

Wilson Congregational Church Records

Finding Aid

Windsor Historical Society
96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, CT 06095

Creator: Wilson Congregational Church (Windsor, Conn.)
Church of Christ, Wilson (Windsor, Conn.)

Dates: 1853-2011

Extent: 9 linear feet

Accession #: 2010.44

Church History

Wilson Congregational Church in Windsor, CT has its roots in a Sunday School formed by Mrs. Luther Barber and Mrs. Susan A. Wilson in February, 1853. Mrs. Barber and Mrs. Wilson, with the help of Enos Cornwell, Frederick Hills, and George Hunn of the South Baptist Church of Hartford, founded the school and held evening services in a one-story schoolhouse on the present-day Wolcott Avenue. The Sunday School was funded by a women's sewing society, called the Union Society of District No. 1, which was organized in March, 1853 for the purpose of funding religious education in Wilson. However, the Sunday School was unpopular and the services were often disrupted by angry citizens. In the face of so much opposition the school was closed in 1854, although the evening services continued under the leadership of George Hunn. The Sunday School was reestablished in 1856 when a new schoolhouse was built behind Roger Wolcott School, and morning services were also instituted. By 1898, attendance was about forty-five members per morning service.

In 1900, the congregation decided to form an official Church Society and acquire a church building. On January 8 by-laws were adopted and the Wilson Christian Union Association, Inc., was formed. The association purchased the former church building of the Rainbow Baptist Society in August, 1900. The building was rebuilt at 279 Windsor Avenue and opened for services in December, 1900. In 1902, the church officially became known as the Church of Christ, Wilson. The congregation at this time was made up of members from a variety of denominations including Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, and Congregationalists. In 1944, the church finally decided to join the Fellowship of Congregational Churches, and in 1961 the church voted to join the United Church of Christ.

By 1961, the church building at 279 Windsor Avenue was in need of repair. In April, 1961, a building committee was formed and plans initiated to build a new church building at 691 Windsor Avenue. The building fund was aided by a bequest from Leland P. Wilson, Superintendent of the Sunday School from 1901-1938, who had left the church a significant amount of money upon his death in February, 1959. The building project was headed by architect C. Frank Bayek, whose plans were approved by the church in April 1962. Groundbreaking took place on November 4, 1962 and the construction was completed by November, 1963. The old church building at 279 Windsor Avenue was sold to the Windsor Library Committee who tore it down and built a new Wilson Library on the site. On September 22, 1963, the church voted to change its name to Wilson Congregational Church. One month later the congregation moved into its new church building and it was formally dedicated on December 15, 1963.

Wilson Congregational Church's committees, programs, and organizations had a significant impact on the lives of its members and the Windsor community. In addition to the Sunday School, a Nursery School was started in 1964; enrollment grew from twenty-five to seventy-five children in only five years. The church also operated a very successful thrift shop. Opening in 1972, the thrift shop earned on average more than \$2,000 a year which was donated to special charities and needy families. The church is notable for the prominent role of women in the congregation. Besides having been founded and funded by women in the 1850s and 1860s, the Ladies Aid Society raised money for the support of both church and community from 1900 until 1945.

By the end of the 20th century, Wilson Congregational Church began to suffer financial difficulties due to an aging congregation and a shortage of new members. In 1997, Wilson Congregational agreed to let another church rent space in the building at 691 Windsor Avenue, and by 2010 four separate congregations were sharing the church facilities. But the financial difficulties continued, and in 2010 the Wilson Congregational members voted to move towards closure. On September 12, 2010, Wilson Congregational Church held its last service. A memory book was created to document the stories, memories, and emotions of the last members.

On May 27, 2011, the building at 691 Avenue was sold to Holy Temple Church of God in Christ. The members of Wilson Congregational Church voted to donate the proceeds from the sale to a variety of local, regional, and world-wide organizations.

Scope and Contents

The records of the Wilson Congregational Church contained in this collection portray a sense of the nature of the congregation and its activities during each of its three seminal time periods. Some portions of the records are moderately comprehensive and other time blocks are thinly represented. The collection contains narrative histories, bound volumes of church membership and sacramental records (1900-2012), minutes of the Boards of Deacons and Directors (1930s – 1960s), minute books describing the work of the Ladies Aid Society (1906-1945), blueprints and files documenting the design and construction of the building at 691 Windsor Avenue, and memorabilia such as scrapbooks, photographs, and newspaper clippings. A copy of the memory book compiled by the church members at the time of closure in 2011 is also part of the collection.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into three sections corresponding to the three periods in the church's history. Each record group is arranged thematically.

Record Group I. Organizing Period and Union Society of District No. 1 (1853-1900)

Record Group II. Church of Christ, 279 Windsor Avenue (1900-1963)

Series A. Histories

Series B. Church Records

Series C. Buildings

Series D. Members in the News

Series E. Programs and Special Events

Series F. Photographs

Record Group III. Wilson Congregational Church, 691 Windsor Avenue (1963-2010)

Series A. Histories

Series B. Church Records

Series C. Buildings

Series D. Members in the News

Series E. Programs and Special Events

Series F. Photographs

Record Group IV. Artifacts

Box and Folder Lists

Box 1

Record Group I. Organizing Period and Union Society of District No. 1 (1853-1900)

- 1.1 Union Society of District No. 1 1853-1886
 - A progress report of George Hunn's work in Wilson 1896
 - By-laws of the Wilson Christian Union Association 1900

Record Group II. Church of Christ, 279 Windsor Avenue (1900-1963)

Series A. Histories

- 1.2 Histories

Series B. Church Records

- 1.3 Church Records 1900-1957
- 1.4 Church Records 1958-1962
- 1.5 Annual Reports
- 1.6 Financial Records 1902-1956
- 1.7 Financial Records 1902-1962
- 1.8 Membership and Sacramental Records

Box 2

- 2.1 Clerk's Records 1922-1972
- 2.2 Clerk's Records 1925-2011
- 2.3 Board of Directors 1900-1931

Box 3

- 3.1 Board of Directors 1932-1951
- 3.2 Board of Directors 1951-1955
- 3.3 Board of Directors 1956-1959
- 3.4 Board of Deacons 1957-1960
- 3.5 Board of Deacons 1961-1963
- 3.6 Sunday School
- 3.7 Ladies Aid Society 1906-1910
- 3.8 Ladies Aid Society 1910-1915

Box 4

- 4.1 Ladies Aid Society 1915-1923
- 4.2 Ladies Aid Society 1922-1928
- 4.3 Ladies Aid Society 1928-1936

Box 5

- 5.1 Ladies Aid Society 1936-1945
- 5.2 Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor 1899-1911
- 5.3 Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor 1912-1914

Series C. Buildings

- 5.4 Construction
- 5.5 Repairs and Sale

Series D. Members in the News

- 5.6 Members in the News

Series E. Programs and Special Events

- 5.7 Programs and Special Events
- 5.8 50th Anniversary 1950

Series F. Photographs

Box 6

- 6.1 Photographs

Record Group III. Wilson Congregational Church, 691 Windsor Avenue (1963-2010)

Series A. Histories

- 6.2 Histories
- 6.3 Closing Process and Activities

Series B. Church Records

- 6.4 Church Records
- 6.5 Annual Reports
- 6.6 Financial Records
- 6.7 Membership and Sacramental Records 1922-2012
- 6.8 Clerk's Records
- 6.9 *Church Light*
- 6.10 Board of Deacons 1963-1966

- 6.11 Board of Deacons 1967-1970
- 6.12 Board of Trustees 1976-1978
- 6.13 Sunday School
- 6.14 Christian Enlistment Committee

Series C. Buildings

Box 7

- 7.1 Property Deeds and Acquisition
- 7.2 Design and Blueprints
- 7.3 Fundraising
- 7.4 Construction 1960-1962
- 7.5 Construction 1963-1968
- 7.6 Automatic Bell Ringer

Series D. Members in the News

- 7.7 Members in the News

Series E. Programs and Special Events

- 7.8 Programs and Special Events
- 7.9 Church Dedication 1963
- 7.10 Rededication 1983

Series F. Photographs

- 7.11 Photographs

Record Group IV. Artifacts

- 7.12 Artifacts Cataloging Sheets

Related Materials in the Windsor Historical Society Collections

Family files: Wilson, Leland P.

Subject files: Churches – Wilson Congregational

Organizations and Clubs – Ladies Aid Society

Subject Terms

Windsor (Conn.) – Social life and customs

Windsor (Conn.) – Church history

Wilson Congregational Church (Windsor, Conn.) – History

Ladies Aid Society (Windsor, Conn.)

Wilson, Leland P., 1871-1959

Custodial history

The Wilson Congregational Church materials were transferred to the Windsor Historical Society in several batches between 2010 and 2012 as the church Historian, Moderator, and Clerk

sorted through office files and storage closets throughout the church building. The collection was arranged and described by intern Sara Hawran under the supervision of librarian Barbara Goodwin. A few items of relevance to the history of the Town of Windsor were filed in the society's library Subject files. The finding aid was prepared in May 2012 by Sara Hawran.