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Guide to the Chicago Mechanics' Institute Records 1843-1941



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.CMI
Title	Chicago Mechanics' Institute. Records
Date	1843-1941
Size	6.25 linear feet (10boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	The Chicago Mechanics' Institute was chartered in 1843 to provide education to mechanics, apprentices, and other workingmen. The records contain correspondence concerning the Institute's educational activities, reports, minutes, membership lists, legal documents, financial records, and historical materials.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Chicago Mechanics' Institute. Records, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Historical Note

In 1843 the State of Illinois chartered the Chicago Mechanics' Institute, an organization devoted to providing a means of further education to "mechanics, apprentices" and other workingmen, with a view to "elevating their trade-and consequently the community-by elevating themselves." The organization flourished, building up a large membership and a large library; offered numerous lectures, and was soon expanding into larger quarters. In 1849, past President Azel Peck died, leaving a will in which he bequeathed one half the income of his real estate holdings to the Institute for the period of twenty-one years after his wife's death (Ann Peck died in 1866), following which the whole fee would devolve upon it. The use of the money was specifically directed to "the education of poor apprentices and the support of widows and children of indigent artisans and mechanics in Chicago."

Three events, however, were to set back, and almost destroy the Institute. The great financial crisis of 1857 forced the Institute to retrench; the Civil War scattered its membership; and the great Chicago fire of 1871 completed the destruction of assets and property, and dispersal of membership. Beginning in 1875 the Institute began the task of rebuilding.

The Chicago Mechanics' Institute had seventy-six students in 1890, and continued to grow. That year it also offered ten lectures on electricity and chemistry that were well attended with an average of 142 persons. By 1912, the institute had grown to 1,286 students. In a few years, the CMI offered courses on bookkeeping, shorthand, drawing, mathematics, phonography, grammar, and typewriting. It also had agreements with other schools to allow their pupils to enroll in programs they were not able to offer. In most successful cases, the institute was able to place students in jobs immediately after their training.

The Chicago Mechanics' Institute also came to recognize the importance of having skilled laborers for international competition. In 1913, a CMI pamphlet noted, "The paternal governments of Europe are doing for our competitors across the Atlantic what must be done here by the efforts of our citizens," they went on to explain, "namely, the establishment of schools of engineering and industrial art and museums, at the industrial centres; the arranging of frequent lectures on subjects of natural science, chemistry and architecture, and placing the standard works on kindred subjects within easy reach" (Box 1, folder 11). Above all, the institute valued providing an industrial education to the people of Chicago.

Scope Note

The Chicago Mechanics' Institute Records document the organization's activities and operations from 1843 to 1941. They are organized into five series: Series I: General Records; Series II: Artifacts and Photographs; Series III: Students; Series IV: Board of Directors; and Series V: Finances. Included in this collection are historical materials, legal documents, minutes of meetings, membership lists, financial records, and correspondence concerning the institute's educational activities.

Series I, General Records, contains some of the earliest documents from the Chicago Mechanic's Institute including the act of incorporation, Azel Peck's will, by-laws, pamphlets, and general letters sent to the institute.

Series II, Artifacts and Photographs, contains a half-tone cut and two photographs of Canal Street, as well as a publication that includes the designs of Jonathan Clark's Metal Worker's Building.

Series III, Student Records, contains records of admissions, student registrations, classes students enrolled, graded received, payments, as well as scholarships some student received.

The first subseries, General Student Records, contain students registered, payments, and final grades. It also contains receipts of charges made to the Chicago Business College for their payment of student's enrollment in courses at the Chicago Mechanics' Institute from 1917 to 1933. It also contains documents from the Children's Scholarship League that paid the cost for several students to attend the school from 1931 to 1940. The latter documents describe student's families, financial difficulties, and their academic performance.

The second subseries contain Vouchers that were paid by the Chicago Business College and the Children's Scholarship League for students to attend the institute from 1919 to 1941. It also contains deposits statements and other financial investments of the institute.

Series IV, Board of Directors, contains a list of board members, financial information, and minutes of meetings.

The first subseries, General, contains lists of Board Members, applications for life time memberships, and reports sent to the Board from 1873 to 1923.

The second subseries, Minutes of Meetings, contains minutes of meetings from 1875 to 1914. The minutes from 1875 to 1888 are hand written, and starting in 1889 most of the minutes are typed. It also contains information regarding properties that the institute owned that the institute received from Azel Peck's will.

Series V, Finances, contains financial information from 1867 to 1941 in the form of receipts, checkbook stubs, statements, and notebooks.

The first subseries, General Finances, contain a tax abstract, treasurer's reports, a cash book, and financial statements.

The second subseries contains Checkbook Stubs from 1893 to 1938.

The third subseries contains Receipts from 1900 to 1909.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Subject Headings

- Chicago Mechanics' Institute
- Trade schools -- Illinois -- Chicago
- Apprenticeship programs -- Illinois -- Chicago
-
-
-
-

INVENTORY

Series I: General Records

Box 1

Folder 1

Act of Incorporation, State of Illinois, 1843

Box 1

Folder 2

Azel Peck's Will, 1854

Box 1

Folder 3

Lease to John Clark, 1888

Box 1

Folder 4

Suit Claims, 1889-1908

Box 1

Folder 5

Examination of deed, David L. Zook, 1893

Box 1

Folder 6

Pamphlet, The Columbian Trade and Business School, 1904

Box 1

Folder 7

Petition for new constitution and by-laws, 1907

Box 1

Folder 8

Documents from 1910

Box 1

Folder 9

By-laws, 1913

Box 1

Folder 10

News Clippings, 1913-1938

Box 1

Folder 11

Pamphlet, The Chicago Mechanics Institute, 1913

Box 1

Folder 12

Miscellaneous forms and copies, c. 1920s

Box 1

Folder 13

Letters of Appreciation, 1921-1931

Box 1

Folder 14

Liverpool and London and Globe Insurance, inquiry about name, c. 1930

Box 1

Folder 15

Ohio Mechanics Institute, 1934-1935

Box 1

Folder 16

Inquiry about filing annual reports, 1936

Series II: Artifacts and Photographs

Box 1

Folder 17

Half-tone cut of southwest corner of Clark and Washington, 1858

Box 1

Folder 18

Canal Street looking southwest from Washington Street, no date

Box 1

Folder 19

Canal Street looking east from Madison Street, no date

Box 2

Folder 1

Jonathan Clark's Metal Worker's Building, blueprint of the building, Nos. 43 to 49 Canal Street, Chicago, no date

Series III: Student Records

Subseries 1: General Student Records, 1874-1940

Box 2

Folder 2

Pupils register (inclusive), 1874-1889

Box 3

Pupils name cards (inclusive), 1876-1911

Box 4

Folder 1

Pupils and Tuition, 1889-1905

Box 4

Folder 2

Student's receipt book, 1890-1895

Box 4

Folder 3

Student's receipt book, 1895-1901

Box 4

Folder 4

Record of student's courses and hours, 1901-1904

Box 4

Folder 5

Notes inside the Record of student's courses and hours, 1901-1904

Box 4

Folder 6

Admission receipt book, 1904-1911

Box 5

Folder 1

Chicago Business College, 1917-1933

Box 5

Folder 2

Children's Scholarship League, 1931-1934

Box 5

Folder 3

Children's Scholarship League, 1935-1940

Subseries 2: Vouchers, 1919-1941

Box 5

Folder 4

1919-1920

Box 5

Folder 5

1930-1931

Box 5

Folder 6

1934

Box 5

Folder 7

1935

Box 5

Folder 8

1936

Box 5

Folder 9

1937

Box 5

Folder 10

1938

Box 5
Folder 11
1939-1941

Series IV: Board of Directors

Subseries 1: General, 1873-1923

Box 6
Folder 1
List of Board Members, 1873-1883

Box 6
Folder 2
Membership book, 1891-1907

Box 6
Folder 3
Applications for life membership, 1909

Box 6
Folder 4
Reports to the Board, 1875-1887

Box 6
Folder 5
Finances, 1893

Box 6
Folder 6
Finances, 1923

Subseries 2: Minutes of Meetings, 1875-1914

Box 6
Folder 7
1875-1888

Box 6
Folder 8-9
1889-1895

Box 7
Folder 1-2
1895-1906

Box 7
Folder 3-4
1907-1914

Series V: Finances

Subseries 1: General Finances, 1867-1941

Box 8
Folder 1
Financial Statements, 1867-1880

Box 8

Folder 2

Tax Abstract, 1868-1875

Box 8

Folder 3

Treasurer's Reports, 1875-1899

Box 8

Folder 4

Treasurer's Reports, 1900-1907

Box 8

Folder 5

Cash book, 1907-1926

Box 8

Folder 6

Papers inside cash book, 1907-1926

Box 8

Folder 7

Treasurer's account book, 1919-1941

Subseries 2: Checkbook Stubs, 1893-1938

Box 8

Folder 8

1893-1909

Box 8

Folder 9

1916-1923

Box 9

Folder 1

1924-1930

Box 9

Folder 2

1930-1933

Box 9

Folder 3

1934-1938

Subseries 3: Receipts, 1900-1909

Box 9

Folder 4

1900

Box 9

Folder 5

1901

Box 9

Folder 6

1902

Box 9

Folder 7

1903

Box 9

Folder 8

1904

Box 9

Folder 9

1905

Box 9

Folder 10

1906

Box 10

Folder 1

1907

Box 10

Folder 2

1908

Box 10

Folder 3

1909