

The Filson Historical Society
Union Gospel Mission (Louisville, Ky.)
Records, 1886-1944

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

Size of Collection:
.5 cubic foot (in 1 cubic foot box)

Location Number:
Mss. BJ U58

**Union Gospel Mission (Louisville, Ky.)
Records, 1886-1944**

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of records of Louisville's Union Gospel Mission, an evangelical institution providing religious and social welfare services at 114 East Jefferson Street from 1886 to 1944. Records include board minutes, correspondence, legal documents, reports, financial records, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and paper photographic images.

Folders 1-3 contain legal documents and historical information relating to Union Gospel Mission. Legal documents for Union Gospel Mission include acts of incorporation, bylaws, and constitution from 1886, and a bill of sale between Union Gospel Mission and the Long Run Association of Baptists in 1943. There are copies of the 1936 will of Elizabeth M. Cardwell, former superintendent of Union Gospel Mission, and a 1937 inventory of her personal property. Historical materials include information about the mansion that later housed Union Gospel Mansion and the owners Benjamin and Irene Smith, as well as historical sketches of Union Gospel Mission written in the 1930s.

Folders 4-17 contain copies of board minutes, correspondence, and other administrative records. According to a historical note, board minutes from 1896 to 1906 are missing. Topics addressed by the board minutes and administrative records are funding and financial management of Union Gospel Mission, the provision of a wide range of religious and social services, the Mission's status as a member agency of the Community Chest from the 1910s until 1940, and the transference of the Mission's property to the Long Run Baptist Association in 1943.

Folders 18-20 contain published annual reports and pamphlets from 1900-1941 and miscellaneous materials and images. Publications provide information and images about the history, services, and staff of Union Gospel Mission. Miscellaneous materials relating to Union Gospel Mission include a 1919 advertisement for a revival at Union Gospel Mission, information about the Mission's Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1935 and other events in the late 1930s-1940, newspaper clippings about the Mission, and an account of a woman named Polly who found help at the Mission and became its housekeeper. Also of note is a Jefferson County Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) pamphlet, ca. 1930s.

Related collections:

Union Gospel Mission Photograph Collection, small groups file [999PC33]; subject photograph [CHW-57].

Maude M. Abner, *The Story of the Union Gospel Mission*, 1944 [266.6 A153].

Scrapbook of clippings on history, etc. of the Union Gospel Mission, Louisville, Kentucky [Mss. SB U58a].

Union Gospel Mission, *An Interdenominational Institution for Gospel City Mission Work* [Rare Pamphlet 266 U58 1925].

Union Gospel Mission, *Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Services of Mrs. Elizabeth M. Caldwell, Superintendent* [Rare Pamphlet 266 U58t 1928].

Adam Garland Winters, *Steve P. Holcombe and the Heritage of the Louisville Rescue Mission*, 2016 [266.6 W788].

Union Gospel Mission (Louisville, Ky.) Records, 1886-1944

Historical Note

Located at 114 E. Jefferson Street in Louisville, Kentucky, the Union Gospel Mission provided religious and social welfare services from 1886 to 1943. It grew out of the evangelical ministry of Rev. Steve P. Holcombe, a gambler turned Christian convert. Set up in a vacant store on Jefferson Street and supported by the Walnut Street Methodist Church, the Holcombe Mission went on to open an industrial school for boys, a kindergarten for children between the ages of three and five, and a “Wayfarer’s Rest” for men needing work, food, and lodging.

In 1885-1886, the Holcombe Mission was expanded and put under the control of a board of directors from the Evangelical Churches of Louisville, forming the Union Gospel Mission. The Union Gospel Mission purchased a 3-story, 21-room mansion that had been built around 1839-1842 and owned by Benjamin Smith. Its constitution outlined its purpose “to do general Gospel City Mission work, to teach the masses, and to provide for the want of those who need Christian encouragement and instruction.” Holcombe resigned as pastor from Union Gospel Mission in 1889 but returned as superintendent from 1895 to 1905.

Over the years, Union Gospel Mission conducted nightly gospel meetings, a Sunday school, educational classes, a job-finding service, a daily free medical clinic, and a Daily Vacation Bible School in the summer. Elizabeth Montgomery Cardwell became superintendent in 1906 after taking on the position of Holcombe’s assistant at Union Gospel Mission in 1903, a few years after the death of her husband. During her 26 years as superintendent, Cardwell shifted the focus of the Union Gospel Mission from rescue work for men to a Christian settlement for women and children. The Mission provided lodging and work for “stranded women and children,” a day nursery (started in 1907), a boarding home for “working girls” (started in 1917 at 103 E. Jefferson Street and closed in 1933), a Mother’s Club, and a large outdoor playground. Maude M. Abner took over superintendent after Caldwell’s resignation in 1932.

From 1917 through 1939, Union Gospel Mission received funding from the Community Chest and its predecessors the Louisville Federation of Social Agencies and the Welfare League. When Union Gospel Mission was dropped as a member agency of the Community Chest at the end of 1939, the Mission began looking for other forms of organizational support and funding. In 1943, the Union Gospel Mission transferred its property to the Long Run Baptist Association.

Sources:

Maude M. Abner, *The Story of the Union Gospel Mission*, 1944.

Adam Garland Winters, *Steve P. Holcombe and the Heritage of the Louisville Rescue Mission*, 2016.

**Union Gospel Mission (Louisville, Ky.)
Records, 1886-1944**

Folder List

Box 1

- Folder 1: Legal documents, 1886-1943
- Folder 2: Histories and historical materials, ca. 1920s-1930s
- Folder 3: Historical information copied in 1939
- Folder 4: Board minutes, 1885-1896
- Folder 5: Board minutes and correspondence, 1903, 1907-1909
- Folder 6: Board minutes and correspondence, 1910-1914
- Folder 7: Board minutes and correspondence, 1915-1919
- Folder 8: Board minutes and correspondence, 1920-1926
- Folder 9: Board minutes and correspondence, 1927-1930
- Folder 10: Board minutes and correspondence, 1931-1933
- Folder 11: Board minutes and correspondence, 1934-1935
- Folder 12: Board minutes and correspondence, 1936-1938
- Folder 13: Board minutes and correspondence, 1939
- Folder 14: Board minutes and correspondence, 1940
- Folder 15: Board minutes and correspondence, 1941-1942
- Folder 16: Board minutes and correspondence, 1943-1944
- Folder 17: Administrative reports and records, ca. 1908-1936
- Folder 18: Published annual reports and pamphlets, ca. 1908-1938
- Folder 19: Miscellaneous event and publicity materials, ca. 1919, 1934-1940
- Folder 20: Miscellaneous photographic images and news clippings, ca. 1900-1941

**Union Gospel Mission (Louisville, Ky.)
Records, 1886-1944**

Subject Headings

Cardwell, Elizabeth Montgomery, 1861-1937.
Charities – Kentucky – Louisville.
Children – Services for – Kentucky – Louisville.
Christianity – Relations – Judaism.
Community Chest (Louisville, Ky.)
Community health services – Kentucky – Louisville.
Depressions – 1929 – Kentucky – Louisville.
Evangelical church – Missions.
Evangelicalism – Kentucky – Louisville.
Faith-based human services – Kentucky – Louisville.
Family services – Kentucky – Louisville.
Flags – United States.
Flood damage – Kentucky – Louisville.
Floods – Ohio River Valley – History – 20th century.
Food banks – Kentucky – Louisville.
Fund raising – Kentucky – Louisville.
Historic buildings – Kentucky – Louisville.
Holcombe, Steve P., 1835-1916.
Juvenile delinquency.
Kindergarten – Kentucky.
Long Run Baptist Association.
Louisville (Ky.) – History.
Nursery schools – Kentucky – Louisville.
Sewing schools – Kentucky – Louisville.
Slavery – Mississippi.
Social settlements – Kentucky – Louisville.
Social work with children – Kentucky – Louisville.
Soup kitchens – Kentucky – Louisville.
Sunday schools – Kentucky – Louisville.
Woman's Christian Temperance Union.
Women – Services for – Kentucky – Louisville.
Young Women – Services for – Kentucky – Louisville.