

Boston Children's Friend Society

Papers, 1837 - 1954 (with gaps)

Charities Collection - CC 10

1 manuscript container	Processed June 1995 by Frances Overcash
5 linear inches	Supervising Archivist: Peter Carini
Accession numbers: 78.023, 81.010	

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 worker 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. Because neither of these donations is a discrete collection, the materials transferred in 1991 from the School of Social Work Library and 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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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY:

The Boston Children's Friend Society (BCFS) was founded in 1833, to provide a home for orphaned and neglected children. At the time, there were already two orphan homes in Boston, one for boys and one for girls, but neither of these homes allowed brothers and sisters to stay together or provided care for neglected rather than orphaned children.

The first wards of the BCFS, three little girls "found in poverty," came to the Society in 1833. These children occupied the first "home," an old building on Sheafe Street given to the Society by the owner. In the first year, however, the number of children grew from

three to twenty-nine and the Society changed residences several times during the subsequent years as the number of children continued to grow.

The Society received a land grant from the city of Boston in 1845, for the property at 48 Rutland Street upon which the Society built an \$18,000 brick building. By 1885, the Society had already outgrown this building, and as a result the Society decided to receive only girls and small boys under the age of five at the Rutland Street home. In 1886, a home surrounded by eight acres of land was purchased in Dedham and was used to house the older boys.

The Society not only cared for the children but also provided them with instruction in general education and religion. When the children were old enough they were given practical training in the manual arts; domestic for girls, carpentry and printing for boys. Certain older boys and girls were also apprenticed or indentured to local families.

The Home was maintained with funds received from some parents whose children were in the custody of the Society and from the community. A bequest in 1850, from the estate of the Count of Rumford, established the Rumford Fund for the Care of Orphaned Children and helped to further endow the Society. During this time the numbers of immigrants in Boston grew rapidly. In response to the subsequent increase in destitute and neglected children, the Society broadened its policies in 1850, to admit poverty-stricken foreign born children.

A new General Secretary of the Society, Sherman Kingsley, was appointed in 1900. Kingsley was instrumental in implementing a program to find individual homes in rural and suburban districts for the children. Kingsley believed that normal children should grow up in a family not an institution. During Kingsley's tenure the financial income of the Society also greatly increased. The Orphan's Home was abandoned, and with the children being placed in foster care, the Society was able to care for more children, eventually taking in Roman Catholics and non-Christians as well. The Society was also influential in proposing laws to protect illegitimate children and children exploited by industry. One such law provided public assistance for single women with dependent children and another proposed to hold the fathers of illegitimate children liable for the child's support. A third law, the Uniform Child-Labor Law, was enacted by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1913.

Since 1949, the Society has been acting exclusively as an adoption agency although adoption has been part of its work since the first adoption laws were enacted in Massachusetts shortly after the Civil War. In 1958, the BCFS merged with the Boston Children's Aid Society.

All information taken from "*Boston Children's Friend Society: 1833-1933*" 1933, Boston Children's Friend Society, and the Boston Children's Friend Society Eightieth Annual Report, 1913.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:

The papers of the Boston Children's Friend Society (1837-1954) constitute 5 linear inches with the majority of the records falling between 1837 and 1900. The records, divided into four series, consist of records of donations, annual reports and a minute book.

The first series contains the first record book of the Society's Board meetings, October 8, 1841 - September 4, 1846. An account of the daily workings of the Society can be found in the minutes along with the names of Society members and some information on the children housed at the institution. The cover and first eighteen pages of the minute book, however, are missing. The annual reports, 1837-1954 (with gaps), comprise the second series. These reports contain such information as the constitution, list of members and donations and the treasurer's report. The reports also include a statement by the corresponding secretary on the activities of the Society and many of the later reports offer sketches of children the Society has helped. The third series is composed of publications such as "Boston Children's Friend Society: 1833-1933," which provides a detailed history of the Society. Also included, is a discourse on the care of the poor delivered before the Society in 1837. Account books, 1859-1886, containing the names of donors and the amount of their donations make up the fourth series. The Society received donations not only of money but also of food, clothing, medicine, toys, books and furniture.

SERIES LISTING:

I.	Minute Books
II.	Annual Reports
III.	Publications
IV.	Account Books

CONTAINER LIST:

Box	Folder	
		<u>Series I: Minute Books</u>
1	1	October 8, 1841 - September 4, 1846
		<u>Series II: Annual Reports</u>
	2	1843 1874 1900
	3	1912-1913 1919
	4	1920-1921 1934-1935
	5	1936-1939 1945 1954
		<u>Series III: Publications</u>
	6	"Boston Children's Friend Society:

7	Discourse, 1837
	Series IV: Account Books
8	Appeal for funds
9	November 1859 - October 1878
10	1879-1880
11	1886, Volume 1
12	1886, Volume 2
13	1886, Volume 3
14	1886, Volume 4
15	1886, Volume 5