

Finding Aid to the Martha's Vineyard Museum
Record Unit 389
Martha's Vineyard Neighborhood Convention 1894-1994
By Zachary Gerson-Nieder

Descriptive Summary

Repository: Martha's Vineyard Museum

Call No.

Title: Neighborhood Convention, 1894-1994

Creator: various

Quantity: .75 cubic foot

Abstract: This collection relates to the Martha's Vineyard Neighborhood Convention, an interfaith monthly gathering. The collection ranges from documents marking the organization's founding in 1894 through to its centennial in 1994. However, the bulk of the collection contains detailed minutes from its monthly gatherings, assorted programs from its meetings [1894-1954], presentations, and newspaper clippings.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information: The Martha's Vineyard Neighborhood Convention collection was acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum by various donors throughout the 20th century.

Processing Information: Zachary Gerson-Nieder

Access Restrictions: none

Use Restrictions: none

Preferred Citation for Publication: Martha's Vineyard Museum, Martha's Vineyard Neighborhood Convention, Record Unit 389.

Index Terms

- Neighborhood Convention
- North Tisbury Baptist Church
- Reverend Willard Packard
- Interdenominational

Series and Subseries Arrangement

Series I: Record Books

 Subseries A: Bound

 Subseries B: Unbound

Series II: Assorted loose documents from Record Books

Series III: Programs

Series IV: Presentations

Series V: Newspaper Clippings

Historical Note:

The Neighborhood Convention was founded in 1894 as an interfaith gathering of laity and clergy which encompassed the protestant churches of the Island. Its goal was to broach the divide between the various Protestant congregations. The founder of the Convention was Reverend Willard Packard. The first meeting was held amongst his congregation at the North Tisbury Baptist Church in November 1894.

The monthly gatherings moved from church to church across the Island. The earliest meetings were day-long affairs. A series of pastors and churchgoers would give sermons and presentations. Most speakers were from the local Island congregations; however, some participants came from off-island. One of the most popular speakers was the Reverend Oscar Denniston, an African-American reverend. While early records show limited finances, by the 1940's and 1950's the Neighborhood Convention began donating to local and national charities. By mid-century the organization began to reach-out to non-Protestant congregations on the Vineyard. However, by 1954, Protestant churches were still the sole members of the Convention. The organization continued to champion progressive issues, such as civil rights and the fight against anti-Semitism. The Convention continues in existence as the oldest interdenominational group on the Island up to the present day, and in 1994 it had eighteen member congregations.

Scope and Content Note:

The majority of this collection is a series of detailed logs (1894-1955) containing the minutes of the monthly gatherings. These logs also contain financial statements, as well as assorted programs, newspaper clippings, and letters. Loose programs and clippings have been removed and organized separately. In addition, there are other programs, 50 and 100 year celebratory reports, newspaper clippings, and various presentations.

Series Descriptions:

Series I: Record Books

Subseries A: Bound

Box 1 of 2

Folder 1: Record Book, 1894-1905

Folder 2: Record Book, 1923-27

Folder 3: Record Book, 1935-38

Folder 4: Record Book, 1938-41

Folder 5: Record Book, 1942-54

Box 2 of 2
Folder 6: Record Book, 1954-55

Subseries B: Unbound

Box 2 of 2
Folder 7: Records, 1930-1933

Series II: Assorted Loose Documents from Record Books

Box 2 of 2
Folder 8: Assorted Documents, 1894-1905
Folder 9: Assorted Documents, 1923-27
Folder 10: Assorted Documents, 1935-38
Folder 11: Assorted Documents, 1938-41
Folder 12: Assorted Documents, 1942-54
Folder 13: Assorted Documents, 1954-55

Series III: Programs

Box 2 of 2
Folder 14: Miscellaneous Programs, 1897-1927

Series IV: Presentations

Box 2 of 2
Folder 15: 'Luke and his Gospel', December 3, 1930
Folder 16: 50th and 100th year celebrations of the Neighborhood Convention; November 1944 & November 1994

Series V: Newspaper Clippings

Box 2 of 2
Folder 17: New Bedford Standard, October 6, 1896
Folder 18: Assorted Vineyard Gazette Articles, 'What to Read' April 8 & 15, 1919; May 7, 1934