

## Stevens Square Home

### COLLECTION SUMMARY

**Collection number:** B542, Accession #: 2021.207.0001-2021.207.0031

**Collection Repository:** Hennepin History Museum  
2303 Third Ave  
Minneapolis, MN 55404

**Collection title:** Stevens Square Home

**Dates:** 1881-2002 (Bulk 1919-1960)

**Extent:** 21 Records Carton, 3 Hollinger Box, 1 Half Hollinger, 1 Scrapbook boxes, 4 Small boxes, 1 large folder (24.21 linear feet (not including scrapbook, small boxes and large folder)

**Creator:** Unknown

**Language:** English

### ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

The story of Stevens Square began with a pandemic. In 1881, Typhoid created a need for orphanages in the Twin Cities. Several prominent men's wives supported Stevens Square. The first Stevens Square meeting was attended by 25 women on October 28, 1881, at 520 Second Street NE in Minneapolis. The Bylaws and Articles of Incorporations were approved in December 1881. In 1882, the orphanage moved to its current location of 2200 Sixth Street South and the first annual meeting was held. In 1885, the name was changed to Home for the children and aged women. In 1889, the Board of Directors established an endowment. In 1911, they celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Margaret Kerns ran the non-profit from 1900-1929. Helen Haines, who succeeded Margaret, started working at the non-profit in 1921 to 1953.

The orphanages numbers declined in the late 1920s. In September 1930, three black kids were admitted to the orphanage. The orphanage closed due to financial issues in September of 1935. They were very proud of the 2,000 children they raised. They were the more humane option between institutions and asylums. They believed in being a temporary place for children as opposed to an orphanage. The financial situation was dire. Once the orphanage was closed, a psychiatric clinic rented out the orphanage building from 1938 to the mid-1940s. Since this addition, Stevens Square promoted better mental health treatment for children. Since then, they rented out their facilities to many organizations. In 1948, the name changed to Stevens Square Home.

In 1953, the nursing home no longer used lifetime care contracts since lifespans were getting longer. In 1961, the non-profit relicensed and just became a nursing home. In 1978, the board of directors voted to become a foundation to protect their endowments. Between 1996 and 2001, they stopped being a nursing home and did more community outreach. The last mention of residents in minutes is in 1999. Now, they are a foundation who donates to local causes.

### SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Stevens Square Collection focuses on the running of the nursing home and orphanage from 1885 to 1997. The facilities closed in 2004 and they transitioned from a non-profit into a

foundation. The documents range from everything in between from media to bound journals. There are five series, and they are: Archivist, Administrative, Financial, History and Operations. There are numerous subseries, and they are listed below.

### Archivist:

This series contains notes, research, fragile documents and the finding aid. Future Projects refers to the fragile documents that have been scanned that are illegible due to fading ink and require document editing software. Redacted documents contain sensitive information and require the archivist's approval. Valuable documents refer to originals that have been scanned because of projected heavy use.

### Administrative:

The Administrative series focuses on the running of Stevens Square (otherwise referred to as SS). While the Operations series focuses on the day-to-day decisions made by employees, the Administrative series deals with the organization's general recordkeeping. This series spans from 1881 to 1997.

#### Administrative: Admissions

The Admissions subseries is the application process. The dates range from 1920 to 1960. The two subseries are inquiries (correspondence) and rejected (or withdrawn) applications. For more detailed information about the residents, please look at the operations: Resident files: Senior Citizens/Nursing Home subseries. These files are organized alphabetically.

#### Administrative: Board of Directors

The Board of Directors subseries focuses on the inner workings of the Board of Directors. The dates range from 1881 to 1970. The earliest document is a meeting notice. The Articles of Incorporation are from 1885.

- The first subseries, AOI & Bylaws contains non-profit governing documents. The earliest document is the original AOI written in 1885. The latest document is AOI written in 1970.
- The second subseries is general and contains information about the junior board, resolutions, select committees and meeting notices. The date spans from 1881-1960.
- The third subseries is Board Members. This subseries details the work of the women who were on the board of directors. The dates range from 1928-1961.
- The fourth subseries is Presidents. The subseries details the work of the President of the Board of Directors. The dates range from 1917-1957.

- The final subseries is secretary/secretaries. This subseries details the work of the Board of Directors Secretary. The dates range from 1935-1966.

### Administrative: Committee

The committee subseries documents running a nursing home and orphanage from 1915 to the early 1960s. In this time period, WWI, women suffrage, the Spanish flu, the great Depression and World War II all happened. As a result, this particular subseries is valuable to researchers. If you are interested in medical information, look at the Ladies and Children subseries. If you are interested in economics and inflation, please look at housing and supply.

The Committee Subseries has 12 subseries. The subseries demonstrate how Stevens Square conducted business. The twelve subseries are listed below:

- Advisory: The advisory committee ranges from 1919-1953 and focuses on the investment strategy of the non-profit.
- Aged Care & Community Chest Council: The Aged Care & Community Chest Council ranges from 1944-1953. The purpose of this committee was to gather basic information on Twin Cities Nursing Homes.
- Childrens: The Childrens Committee ranges from 1916-1953. This committee discusses children's medical treatments and orphanage business.
- House/Housing: The house committee ranges from 1927-1963. The purpose of this committee was to document housing expenses.
- Ladies: The Ladies committee ranges from 1917-1951. The purpose of this committee was to document the social life of the nursing home/senior citizen residents.
- School Scholarship: The School Scholarship committee is from the year 1924 and contains a form.
- Service to Children: The Service to Children committee is from 1934-1935 and focuses on an orphanage study.
- Social Legislation: The Social Legislation committee ranges from 1919-1923. This committee focuses on a legislative bill that would make the medical treatment of children diagnosed with epilepsy more humane. In the past, epilepsy was not distinguished from any other cognitive disability diagnosis.
- Supply: The supply committee ranges from 1919-1963 and details expenses.
- Survey: The Survey committee ranges from 1915-1919 and is similar to the advisory committee's function.

- Temporary Placement of Children Committee: The temporary placement of children committee is undated and focuses on boarding home standards.
- Transportation of Allied Nations: The transportation of Allied Nations committee ranges from 1925-1930 and focuses on orphanage standards.

#### Administrative: Minutes

The minutes series focuses on the Board of Directors minutes from 1885-1915 to 1921-1997. These documents are minutes, attendance records, subject index and finance committee's files. The 1885-1915 minutes are in bound journals and need to be digitized.

#### Administrative: Nonprofit

The Non-profit subseries focuses on external communications between SS and professional associations, other non-profits, and government agencies. This series was originally titled the subject files series. Since most of the subject file series dealt with other non-profits, the name was altered reflect this fact. The architecture study folder contains drawings of the grounds with building notes. The dates range from 1919 to 1970.

#### Financial:

The financial series focuses on the business of Stevens Square. This series includes publications, audits, correspondence, budgets and reports from 1882-1975. Since this is a small series, the subseries are straight forward.

#### Financial: Annual Report

The Annual Report subseries spans from 1882-1889, 1891-1892, 1894-1905, 1905, 1907, 1909-1928. This subseries contains pamphlets with important financial information for the Board of Directors and donors.

#### Financial: Audit

The Audit series is financial audits from 1945-1963.

#### Financial: Bank

The Bank series contains correspondence, legal documents, and budgets. The series ranges from 1938-1975.

#### Financial: Budget

The budget series contains proposed budgets and payroll information from 1947-1963. This series is fascinating because it shows how inflation affected wages.

#### Financial: Correspondence

The Correspondence subseries focuses on letters that are about the spending or donating of money and spans from 1919-1963.

#### Financial: Donations

The donation series ranges from and focuses on major gifts.

### Financial: Treasurer Reports

The Treasurer Reports series contains budgets and correspondence from 1883-1929. This series delves into the financial history of this organization.

### History:

The history series includes any moments relating to the past of Stevens Square. These items were consciously set aside to document the past of Stevens Square.

### Financial: Audio

The audio subseries contains one single undated cassette tape. The tape is labeled the history of Stevens Square. This has been digitized.

### History: Media

The Media subseries contains press about nursing homes and book notes about the published history book on Stevens Square. The dates span from 1889 to 2002. The Annual Report is in this series because it is a single page taken from a notebook and would get crushed if put in the proper place. The rest of the annual reports are in the financial series. Grace Phelps was an employee who wrote a travel poetry book in the 1940s and submitted it for publishing.

### History: Photographs

The photograph subseries contains slides, albums and images from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to 2002. The subjects are primarily the residents of Stevens Square. There are some gems in this collection including a teenager “driving” an early car and pictures of cats. Most of the pictures are of the senior citizens and staff and Lakewood Cemetery. Miss Haines, who ran Stevens Square for a long time, is prominent in the pictures.

This was a joy to process because it shows a typical midwestern nursing home experience. They show Polka music (as shown by the polka skirts), Scandinavian and Christian holidays. The nursing home residents were primarily white woman, many of whom had migrated from Scandinavia or England.

### History: Printers Blocks

The Printers Blocks subseries contains 11 blocks. They look modern based on the materials used. There is no rust on the stamps. They are probably from the 1940s-1950s. The printers blocks are of exterior and interior shots. The décor looks like Victorian meets 1930s. These stamps have a photo quality to them. The archivist thinks they were used in a small print book or a newsletter. There are two subseries: small and large stamps

### History: Scrapbook

The scrapbook subseries consists of one scrapbook that details the social life of the residents. This 11 page scrapbook starts at the beginning of March and concludes with New Years Eve. This scrapbook is made up of fabric squares that cover cardboard squares. At the end of the book, there is a bag with nails & wood and extra decorations.

## Operations:

The Operations series details the day-to-day happenings of Stevens Square from the building maintenance to the lives of the residents. This series spans from 1909 to 1961. One will find many gems in this series: The streetcar incident (General), Table prayers (Food Service) and Eugenics Records (Psychiatry).

### Operations: Building Management

The Building Management subseries contains items related to the maintenance of the physical building and care of the property. These documents include construction, real estate, budgets, proposals and insurance files. The dates range from 1935-1936.

### Operations: Food Service

The food service subseries contains documents related to feeding the residents. The types of documents include menus, receipts, forms, and table prayers. The dates span from 1920-1968. This subseries would be of interest to a food historian.

### Operations: General: Main Office & Orphanage

The general subseries has two subseries: Main Office and Orphanage. The main office has mainly legal, financial, and vital documents (Information needed to run a business). The dates range from 1922-1954.

The orphanage series specifically deals with children's needs. The general orphanage subseries ranges from 1909-1952. This subseries contains: Correspondence, minutes, professional development, legal, reports, and government documents.

### Operations: Human Relations

The Human relations subseries has one subseries: pensions. The entire subseries focuses on employee relations. The dates range from 1919 to 1963. This subseries would be interesting to labor historians.

### Operations: Psychiatry

The Psychiatry subseries spans from the 1920s-1960s. The Stevens Square Orphanage practiced eugenics. They tested for low IQs during the application process and used the information to decide if they met their standards. The mental hygiene movement emphasized better treatment of mental illness. It is unknown whether they believed in this mission or used it to weed out those they didn't want to admit. If someone engages in eugenic activity, they are rejecting applicants based on IQ tests and thereby forcing the applicants to go to a state institution, not working with the neurodiverse community because of assumed stereotypes and outright discriminating based on assumed societal norms (If the parent isn't smart, the child isn't either and other variations of this type of thinking). The processing archivist believes this occurred at Steven Square. Eugenics is still practiced.

Stevens Square consulted with other orphanages about mental health and the University to set up a Psychiatry clinic. The state stopped providing funding for the tests and the clinic folded due to a financial disagreement.

#### Operations: Residents: Orphanage

The Orphanage Resident subseries has three small boxes. This subseries contains details of the orphanage's residents including their parentage, if they were placed and reason they applied.

#### Operations: Residents: Senior Citizens/Nursing Home

The nursing home residents subseries has 19 subseries. They are organized alphabetically (A-M, O-P, R-T, W). This subseries contains withdrawn or transferred files. The dates span from 1920 to 1961. These files contain health and death records: anything related to burials, personal property distribution, property records (real estate and mortgages), financial records, correspondence with family and friends, funeral plans and obituaries. These files are fragile and should be handled with care. These files tell a story of how women lived and aged in the twentieth century.

#### Operations: Subject Files

The Subject Files subseries ranges from 1920s-1940s. This subseries focuses on reference materials used in operating an orphanage. Stevens Square worked with the Child Welfare League of America and other similar non-profits. The Subseries contains correspondence, minutes, poetry, legislative, and healthcare files.

#### Subseries List

The collection is arranged in 5 series with 27 subseries. The series include:

##### Series 1: Archivist

- Subseries 1: Future Projects
- Subseries 2: Redacted Documents
- Subseries 3: Valuable Documents

##### Series 2: Administrative

- Subseries 1: Admissions
  - Subseries: Inquiries
  - Subseries: Rejects
- Subseries 2: Board of Directors
  - Subseries: Articles of Incorporation/Bylaws
  - Subseries: General
  - Subseries: Members
  - Subseries: Presidents
  - Subseries: Secretary
- Subseries 3: Committee
  - Subseries Advisory
  - Subseries: Aged Care & Community Chest Council
  - Subseries: Children
  - Subseries: House/Housing
  - Subseries: Ladies

- Subseries: School Scholarship
- Subseries: Service to children
- Subseries: Social legislation
- Subseries: Supply
- Subseries: Survey
- Subseries: Temporary Placement of Children
- Subseries: Transportation of Allied Nations

Subseries 4: General

Subseries 5: Minutes

- Subseries: 1885-1915
- Subseries: 12/1921-10/1952
- Subseries: 1952-1974
- Subseries: 10/1974-9/1976
- Subseries: 10/1976-12/1978
- Subseries: 5/1982-8/1985
- Subseries: 9/1985-8/1985
- Subseries: 9/1985-12/1988
- Subseries: 1989-1997

Subseries 6: Nonprofits

Series 3: Financial

- Subseries: Annual Reports
- Subseries: Audits
- Subseries: Banks
- Subseries: Budgets
- Subseries: Correspondence
- Subseries: Donations
- Subseries: Treasurer Reports

Series 4: History

- Subseries: Audio
- Subseries: Media
  - Subseries: History
  - Subseries: History Project
- Subseries: Photographs
- Subseries: Printers Blocks
  - Subseries: Small
  - Subseries: Large
- Subseries: Scrapbooks

Series 5: Operations

- Subseries: Building Management
- Subseries: Food Series
- Subseries: General
  - Subseries: Stevens Square
  - Subseries: Orphanage
- Subseries: Human Resources
  - Subseries: Pension
- Subseries: Psychiatry
- Subseries: Residents
  - Subseries: Orphanage



Subseries: Senior Citizens/Nursing Home

Subseries: A  
Subseries: B  
Subseries: C  
Subseries: D  
Subseries: E  
Subseries: F  
Subseries: G  
Subseries: H  
Subseries: I  
Subseries: J  
Subseries: K  
Subseries: L  
Subseries: M  
Subseries: O  
Subseries: P  
Subseries: R  
Subseries: S  
Subseries: T  
Subseries: W

Subseries: Subject Files

## **ACCESS**

This collection is open for researchers except for the Archivist Series: Redacted documents folders.

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## **RELATED MATERIALS**

Minnesota Historical Society: Human Services Department: Adoption Unit