

The Filson Historical Society

**Rotary Club of Louisville
Records, 1912-2016**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, contact the Curator of Collections.

Size of Collection:
12 cubic feet

Location Number:
Mss. BM R842

Rotary Club of Louisville Records, 1912-2016

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of the records of the Rotary Club of Louisville, a service organization founded in 1912 with a membership drawn from local business and professional leaders. Included in the papers, dating from 1912-2016, are minute books, financial records, membership rosters, and *Sparks* newsletters. Records document the organizations and programs that the Rotary Club of Louisville helped to support with funds and volunteer service. They provide information about individual members and their businesses. The collection also details the meetings, dinners, and other events held to provide opportunities for club members to socialize and to develop business connections with each other.

Boxes 1-4 contain the minute books and other records of the Rotary Club of Louisville from 1912-2015. Box 4 includes the records of the Rotary Fund of Louisville, a nonprofit organization incorporated in 1951 to manage Rotary Club funds for educational and charitable purposes. Among the records of the Rotary Club and the Rotary Fund are Articles of Incorporation, original and amended versions of the by-laws, meeting minutes, financial statements, legal agreements, correspondence, and service project materials.

Box 5 contains the annual membership rosters for the Rotary Club of Louisville from 1912-2008. The bound rosters were distributed to members as a handbook, with lists of officers and committees, and a photographic image of and information about each member.

Boxes 6-12 contain the remaining annual membership rosters from 2008-2016 and the *Sparks* newsletters from 1913-2010. Initially the *Sparks* newsletters, distributed to club members, were published by the Rotary Club of Louisville every two weeks. In 1927, the Rotary Club began publishing the newsletters weekly. The newsletters contain information about Rotary Club meetings and service programs, members and their businesses, and details about upcoming social events. Each issue introduces the speaker and subject for the next meeting, such as a speaker on “The Red Menace” in the early 1920s, a female psychologist’s talk on “How to Manage a Woman – A Command Appearance for Your Secretary” in 1961, and a presentation by a Pan-African Studies professor in 2002. Local and state political candidates and office-holders also gave talks at club meetings. In addition, the newsletters include local advertisements. In 1987, issues of *Sparks* give updates on a California court case dealing with the question of whether the Rotary Club could exclude women from membership. After the case ends with the Supreme Court ruling that states could outlaw sex discrimination by all-male private clubs like the business-oriented Rotary Club, a *Sparks* issue from September 1987 welcomes Patricia W. Hart as the Louisville club’s first female member.

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Historical Note

The Rotary Club of Louisville was chartered on July 23, 1912, as a service organization of local business and professional leaders. The 40 charter members of the Rotary Club of Louisville became part of an international association of service clubs, all modeled after the first Rotary Club established in Chicago in 1905, and all allowing only men as members until 1987. Two mottoes for the association of Rotary Clubs were “He Profits Most Who Serves Best” and “Service above Self.” While the name Rotary Club referred to the practice of rotating weekly meetings among members’ places of business, the Louisville Rotarians settled into a pattern of meeting at the Brown Hotel by the mid-1920s. After the Brown Hotel closed in 1971 (it later reopened in 1985), the club held meetings in a variety of locations, such as the Holiday Inn on Zorn Avenue, Jim Porter’s Tavern, and Churchill Downs.

Like other Rotary Clubs, Louisville’s club focused on both fellowship and service. Louisville Rotarians began to publish a newsletter called *Sparks* for members in 1913, and they briefly broadcast a radio program in the early 1920s. Social events, such as dinners and baseball games, provided members opportunities to get to know each other and to develop business connections. Early service activities included a student loan fund for “worthy boys” at Male and Manual high schools, aid to residents in Louisville and eastern Kentucky during the 1937 Ohio River flood, and support for servicemen during World War II. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Louisville club expanded the reach of its service activities. It continued to focus on organizations and youth programs in Louisville but also contributed to Rotary International projects, such as efforts to eradicate polio and to redistribute surplus medical supplies from the United States to developing countries. When Rotary International opened membership to women in 1987, Patricia W. Hart, who had worked as executive director of the Louisville club, became Louisville’s first female member. As of 2018, the Rotary Club of Louisville is the 14th largest of the 34,000 Rotary Clubs around the world.

Sources:

Brief History of Rotary Club of Louisville, <http://www.louisvillerotary.org/history.php>

Rotary History, <http://www.clubrunner.ca/data/5050/html/1726/Rotary%20history.pdf>

**Rotary Club of Louisville
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Folder List

Box 1

Folder 1: Constitution and By-Laws, 1975-1993
Volume 2: Minute Book, February 1912-December 1914
Volume 3: Minute Book, January 1915-September 1916
Volume 4: Minute Book, October 1916-December 1917
Volume 5: Minute Book, January 1918-December 1919
Volume 6: Minute Book, January 1920-July 1921
Volume 7: Minute Book, August 1921-December 1922
Volume 8: Minute Book, January 1923-December 1924

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Volume 9: Minute Book, January 1925-December 1926
Volume 10: Minute Book, January 1927-December 1929
Volume 11: Minute Book, January 1930-June 1932
Volume 12: Minute Book, July 1932-May 1935
Volume 13: Minute Book, May 1935-April 1939
Volume 14: Minute Book, May 1939-November 1948

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Volume 15: Minute Book, December 1948-June 1954
Volume 16: Minute Book, July 1954-June 1960
Volume 17: Minute Book, May 1960-December 1967
Volume 18: Minute Book, January 1968-June 1973
Volume 19: Minute Book, July 1973-December 1978
Volume 20: Minute Book, January 1979-December 1985

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Volume 21: Minute Book, January 1986-June 1991
Volume 22: Minute Book, July 1991-June 1995
Volume 23: Minute Book, July 1995-June 1999
Volume 24: Minute Book, July 1999-June 2004
Folder 25: Rotary Fund Minutes and Records, December 1951-October 1965
Folder 26: Rotary Fund Minutes and Records, May 1966-June 1975
Volume 27: Rotary Fund Minute Book, October 1974-January 2009

Folder 28: Copies of Rotary Fund Minutes and Records, July 1953-April 1971, July 2014-January 2015

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Folder 29: Membership Rosters, 1912-1915
Folder 30: Membership Rosters, 1915-1918
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Folder 34: Membership Rosters, 1931-1935
Folder 35: Membership Rosters, 1935-1939
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Folder 37: Membership Rosters, 1943-1947
Folder 38: Membership Rosters, 1947-1951
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Volume 142: Sparks, June 2002-June 2003
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Volume 148: Sparks, June 2008-June 2009
Volume 149: Sparks, June 2009-June 2010

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Subject Headings

Boy Scouts of America – Kentucky.
Business enterprises – Kentucky – Louisville.
Businessmen – Kentucky – Louisville.
Businesswomen – Kentucky – Louisville.
Charities – Kentucky – Louisville.
Charitable contributions – Kentucky – Louisville.
Child Welfare – Kentucky – Louisville.
Clubs – Kentucky – Louisville.
Education – Kentucky – Louisville.
Louisville (Ky.) – History – 20th century.
Louisville (Ky.) – Social life and customs – 20th century.
Public health.
Rotary Fund of Louisville.