

**The Prospect Union/Educational Exchange
of Greater Boston, Inc.
Collection**

**Donated to
The Cambridge Historical Commission
by
Dr. Earl Perry Lions
1990**

.5 linear feet

Prepared by
H. Alice Dodds
2008

Cambridge Historical Commission
831 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Prospect Union/Educational Exchange Of Greater Boston, Inc.

Description

The Prospect Union Educational Exchange Collection was donated to the Cambridge Historical Commission in 1990 by Dr. Earl Perry Lions, brother of Ms. Zelda Lions (Mrs. Jason Solomont), the long time Executive Director of the Exchange, after her death in 1988.

This collection gives an overview of the establishment in 1891 of the Prospect Union; its teaching services to the Cambridge working community; its evolution in 1923 from a teaching to an educational guidance center, known as the Prospect Union Educational Exchange, and; the complete change of its name in 1964 to the Educational Exchange of Greater Boston, Inc.

Between 1923 and 1988, this organization, despite its changing name, provided the same two essential services to the Greater Boston area: the counseling and guidance of individuals interested in taking day or evening adult education courses and the annual publication of “Educational Opportunities of Greater Boston,” which listed thousands of adult education courses.

The Educational Exchange terminated its activities in 1988, and its functions were absorbed by other Boston area organizations.

Series

Series I – Founders

The Reverend Robert Erskine Ely, a Congregational minister, and Francis Greenwood Peabody, a Harvard Professor, founded the Prospect Union. It was hoped by doing so to ameliorate the 19th century tensions between the Cambridge elite and the ever growing immigrant population, and also to offset the organizing power of labor unions. These materials include articles written by Reverend Ely and Professor Peabody, photographs of the two men, and a photocopy of a plaque done by Zelda Lions of the bust of Professor Peabody.

Series II – Zelda Lions (Mrs. Jason Solomont)

Ms. Lions worked at the Prospect Union Educational Exchange from 1923 to 1988, sixty-five years of dedicated service. These materials contain brief biographical information, her letter requesting a change of her title, certificates of membership, and two articles of her authorship. Ms. Lions saw the organization through multiple moves, supervised its ever changing staff and volunteers, counseled thousands of prospective students, and each year prepared the “bible” of the Boston area adult education world, “Educational

Opportunities of Greater Boston.” Michael Shinagel, President of the Educational Exchange in the 1980s, wrote, “Zelda rightly regarded her publication as a service to the city and all its residents.” It was upon the death of Ms. Lions in 1988, at age 85, that the organization closed its doors.

Series III -- Annual Reports

Ms. Lions was the mainstay of the organization, and these annual report reflect her personal flavor. Three or four marginally paid staff members and a team of volunteers assisted, but she herself carried major responsibility for the work. Simply prepared, these reports relate many stories of individuals assisted, record information about the staff, volunteers, trustees, and others, quote laudatory letters and comments received about the organization’s work, and include annual financial statements.

Series IV – Clippings

These six clippings are spaced to tell the story of the Prospect Union Educational Exchange from the 1891 to 1965.

Series V – Photographs

The photographs of the founders, Reverend Ely and Professor Peabody, can be found in Series I. Of the seven large portraits included in this series, only three are identified and all are undated. Twenty small photographs show unidentified groups. None are dated. The only woman pictured may be Zelda Lions.

Series VI – Publications

Articles written by Reverend Ely and Professor Peabody are included in Series I, and those by Zelda Lions in Series II. Of the four articles in this Series, David Potter’s, “The Prospect Union: A Conservative Quest for Social Justice,” written in 1962, gives a broad discussion of the organization’s early counterparts and its social, historical and economic context.

Folder List

Series I – Founders

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Ely, Robert Erskine, “The Prospect Union” | c 1900 |
| 2. Ely, Robert Erskine, Photographs (2) | 1945 |
| 3. Peabody, Francis Greenwood, Correspondence | 1925 |
| 4. Peabody, Francis Greenwood, “The Prospect Union:
Its Past and Future” | 1923 |
| 5. Peabody, Francis Greenwood, photocopy of bust | 1934 |
| 6. Peabody, Francis Greenwood, photograph | undated |

Series II – Zelda Lions

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 7. Biographical materials | undated, 2007,
2007, 2008 |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 8. Certificates | 1949, 1963 |
| 9. Letters of commendation | 1936/37, 1983 |
| 10. Letter re job title | undated |
| 11. Photograph | c 1930 |
| 12. Publication, "A Unique Social Agency" | 1960 |
| 13. Publication, "The Prospect Union Educational Exchange" | 1930 |

Series III – Annual Reprts

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 14. "Report for Annual Meeting" | Jan. 17, 1958 |
| 15. "Report for The Annual Meeting" | Jan. 22, 1961 |
| 16. "39 th Annual Report" | Jan. 18, 1963 |
| 17. "Report of The Annual Meeting" | Jan. 22, 1965 |

Clippings – Series IV

18. Seven clippings

Photographs – Series V

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 19. Alport, Gordon W. | undated |
| 20. Einssfor, Rev. | undated |
| 21. Hieley, Rev. Augustus | undated |
| 22. Unidentified men, four | undated |
| 23. Small photographs of unidentified groups, twenty | undated |

Series VI --Publications

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 24. "The Prospect Union: 1891-1899" | 1899 |
| 25. "Cambridge Vocational Counseling" | undated |
| 26. "Handbook of Settlements" (excerpt on the Prospect Union) | 1911 |
| 27. "The Prospect Union: A Conservative Quest for Social Justice," Potts, David B. | 1962 |

Objects Included in This Collection

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. Plaque of bust of Francis G. Peabody
by Zelda Lions, undated | Located in CHC storage area |
| 2. Plaque of bust of Professor James Ford
by Zelda Lions, undated | Located in CHC storage area |

Materials and Objects Missing from the Collection

The following items listed in the original inventory are now missing from the collection.

1. Three returned checks
2. One letter (of two) from Zelda Lions re her job title
3. Three (of four) copies of a pamphlet, "Vocational Counseling"

4. Annual Report for 1954
5. Thirty-two page list of agencies compiled in 1976
6. 65th edition of "Educational Opportunities of Greater Boston"
7. Three photographs
 - George Bancroft
 - Walter F. Edwards
 - M. Lowell

The following objects listed in the original inventory are now missing from the collection.

1. Framed letter from Governor Channing Cox
2. Map of Cambridge c1949

Related Materials

The materials related to this collection are available from several sources, as listed below. They have been photocopied and included with the collection.

1. Widener Library, Harvard University, "Cambridge Magazine," Cambridge. Mass
 - EducP 125.3
 - "The Prospect Union" Feb., 1986
 - "The Prospect Union" Feb., 1986
 - "The Prospect Union" Mar. 1896
 - "The Prospect Union" May, 1896
2. Article by Rev. Louis F. Berry, "The Prospect Union at Harvard"
 - in Outlook Nov. 18, 1899
3. "The Boston Globe," two electronic items 1983, 1988
4. "The Cambridge Chronicle," clipping, photograph of Prospect Union Hall undated
5. Sullivan, Charles, e-mail c. 2008

Return to CHC Collections home:

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/researchaids/archivalcollections>