

Helen Leary Papers

COLLECTION, M-78

DATE

1929 – 1989

CONTRIBUTOR

Mattatuck Museum

ADMINISTRATIVE/BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY ELEMENT

Helen (Boice) Leary was born in 1901 and was a Waterbury resident her entire life. Her grandparents immigrated in the 1870's from Ireland, they bought a house in the North End and worked in one of the many factories in Waterbury. Leary's father and mother stayed in the North End, her father also got a job at one of the factories in Waterbury. Growing up in Waterbury Leary attended many of the schools in the North End. She attended St Thomas School and both Crosby and Wilby. She said she switched schools halfway through high school because Crosby was the college prep high school and Wilby was the mechanical high school. Leary was a part of the first graduating class that came out of Wilby. After Leary graduated, she worked for the Chase Company on Grand Street.

In 1926 Helen married John J. Leary and moved to the East End. What drew her to that end of the city was that the community there was incredibly involved. In 1938 the East End Community Club was founded with Leary as a charter member. The club met at Anderson school, which is now the Arc. The East End Community Club was highly active and fought to bring many services to the East End community. The first thing the club accomplished was fighting for the building of the Fair Lawn playground. Among many other accomplishments a few to name are the Anderson School Gymnasium, which was the first gym in the East End, a Post Office branch, as well as a Library in a bank. In addition to fighting for the development of these services in the community, the club also hosted Fourth of July Parades, had a Drum Corps, which Leary was on the committee for, as well as a 90-member bowling league, which bowled at Genlot alleys.

In addition to being regularly active in the East End Community Club Leary was also a part of social groups for the Chase Company. She was President of the Chase Girls Choral Club often referred to as the Chase Girls' Glee Club. The Chase Girls Choral Club was highly regarded by the Waterbury community. The club held caroled and held annual concerts performed for Christmas and other holiday celebrations. People from all over Waterbury came to hear the girls sing under the direction of Elmer E. Wilson, who often received hoard of letters of congratulations after performances.

Leary was also an avid bowler, winning many State and National championships. She was a part of the Genlot Girls Bowling Team which was comprise of five other members. The team often came first in many championships. In 1929 Leary set a world record with a score of 1,009 pins, the record was vouched for by George L. Isemann of Washington, D.C.. This score was a feat not even many in men's bowling leagues had accomplished. The team was very renowned and often traveled to places out of state to compete, they competed in competitions in Baltimore and Washington D.C.. Interesting to note is that Waterbury resident Chief Two Moon allowed the team to drive his van as their transportation to the competition.

Helen Leary died November 1st, 2002, at 101 years old.

SCOPE & CONTENT

The Helen Leary Papers contains documents detailing Leary's involvement in local Waterbury organizations like the the East End Community Center between 1929-1989.

The collection contains scrapbooks created by Leary containing newspaper articles about East End Community Club's accomplishments as well as articles and pictures of the Genlot Girls' Bowling League. There is also programs and pictures of the Chase Girls' Choir, Chase Company newsletters, as well as newsletters from the East End Community Club. Interesting to note are two awards received by Leary, one plaque of appreciation from the East End Community Club and a 1st place trophy from the Connecticut State Bowling Tournament.

ARRANGEMENT

Arranged alphabetically.

RELATED PEOPLE/INSTITUTIONS

Helen Leary (created by)