

William A. Baker Papers, 1890-1987

Repository: Hingham Public Library
Manuscript Number: MSC #27
Creator(s): William A. and Ruth S. Baker
Quantity: 2 Carton Boxes, 1 Flat File Drawer
Processed By: Stephanie McBain and Jennifer Williams. Finding aid completed in December of 2015.
Access: Open for research. Some materials have been placed in protective enclosures and should not be removed from them.

Provenance

This collection was created by William A. and Ruth S. Baker while living in Hingham during the 20th century. It was donated to the Hingham Public Library by Ruth S. Baker in 1987.

Biographical Note

William Avery Baker (1911-1981) was born on October 21, 1911 in New Britain, Connecticut to William Elisha and Margaret Sanderson Baker. William attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1934 with a degree in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering. Two years later he married Ruth Stuart (1909-1992). William worked as a naval architect at the Bethlehem Steel Company in Quincy and San Francisco from 1934 to 1964 as well as a lecturer at MIT from 1963 to 1981. He also served as the curator of MIT's Francis Russell Hart Nautical Museum, maritime consultant for the National Trust, and founder/first president of the North American Society for Oceanic History. He spent his spare time designing reproductions of historic ships, including those of the *Mayflower II* and the *Beaver II*, and writing many books and articles on maritime history. In 1949 William received Norway's St. Olav's Medal, which is awarded for spreading information about Norway abroad. He died in Hingham on September 8, 1981 and Ruth died in 1992. No other information could be found about Ruth.

William played bassoon in the Hingham Civic Orchestra between 1950 and 1980.

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of various materials that relate to the history of Hingham and the South Shore, and to the area's ships and marine history. Included are some of William's own research manuscripts and reports, as well as photographs, prints, and memorabilia collected by the Bakers including a cloth-mounted map, a tourist guide on the area, a magazine article about steamboats, and a booklet printed by the Hingham Institute for Savings. The collection also contains 185 photographic slides of Hingham landmarks, houses, events, and other miscellaneous scenes that were taken from the 1950s through the 1980s.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into the following two series:

- Series I. Papers and Memorabilia, 1890-1987
- Series II. Slides, 1950-1982
- Series II. Hingham Civic Orchestra Scrapbook, 1950-1980

Series I. Papers and Memorabilia, 1890-1987

Boxes 1-2; File drawer 13, Folders 1-2

This series includes a 19-page handwritten manuscript of vessels built in Hingham between 1706 and 1846 that was compiled by William, a two-page typed report by William on "The Weymouth Back River Gundalow" boat and wreck, 21 photographic prints of the *History of Hingham* section on public conveyances, a photograph of Ship Street ca. 1890, an article by T.P. Smith titled "The Oldest Steamboat Line" taken from the June 1960 edition of *Yankee* magazine, a booklet called "A Century and a Quarter of Service" printed by the Hingham Institute for Savings in 1959, and an 1890 tourist guide of Boston Harbor and the South Shore. Also included is a typed index of the collection compiled by Ruth at the time of its donation.

Box

- 1 Documents
- 2 Photographs

File drawer 13 contains an undated cloth-mounted map of Hingham and two maps (one of Nantucket and one of the Old Colony Railroad line) that have been removed from the 1890 tourist guide for preservation purposes.

Series II. Slides, 1950-1982

Box 2

This series contains 185 Kodachrome transparencies of scenes throughout Hingham. Each color slide has been labeled with a location and date. The photographs were taken between 1950 and 1982, and depict Hingham's landmarks, churches, houses, estates, homesteads, and events throughout the seasons. Frequent subjects include the Lincoln Statue, New North Church, Old Ship Church, Old Ordinary, Rainbow Roof House, Great Hill, Hingham Harbor, Broad Cove, the Yacht Club, World's End, the islands, the annual Fourth of July Parade, and the Old Ship Church anniversary celebration. Day-to-day scenes include flowers, foliage, an approaching train, and a sunrise.

Series III. Hingham Civic Orchestra Scrapbook, 1950-1980

Box 3

This series is composed of a single scrapbook containing materials related to the Hingham Civic Orchestra between approximately 1950 and 1980. The majority of the items are concert programs listing the date of the event, general notes about the concert, information regarding the music to be played, as well as the names of performers, staff members, and sponsors. There are also a wide variety of other materials, including newspaper clippings, letters, photographs, flyers, and newsletters.

The subjects within these items include biographies of concert soloists and special guest performers, rehearsals and other activities involved in planning each concert, performance

themes, auditions for open spots, the orchestra's Annual Meeting and Banquet, critiques of past and future performances, fundraisers, the orchestra's history, and changes in personnel.

Note: The scrapbook has been disbound due to preservation concerns.