finding aids have been placed in the S-9 folder.

As this is a created repository collection, it has been assigned a new accession number (2019.08). A copy of the legacy finding aids has been included with the new folder.

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

M.1 (S.9), 1956 Wellesley Village Improvement Association

M.2 Wellesley Fells Improvement Society

Accruals

The Historical Society may add materials to this collection in the future; however, no further accruals are currently expected.

Related Materials

Wellesley Farms Neighborhood Club

Description

DACS-compliant Finding Aid created in May 2019 by Alden Ludlow. Processing of this collection was made possible through a grant from the Wellesley Community Preservation Committee.

Bibliographical Note

The Wellesley Village Improvement Association was referenced on at least two occasions in *The American City* as a model civic organization. See *The American City*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (September 1909), page 84; and Vol. 2, No.5 (May 1910), page 232; published New York City, NY by The American City Publishing Company, edited by Arthur Hastings Grant.

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Container List

I. Wellesley Village Improvement Association Records

This series contains materials pertaining to the business of the Wellesley Village Improvement Association; they date from 1905-1958, with the bulk falling in the 1905-1927 date range. The materials include four bound record books as well as related correspondence and other business materials, including bank records and membership items. There are several newspaper clippings, which have been reproduced for preservation purposes. The record books contain secretary reports, membership lists, treasurer's accounts, correspondence, and other business. The first three volumes are secretary's record books; the fourth is the treasurer's account book. Folders of associated materials contain items which were either separate from the record books, or were stored within them.

Box 1

- Folder 1: Records 1905-1911 (Hardbound record book)
- Folder 2: Records 1911-1919 (Hardbound record book)
- Folder 3: Records 1919-1926 (Hardbound record book)
- Folder 4: Account book, 1916-1958

Box 2

- Folder 1: Membership cards and applications, 1922 (blank)
- Folder 2: Membership lists, 1912 and 1921
- Folder 3: Business papers and correspondence, 1915-1941
- Folder 4: Newspaper clippings, 1939
- Folder 5: Dissolution papers and bank records, 1956-1958

II. Wellesley Fells Improvement Society Records

This series contains the records of the Wellesley Fells Improvement Society. The materials include three bound record books, one softcover (1912-1918), and two hardcover (1922-1926 and 1926-1929); there are no records for 1919-1921. The records contain membership lists, dues accounts, meeting minutes, officer lists, and committee appointments, as well as other related business.

Box 2

- Folder 6: 1912-1918 (Bound softcover record book)
- Folder 7: 1922-1926 (Hardbound record book)

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Folder 8: 1926-1929 (Hardbound record book)

***III.* Hills and Falls Village Improvement Society of Wellesley, 1906 Constitution**

This series contains one item, a 1906 booklet that lists the officers and committees for 1906, as well as the Constitution of the organization and an outline of its purpose and ideology.

Box 2

Folder 9: Constitution, 1906