

MARTIN LUTHER ORPHAN'S HOME (1871-1945)

Records, 1887 - 1915

Charities Collection - CC 2

1 manuscript container	Processed March 1993 by Sheri Kelley
2.5 linear inches	Supervising Archivists:
Accession number: 93.003	Megan Sniffin-Marinoff and Peter Carini

ACQUISITION: In 1911 the Boston Children's Aid Society gave its entire library to the Simmons College School of Social Work Library. This library included the annual reports of many local and international welfare and charitable organizations. With the passage of time this collection took on historical significance and in 1991 it was transferred to the Simmons College Archives.

As part of donations in 1988 and 1989, Donald Moreland, a local social work administrator and collector of social work history, gave the Simmons College Archives a large number of annual reports, pamphlets and other materials related to various welfare and charitable organizations. With neither of these donations a discrete collection, the materials transferred in 1991 from the School of Social Work Library and the related materials donated by Donald Moreland were combined to form the Charities Collection. The Simmons College Archives Charities Collection consists of numerous small collections. Accession numbers for the individual collections are assigned during processing.

ACCESS: Unrestricted.

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HISTORY:

In March 1871, the Association of the Evangelical Lutheran Church for Works of Mercy was chartered to operate the Martin Luther Orphan's Home. Its members were the German Lutheran parishes of Boston. The idea for an orphan's home did not originate from pastoral leadership but rather from a Roxbury parishioner named Gottlieb Burkhardt (BG). BG was a German immigrant who made a vow, upon reaching America, that if he became wealthy he would distribute "God's" wealth to the poor. When his Roxbury brewery started making money he began to help his neighbors and fellow parishioners under the guidance of Pastor Otto Hanser (OH). In 1869, OH and BG took three orphaned children from Roxbury to a new orphanage in Mt. Vernon, New York. The

orphanage was one of several managed by the Rev. William Passavant of Pittsburgh. BG was so impressed that he called on Passavant to help him organize an orphanage in Boston. On Nov. 10, 1870 Passavant and the Boston pastors met with BG to survey several sites of land and form an association. Brook Farm, once the site of a famous utopian transcendentalist community, was soon chosen as the optimum site and BG bought the land with a partial mortgage. After time was allowed for "God to show that His will lay behind the institution," the Home was dedicated on October 3, 1872 .

The mission of the home was to raise orphans and half-orphans in a Lutheran home where they would learn the "true Word of God" and be confirmed in the Lutheran Church. They received mainly half-orphan children from destitute Lutheran families, although they did receive Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant children at various times. BG and his followers their duty was to rescue orphan children who might otherwise grow up without a proper Lutheran education. Boys were trained on the farm and girls were trained in the domestic arts. Later, they also emphasized the apprenticeship of their orphan boys either in their print shop, founded in 1890, or with local tradesmen. They ran a farm and a cemetery according to BG's wishes and also cared for one or two indigent elderly persons from time to time. The Home operated until 1945 when it was shut down due to a negative evaluation of its effectiveness by an independent Lutheran charity board.

All information is taken from an undergraduate paper by Harvard University student, James Richardson entitled "A Brief History of the Origin and Mission of The Martin Luther Orphans' Home (Das Martin Luther Waisenhaus)," Cambridge, 1993.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:

The Martin Luther Orphan's Home records, 1887 - 1915 (with gaps), are printed in German and arranged chronologically. The annual reports for 1887 and 1889 include translations of the introductions. The three translations contain information about the education of the orphans by the home. A description of classes is included, and the number of children taken in and returned to their parents is discussed.

All of the annual reports include a list of the children in the orphanage for each year, a list of donors and the amount of their donations, and a financial report of credits and expenses. It should be noted that the financial information in each report is printed in German and English.

CONTAINER LIST:

BOX	FOLDER	CONTENTS
SERIES I: ANNUAL REPORTS		
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	2	1889 (Report and partial translation)

3	1890
4	1891
5	1894
6	1895
7	1897
8	1898
9	1901
10	1903
11	1904
12	1906
13	1909
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16	1915