

Parents and Teachers Association Mothers' Club of South Windsor records 1990.10

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Friends of Wood Memorial Library and Museum

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Summary Information

Repository:	Friends of Wood Memorial Library and Museum
Creator:	Parents and Teachers Association Mothers' Club of South Windsor
Title:	Parents and Teachers Association Mothers' Club of South Windsor records
ID:	1990.10
Date [inclusive]:	1913-1942
Physical Description:	0.417 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	The Mothers' Club of South Windsor had been formed by 1910 as a part of the National Congress of Mothers, which was organized in 1908. In 1929, it reorganized as a parents and teachers association (PTA). The records consist of one Hollinger box containing three notebooks and spanning the years 1913 to 1942. Arranged chronologically, the notebooks contain records of the clubs' secretaries including minutes of regular and special meetings, annual reports, and various committee reports. They provide information on the organizations' structure, policies, members, programs, and fund-raising and charitable activities.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Parents and Teachers Association Mothers' Club of South Windsor records (1990.10), Wood Memorial Library and Museum, South Windsor, CT.

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Biographical / Historical

The Mothers' Club of South Windsor had been formed by 1910 as a part of the National Congress of Mothers, which was organized in 1908. The goals were similar to those of the national Parents and Teachers Association, which was founded in 1897: promote the welfare

of children, raise standards of home life, secure adequate laws for the care and protection of youth, and foster closer relations between school and home.

Meetings were generally held in various members' homes or at Town Hall during the school year. Officers and an executive committee were elected each June to serve during the following school year. In 1913 afternoon meetings were changed from the second Tuesday of each month to the third Friday. Programs frequently featured school officials or other speakers who presented topics related to school or children. The meetings were usually followed by a social period, often consisting of readings or music and, sometimes, performed by school children.

Officers included a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, three-member executive committee, five member entertainment committee, and three-member nominating committee. Other committees were formed for special functions as needed. The officers, frequently participated in state and national activities of the Mothers Club. A 1914 report indicates 21 charter members, 25 members, and 9 honorary members. For the first time, teachers and the school superintendent were honorary members.

Funds were raised by a variety of activities, including the sale of aprons, cakes, and candy. In December 1913, dues were increased to 25 cents per member, the 15 cents used locally and 10 cents going to state and national fees. At the time, members also voted to donate \$25 to each school in the Union District for the purchase of playground equipment.

Other projects sponsored in the early years included holiday programs for school children, paying school boys for janitorial services, picnics, fall receptions for teachers, purchase of a stove and utensils for the Town Hall Meeting room, establishing a reading room for children at the Wood Memorial Library, arranging for instruction in dance and gymnastics, and the purchase of school equipment such as movie screen, piano, sewing machine, and classroom pictures.

Members also pushed for improvements in the schools. In 1913 they asked school officials to provide paper cups, towels and toilet paper and to correct the deficient water supply to the girls' bathroom at Union School. They also asked for better janitorial services and for teacher supervision of students during lunch.

A January 1915 open meeting attracted 75 people. The session, at Town Hall, included a review of club activities for the previous three years, a music program, and an address by the president of the Connecticut Congress of Mothers. Later that year, members supported state petitions for a Mothers' Pension Bill and a Reformatory for Women. New by-laws stated the group's main objectives as establishing closer relations between home and school and more cooperation between parents and teachers or the education of children.

During World War I, members set up a relief committee to help families of the poor and of those serving in the military. A child welfare committee helped families obtain food and medicine for children. Some regular meetings were devoted to Red Cross work, and members also sponsored clothing collections.

In November 1919, the Mothers' Club purchased supplies and arranged for the opening of a soup kitchen at the Union School, with older girls assisting the operation as part of their domestic science training. For the next several years, the soup kitchen or lunch room was generally run by the club, sometimes at a loss and sometimes for only parts of the school year. For 1923-24, the kitchen operated 54 days, had receipts of \$113.88 and expenses of \$109.78. Membership had grown to 90, and the average attendance at meetings was 25.

When the school board decided to drop cooking and sewing courses in 1921, the Mothers' Club strongly opposed it. When members agreed to pay the \$4 for one day of instruction per week, the program was continued. In 1923, the club paid \$8.50 per day for instructing boys in two grads in manual training once a week. Both programs were similarly supported for several years.

The National Congress of Mothers merged with the Parents and Teachers Association in 1925. Some local members favored switching to a PTA, but no action was taken until the executive committee voted against the change in January 1928. In May 1929, however, members voted for the change at their annual meeting.

The first meeting of the newly organized PTA was held October 28, 1929 at Wood Library. Dues were set at 25 cents and meetings on the second Thursday of each month. Mrs. Jeremiah McGrath was the first president. Meeting programs continued to include speakers, teas, and some events with children, mostly in the afternoons.

During the early 1930's the club started using canned soup in the lunchroom, providing it free for those unable to pay. A dental clinic was also established. Plays, basketball games, bridge and whist parties, and weekly dances joined apron sales as top fund raisers. Regular meetings were switched to evenings. At a March 1932 meeting, the Northern Connecticut Light and Power Co. gave a cooking demonstration with the recently introduced electric range and displayed electric heaters and refrigerators.

In November 1932, the executive committee agreed to a request by selectmen to take charge of the Red Cross project of sewing clothing for the unemployed. A May 1935 report indicated 3371 lunches served for the year, 470 being free; some donations of food were made by townspeople to keep the charge at 10 cents.

Club records also reflect changes in the schools. At a March 1936 meeting, School Supt. Dunfield outlined plans for new high school. Movies, especially documentaries, were shown at several meetings for program, and some were sponsored for the public. In 1940, members voted to buy a radio and movie projector "not to exceed \$100 together" for the Union School, as well a new piano (the \$295 cost to be split with the Wednesday Club), a new gas stove and electric refrigerator.

In November 1941, the PTA joined the Defense Council in a World War II rally here with local musicians and a speech by Mrs. Chase Going Wood house, Secretary of State. The war, particularly the cut back in tires and gasoline, reduced the popularity of the weekly dances. Members in 1942 volunteered to help statewide registration of women for defense work. A

year later, they turned down a suggestion to discontinue regular meetings because of the war, but attendance and membership declined.

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Scope and Contents

The Parents and Teachers Association Mothers' Club of South Windsor records consist of one Hollinger box containing three notebooks and spanning the years 1913 to 1942.

Arranged chronologically, the notebooks contain records of the clubs' secretaries including minutes of regular and special meetings, annual reports, and various committee reports. They provide information on the organizations' structure, policies, members, programs, and fund-raising and charitable activities.

The Mothers' Club was formed by 1910, but the earliest records are missing. In 1925, the National Congress of Mothers groups merged with the Parents and Teachers Association, and the local club was reorganized as a PTA in 1929.

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