

Finette Benson Nichols Collection

COLLECTION, MS B31

DATE

1963 – 1970
1978
1890 – 1969

CONTRIBUTOR

Fairfield Museum

ADMINISTRATIVE/BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY ELEMENT

In 1968 the State Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities held public hearings in Waterbury. The commission was concerned with four areas: Housing, Education, Employment, and Police-Community Relations. The hearings provided a forum for anyone who lived in Waterbury to voice concerns over these issues – though the vast majority of people who testified were under subpoena. Witnesses spoke about police violence, segregation, inequality, discrimination in housing, lack of opportunities.

The Commission then took the findings from the hearing to the Executive Committee and Legislative Committee. In addition to the hearings, an Interim Report was issued summarizing the findings in which Police – Community Relation and Housing were the two areas of great focus with conclusions and suggestions.

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities was originally called the Inter-Racial Commission and was founded in 1943. On May 21, 1945 the commission held a similar hearing in Waterbury.

The granddaughter of Fairfield sea captain Abraham Benson, Finette Benson Nichols was educated at the Fairfield Academy and worked for 25 years in New York City as secretary to the head of the American Baptist Society. Although she had been opposed to the suffrage movement before 1920, Finette B. Nichols ended up devoting years of her life to politics. With support from Annie B. Jennings and other Republican women, she was nominated as a state representative. In 1931 she was elected to the Connecticut General Assembly, becoming the first woman to represent Fairfield at the state level. One of only a handful of female legislators during that time, she went on to serve eight terms, until just before her death in 1948. She was known as a “liberal conservative,” serving on committees dealing with public health and safety, labor, towns and cities, and public welfare.

SCOPE & CONTENT

The Waterbury Civil Rights Collection was compiled by local historian Jeremy Brecher about racism in Waterbury during the 1960s. The collection is composed of two types of documents: the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities Hearings and responses, and a general collection of documents and newspapers about racism.

The collection is entirely paper based and consists of 8 volumes of verbatim commission hearings, newspaper articles, correspondence, and a pamphlet. There are 15 boxes and 3 oversize items in this collection. The bulk of the material concerns Finette B. Nichols' legislative career.

ARRANGEMENT

The collection is arranged alphabetically, except for the public hearings and related materials which are listed first.

Collection Contents

Finette Benson Nichols Collection

Box 2: Finette Nichols family materials

- Minnie V. Kippen estate papers
- Finette Nichols personal correspondence
- Misc. letters to Finette Nichols
- Finette Nichols probate papers
- Minnie V. Kippen photos and album
- Minnie V. Kippen papers
- Nichols-Kippen estate/probate papers
- Mary B. Kippen probate papers
- Jane Nichols Kippen and George Kippen papers

Box 4: Finette Nichols political papers

Fairfield Republican Committee
Fairfield Town Republican Committee papers
Republican state committee papers
Finette Nichols political correspondence

Box 5: Nichols' Family photographs

Finette Nichols' scrapbook 1936
Photos of Finette Nichols
Finette Nichols legislative photos and lists
Carter family photographs
Unidentified photographs (may be Johnson family)
Johnson family postcards and papers (Kent, CT)

Box 6: Finette Nichols political and legislative organizations

Public Health
Education
Clippings 1945- State Assembly
Public Welfare Committee
Order of Women Legislators (OWL)
Fairfield County Republican Women's Association
Fairfield County Republican Women's Association

Box 7: Fairfield County Women's Association Bulletins

Box 8: Finette Nichols legislative and political papers

World's Fair 1939
Prohibition
Political clippings
Child Welfare acts
Finette Nichols letterheads
Legislative papers and correspondence
Bulletins and Correspondence
Fairfield County Commissioners

Box 9: Finette Nichols legislative material and correspondence

Correspondence re: court nominations
Federal relations committee
General assembly pocket manual (1943, 1945, 1937)
Fairfield bills 1939
Fairfield bills, 1945 session
Legislative papers- bills passed
Cornwall-Litchfield rd. bill

Box 10: Connecticut Hospital for the Insane papers

Anna Nichols papers

Anna Nichols papers

Anna Nichols Connecticut hospital for the insane papers

Box 11: Legislative bills- public health committee

Public health and safety bills-1941

Public health acts

Public health acts

Public health and safety committee

Public health bills

Box 12: Finette Nichols pamphlets and broadsides

Box 13: Personal financial and tercentenary papers

House bills

Tercentenary

Stocks and investments

Box 14: Writings and miscellaneous organizations

Misc. papers

Women's national republican club

Red cross and other misc. organizations

WWII papers

Fairfield Welfare society

Baptist mission material

Finette Nichols short stories

Newspaper articles

Notes and speeches

Box 15: Finette Nichols Financial and real estate papers

Typewriter patent

Personal financials

Real estate papers 1920s-30s "South"

Real estate papers 1920 "South"

Box 3: Real estate papers of Emma and Finette Nichols

Oversize Property Maps

Maps of property belonging to Emma and Finette Nichols:

1. Map of "Salt Meadow" property at Wakeman's Island, between east branch of Pine Creek and Veres Street.
2. Map of Fairfield Beach property
3. Map of Nichols Estate "east," Reef Road and Oldfield Road

Real estate papers 1920s "East"

Real estate papers 1920s "East"

Real estate papers 1920s "East"

Real estate papers 1920s "North"

Real estate papers 1920s "North"

Nichols' real estate papers "North"

Real estate papers (deeds, etc.)

Series 16: Oversize Items

Photo of Connecticut State Representatives 1933, Photo of Finette and other individuals, CT State House

Voting instructions 1935, voting list 1939, broadside DAR Garden Party, news clippings re: A. B. Jennings' interest in Anastasia

Photographs of Annie B. Jennings and political groups

State Legislature seating plan and scrapbook

Box 1: Finette and Emma Nichols Personal Papers

Emma Starr Nichols probate papers

Emma Starr Nichols papers

Letters to Emma Starr Nichols

"Surfside" beachside cottage papers

Misc. letters to Finette Nichols

Letters from Annie B. Jennings to Finette Nichols

Post Cards from Annie B. Jennings to Finette Nichols