

Donald Robinson Research Papers, c. 1911-1980

Repository: Hingham Public Library
Manuscript Number: MSC #23
Creator(s): Donald Robinson
Quantity: 2 Document Boxes
Processed by: Stephanie McBain and Jennifer Williams. Finding aid completed in July of 2015.
Access: Open for research. Some materials have been placed in protective enclosures and should not be removed from them.

Provenance

These papers were created by Donald Robinson between approximately 1961 and 1980. They were gifted to the library by an anonymous donor.

Historical Note

Donald Fay Robinson was born in Jamaica Plain, Mass. on February 6, 1905 to Thomas and Ethel (Fay) Robinson. He grew up in the MetroWest area with his parents and four siblings, obtaining his education at the Browne & Nichols School in Cambridge. He graduated in 1922 and then enrolled in Harvard College, where he studied farming. During his time at Harvard Robinson received several scholarships and was extremely active in the Dramatic Club.

After obtaining his bachelor of arts degree in 1926 Robinson taught German and Latin at the Valley Ranch School in Cody, Wyoming and also studied in France, Germany, and Switzerland. Robinson's parents moved to the Abel Cushing House at 46 South Pleasant Street in Hingham during the mid-1920s, and he would often stay with them when he was not working or in school.

In the 1930s Robinson decided to pursue a religious career, obtaining a postgraduate degree at the Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, PA. In 1942 he married Carol Howard, with whom he would have two children. He was ordained to ministry by the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1957 and became the minister of Second Parish in Hingham during that same year. Robinson would remain in that position until his retirement in 1977.

Robinson was extremely active in the Massachusetts religious community, serving as the president and vice-president of Boston's Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship between 1970 and 1975 as well as participating in the Society of Biblical Literature and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association. He also wrote several articles for religious journals and a book entitled *Jesus, Son of Joseph*.

Robinson was also very active in the Hingham community. He was extremely interested in the town's history and therefore became a board member of the Hingham Historical Society, serving as its president between 1960 and 1963. He collaborated with that organization to write a book entitled *Two Years in South Hingham*, published in 1980, which provided a detailed look at life

in South Hingham and the evolution of the Second Parish Church between 1746 and 1946. Robinson conducted in-depth research for this project and was eventually named town historian.

Robinson's love of history also led him to focus on historic preservation. He was a key figure in the creation of the Lincoln Historic District and the Historic Districts Commission during the 1960s, serving on the Hingham Historic Survey Committee as well as the Hingham Historic Districts Study Committee. He also became a trustee of the Wilder Charitable and Educational Fund, which focused on preserving the Wilder Memorial building.

Aside from his public persona as a historian and minister, Robinson was also a poet. He began writing as a child, during which time several of his poems were published and received awards. As an adult he was published in the book series entitled *Poems for People*, and also wrote many unpublished poems. Robinson died of emphysema at the Deering Nursing Home in Hingham on June 26, 1991.

Scope and Content Note

This collection is composed of the research papers created by Donald F. Robinson between approximately 1961 and 1980. The earlier materials, which date between 1961 and 1966, focus on his efforts to form the Lincoln Historic District and the Hingham Historical Districts Commission. Items include correspondence, reports, research notes, maps, newspaper clippings, and the 1966 act of establishment.

There are also many materials related to Robinson's research for, and publication of, his book *Two Hundred Years in South Hingham*. These items, which date between approximately 1911 and 1980, include handwritten and typed notes, three manuscript copies of the book, copies of photographs and illustrations included in the book, primary resources used to obtain information about Hingham's history, promotional materials for the book's publication in 1980, as well as publication information.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into the following two series:

- Series I. Hingham Historic Districts Research Papers, 1961-1966
- Series II. *Two Hundred Years In South Hingham* Research Papers, c. 1911-1980
 - Subseries I. Hingham History Sources, 1911-1980
 - Subseries II. Historical Research Notes, Undated
 - Subseries III. Photographs, Illustrations, Captions, and Indices, c. 1977-1980
 - Subseries IV. Manuscripts, c. 1978-1980
 - Subseries V. Publicity and Publication Information, 1980

Series I. Hingham Historic Districts Research Papers, 1961-1966

Box 1, Folder 1

This series contains documents, which date between 1961 and 1966, relating to the formation of both the Lincoln Historic District and the Historic Districts Commission in Hingham. Materials include a copy of the 1962 Historical Survey Committee Report, several drafts and final copies of the 1966 Hingham Historic Districts Study Committee Report, correspondence, research, information sources, newspaper clippings, maps, and copies of the 1966 act of establishment. These items discuss the importance of creating the historic district and the commission, how other town and cities had established historic districts in the past, data regarding historic buildings in Hingham, and proposed articles for town meetings.

Series II. *Two Hundred Years In South Hingham* Research Papers, c. 1911-1980

Subseries I. Hingham History Sources, 1911-1980 Box 1, Folder 2

The materials in this subseries were used by Robinson as sources on Hingham history for his book *Two Hundred Years in South Hingham*. Items include two copies of *The Settlement of Hingham* which was published by Louis C. Cornish in 1911; a typewritten genealogy of the Hersey family compiled by Francis C. Hersey; a "Trace Your Roots" genealogy workbook; a typewritten manuscript focusing on the Civil War and entertainment in Hingham; a Friends of Conservation newsletter focusing on Accord Pond; and copies of several historical documents relating to important Hingham families and streets, including ledger pages and maps.

Subseries II. Historical Research Notes, Undated Box 1, Folders 3-9

This subseries contains handwritten and typed notes created by Robinson as he researched the history of Hingham for his book entitled *Two Hundred Years in South Hingham*. The materials include draft sections of the book, timelines, lists of South Hingham residents and streets, copies of the town census, hand-drawn maps, copies of town meeting records, genealogical information, and quotations. The materials focus primarily on the history of South Hingham during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Subseries III. Photographs, Illustrations, Captions, and Indices, c. 1900-1980 Box 2, Folder 16

This subseries is composed of photographs, negatives, illustrations, captions, and indices that were used in Robinson's book *Two Hundred Years in South Hingham*. Many of the photographs were taken in 1977 and feature houses, churches, cemeteries, meeting halls, fire stations, parks, and landmarks in South Hingham. There are also older images that from the late 19th and early 20th century that focus on people and businesses. Included with these photographs are several illustrations and hand-drawn sketches as well as captions for all the images used in the book.

The subseries also contains two indices that were compiled by James Wheaton for inclusion in the book. The first is a general index listing the various subjects discussed in

the book and the pages on which they can be found. There is also a name index detailing the individuals mentioned and the pages on which they can be found. The indices contain handwritten notes regarding how they should be formatted when published, including indents and fonts. Finally, there are letters between Robinson, Wheaton, and the book's printer that relate to the indices.

Note: Original photographs and negatives have been removed to the media collection. Copies of the images have been left in the collection.

Series IV. Manuscripts, ca. 1978-1980
Box 1, Folders 3-8

This subseries contains three typed copies of Robinson's work *Two Hundred Years in South Hingham*. The manuscripts, all of which are over 200 pages in length, contain handwritten notes and edits regarding such matters as spelling, punctuation, and formatting.

Series V. Publicity and Publication Information, 1980
Box 2, Folder 17

This subseries contains documents relating to the 1980 publication of *Two Hundred Years in South Hingham* by Donald Robinson and the Hingham Historical Society. It includes copies of the vote to publish, printing information and prices, and two small mock-ups of the book. Also included are several promotional newspaper clippings, press releases, and Hingham Historical Society newsletters.