

Denver Orphans' Home Records

Mss.00196

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Summary Information

Repository	History Colorado. Stephen H. Hart Research Center
Title	Denver Orphans' Home Records
Date	1881-1940
Extent	2.25 Linear feet
Language	English
Archival Material [Box]	2.25 lf
Abstract	<p>This collection contains information about the Denver Orphans' Home from 1881-1940. Included in this collection are loose papers and bound books pertaining to the business of the orphanage. Papers gives insight into the evolution of the orphanage and its scope as needs in Denver changed over the years. Several books to highlight are lists of orphans given to the care of the orphanage and one containing newspaper clippings from 1883-1894 highlighting the early Presidents, fundraising, orphans, and the orphanage.</p>

Preferred Citation note

Cite as: Denver Orphan Home, Mss.00196 (accession 20746), History Colorado

Historical note

A meeting called by the Ladies' Relief Society of Denver initiated the idea of organizing an orphans home in Denver, based on a donation of \$850 made by George W. Clayton, Fred Salomon and brothers, Col. Jacobson, Mr. Dean Richmond, and Mr. C.L. Morey. Articles of incorporation for the Denver Orphans Home Association were written and filed in the office of the Secretary of State in January 1881 saying that only full orphans under 12 years of age were eligible for admission. At a subsequent meeting, the charter was amended so that the management could admit destitute half orphans, thus greatly enlarging its sphere of usefulness. At this time it was decided that no "colored" children would be admitted. Also at this meeting the board of managers was increased from 13 to 21. In order to prevent the institution from ever becoming sectarian, the articles of incorporation provided that no denomination could ever have more than three members of its sect on the board of managers.

During the first several years few children were cared for, as most efforts went into acquiring a suitable site and raising funds necessary to erect a building. In June 1882, prior to the erection of this building, arrangements were made for the care of the children with Mrs. Lord. She rented a house, first at 9th and Pine Street and later at 734 California agreeing to care for children at \$3 per child per week until the new building was completed. At the annual meeting held on January 16, 1883, the managers stated they had "the supreme satisfaction of presenting to the public a pleasant and commodious Orphans Home free from debt or encumbrance of any kind."

The site of the Denver Orphans Home included one entire block on Race Street between E. 16th and E. 17th Avenues. Half of the block was given by J.H. Wyman of New York City. The eastern half of the block was purchased from Carver Gross for \$2,400, a price considered to be \$1,000 less than its actual value. After much investigation the board adopted the cottage system of building and management. A building capable of housing 40 children was erected on the southwest corner of the block, at a cost of \$9,217, and was named the Wyman Cottage. If a larger number of children required space, plans called for the construction of cottages on the remaining corners and one in the center. Materials for a fence surrounding the entire grounds were donated by the lumber dealers of Denver, and a cement walk leading to the front steps was contributed by the Denver Cement Manufacturing Company. An unexpected problem was encountered when the Home was found to be beyond the limits of the Holly water works of the city. It was necessary to dig a well which was completed after much difficulty. At the time of the opening of the Home, it was also beyond the reach of city services such as gas, sewers, street cars, and telephone wires. The building was first occupied on November 21, 1883.

Due to the contribution of goods, the Home was furnished for the total sum of \$125. All other work was made possible by the principal fund made up of subscriptions of \$1,000 each which took two years to attain. The first three subscriptions came from Mrs. Bishop Warren, Mr. David Moffat, and Mr. Walter S. Cheesman with the stipulation that the money would be donated when ten more subscribers were found. These subscriptions included gifts from Mr. and Mrs. John Evans, Mrs. John W. Iliff, Mr. D.H. Routt, Mr. C.B. Kountze and W.B. Berger, the Cattle Growers' Association, the Grant Smelting Company, and Mrs. William Clayton.

There were many requests for placement of children from counties surrounding Denver. The managers decided in September 1886 to accept such children if arrangements could be made to pay for their care. In June 1893, admissions were again limited to children from Denver. Later, in November 1916, the board decided to accept children from outside Denver providing adequate space and full maintenance was paid.

Nineteen years after the original site was selected on Race Street, the board of managers decided they needed a more appropriate location for the Home. A site near Colorado Boulevard on Colfax was approved and purchased for \$3,750 in April 1901. In August, a construction bid of \$34,538 was accepted and the new building was completed eight months later. In 1990, the building was occupied by the successor of the Denver Orphans Home, the Denver Children's Home. The major interior improvements of the new building took two forms-one providing service equipment for both safety and convenience, and the other creating greater individualization in child care.

The minutes of various board meetings show that there was some difficulty in deciding what contact children could have with relatives. In 1892 it became necessary for the Board of Managers to require any child to have written permission for the Board before they could leave the grounds for any purpose other than running errands. Children were allowed to write their parents once a month on the condition that their parents supplied the stamps, the teacher supervised and corrected the letters, and a member of the Board inspected each letter before it was sealed. It was decided in 1903 that parents might visit their children once a week, and in 1905 the Board stipulated that the visitor and child remain on the grounds of the Home.

As early as 1889, health committees for the Home required that each child admitted have a doctor's certificate of inspection. By 1898 the Home managers had made arrangements to place all cases of contagious disease in Steele Hospital, a department of the City and County Hospital. In 1921, however, the third floor of the Home became equipped as a hospital and any child showing symptoms of illness was sent to the third floor for observation. Sanitation improvements for the kitchen were put into effect around 1920 during a period when contagious diseases were prevalent. In a nutrition class conducted at the Home in 1923, it was recommended that less meat and more fresh fruit, vegetables, and milk be served. Undernourished children were weighed regularly and classified according to the rest periods and special diets needed.

From 1884-1887 a teacher was hired to live in at the Denver Orphans' Home and provide an education for the children. Beginning in September 1888, children over the age of six were allowed to go to public schools. Unfortunately, that same fall a diphtheria epidemic forced the children to remain at the Home and a teacher was again retained. Teachers' salaries and school supplies were furnished for the Home by the Board of public Education over the years, but it is unclear how many of the children used these facilities and how many actually attended public schools. A new school, the Albion, was built opposite the Home in October 1920. For several years it was used by neighborhood children and children from the Home until the fall of 1923 when the school was designed for exclusive use by the children of the Home.

Methods of child placement and retention changed substantially over the years. Minutes of a Board meeting in the mid-1920s stated that the policy was to accept children for a three month period. At the end of this time the limit could be extended for another three months. At this time a child stayed in the Home for an average of 6.3 months, down from the early 1920s when the average stay was 10.5 months. Beginning in 1925, the Child Welfare Bureau, a casework agency, took over the responsibility of investigating applications to the Denver Orphans' Home from the Home's Committee on Admission

and Dismissals. The Child Welfare Bureau eventually became the Colorado Children's Aid Society, and by 1940 applications were made directly to this Society. Minutes from April 1932 mention that the Home was full and had a waiting list due to the widespread unemployment of parents. Indenture forms show that children were released from the Home to people who desired to have a child and proved they could provide care. When any child reached the age of 13, an attempt was made to find work for them or a home. A committee of the Home kept in touch with children placed in outside homes, and occasionally children returned to Denver Orphans' Home if their surroundings were found to be unsatisfactory.

The Denver Orphans Home continued to serve in much the same capacity until about 1960. By this time there was no longer a need for orphan or half-orphan care, and the Home turned to new needs. In 1962 the name was changed to Denver Children's Home and the scope of services changed as well. The orphanage became a treatment center for emotionally distressed children and adolescents. By design, the Home serves a statewide population placed by the courts or county departments of social services. The Home operated as a tax-exempt, non-profit intensive psychiatric treatment facility which provides both residential treatment and day treatment for children from ages six to 18, and is one of the four largest residential child care facilities in the State of Colorado as of 1990. In most cases, the children do not come from families whose means allow for, at most, private psychiatric care, and at least food, clothing, and shelter. Approximately 400 children per year are treated who have suffered sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, and other forms of turmoil and violence. Their care is quite a tribute to the founders who, in 1881, took on the job of caring for Denver's destitute children.

Denver Orphans Home/Denver Children's Home

1880	Donation of \$850 from a small group of Denver residents for care of destitute orphans. Organizational meeting held at the home of Margaret Evans.
1881	January 8-Articles of Incorporation notarized.
1883	Amendment to Articles of Incorporation. November 21-Original Denver Orphans' Home on Race Street occupied.
1902	April-Building occupied by Denver Children's Home in 1990 was opened on Albion Street.
1925	The Child Welfare Bureau, a state agency, took over the responsibility of investigating applications to the Home.
1962	Denver Orphans' Home became Denver Children's Home, and the scope of care changed.

1991

January 8-Denver Children's Home celebrates 110 years under the same Articles of Incorporation.

Scope and Contents note

The Denver Orphans Home Collection contains records covering the years 1881 to 1940. The Orphans Home has been in continuous existence since 1881 and the compilation of meeting minutes and early records in this collection is imperative to understanding its evolution over the years.

The Denver Orphans Home Collection contains both loose paper and bound volumes of records. The papers have been organized into three categories in chronological order. The first series, entitled Early Records, contains original meeting notes, articles of incorporation, and other materials covering the first ten years of the organization's existence (1881-c. 1890). Margaret Evans was one of the primary organizers and served as President of the Board of Managers. Correspondence and minutes from her office are included in this section.

The second series contains the Recording Secretary's Minutes based on the monthly meetings of the Board of Managers from November 1913-1940. The years between 1914 and 1930 are well documented, but records between 1930 and 1940 are very sparse.

Loose Materials comprise the next series. Many of these papers were inserted within the pages of the bound volumes and records of admissions. They have been separated to protect the loose pages and their original location is noted. These papers include correspondence, notes, and financial records dating from 1881-1927.

Bound volumes are comprised of both recording secretary's minutes and admissions to the home. One book also contains a collection of newspaper clippings from the turn of the century. The Book of Admissions lists the names of children admitted to the home and, in some cases, the names of their parents from 1906 to 1921. Each book is numbered and, in all, they cover the years 1881 to 1921.

Arrangement note

Original order for loose papers maintained from processing in December 1990.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

History Colorado. Stephen H. Hart Research Center

Provenance

This collection was donated by Mrs. F. Julian Maier (Margaret Maier) in 1963.

Processing Information note

Processed by Judith Broeker, December 1990, and Haley Suby, March 2015.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Denver Orphans' Home.
- Denver Orphans' Home.

Genre(s)

- Articles of incorporation
- Books.
- Correspondence.
- Ledgers (Accounting)
- Minutes.
- Newspaper clippings.
- Resolutions of boards of directors

Geographic Name(s)

- Denver (Colo.)

Personal Name(s)

- French, Eva Le Fevre, 1851-1948

Subject(s)

- Orphans.

Accession number

20746

Collection Inventory

Early Records 1881-1891

FF1 Biographical Information [1884-1984]

FF2 Articles of Incorporation and Constitution Jan. 1, 1881

FF3 Amendment to Law on Corporations for charitable Purposes March 12, 1883

FF4 List of Officers for 1883 and 1884

FF5 Notarized List of Persons to Whome Notices were sent May 7, 1883

FF6 Denver Orphans' Home Report 1890-1891

Recording Secretary's Minutes 1883, 1913-1940

FF7 Board of Managers Minutes from Sect. Minutes 1907-1915 [April 14, 1907-1915]

FF8 Secretary's Report from Secretary's Minutes from 1881-1886 1883

FF9 Board of Managers from Record of Minutes 1915-1921 Nov. 12, 1913, Oct. 15, 1919

FF10 Board of Managers from Record of Minutes 1915-1921 March 11, 1914, Oct. 15, 1919

Recording Secretary's Minutes

FF11 Board of Managers Minutes from Sect. Minutes 1907-1915 Aug. 12, 1914

FF12 Board of Managers from Sect. Minutes 1907-1915 Sept. 10, 1914

FF13 Board of Managers from Sect. Minutes 1907-1915 Oct. 11, 1914

FF14 Board of Managers from Sect. Minutes 1907-1915 Oct. 13, 1915

FF15 Board of Managers from Sect. Minutes 1915-1921 1914-1915

FF16 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1916

FF17 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1916

FF18 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1917

FF19 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1917

FF20 Board of Managers Minutes from Record of Minutes 1915-1921 Nov. 16, 1917

FF21 Recording Secretary's Minutes I 1918

FF22 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1918

FF23 Recording Secretary's Minutes, III 1918

FF24 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1919

Recording Secretary's Minutes

FF25 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1919

FF26 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1920

FF27 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1920

FF28 Annual Report from Record of Minutes 1915-1921, III 1920

FF29 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1921

FF30 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1921

FF31 Recording Secretary's Minutes, III 1921

FF32 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1922

FF33 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1922

FF34 Recording Secretary's Minutes, III 1922

FF35 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1923

FF36 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1923

FF37 Recording Secretary's Minutes, III 1923

FF38 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1924

Recording Secretary's Minutes

FF39 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1924

FF40 Recording Secretary's Minutes, III 1924

FF41 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1925

FF42 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1925

FF43 Recording Secretary's Minutes, III 1925

FF44 Recording Secretary's Minutes, I 1926

FF45 Recording Secretary's Minutes, II 1926

FF46 Recording Secretary's Minutes, III 1926

FF47 Recording Secretary's Minutes 1927

FF48 Recording Secretary's Minutes 1928

FF49 Recording Secretary's Minutes 1929

FF50 Recording Secretary's Minutes 1930

FF51 Recording Secretary's Minutes 1935

FF52 Recording Secretary's Minutes 1939

Loose Materials

FF53 Recording Secretary's Minutes 1940

Loose Materials 1881-1927

FF54 Newspaper Clippings from Denver Orphans Home Book 1881

FF55 Secretary's Minutes from 1905-1915 Undated

FF56 Secretary Minutes, Admission Forms 1907-1915

FF57 Correspondence from Denver Orphans Home Book 1881

FF58 Treasurer's Report Feb. 1908

FF59 Officers and Board of Managers 1911

FF60 Secretary Minutes, Contract 1913

FF61 Treasurer's Annual Report 1913

FF62 Correspondence and Receipts 1914

FF63 Correspondence 1914

FF64 Notes and Correspondence 1915

FF65 Report of Correspondence Sect. Oct. 1915-Oct. 1916

Loose Materials

FF66 Resolution Jan. 12, 1916

FF67 Bequeath to Home Nov. 8, 1916

FF68 List of Board of Managers 1916-1917

FF69 Insurance Evaluation of Home Jan. 20, 1917

FF70 Correspondence June 11, 1919

FF71 Correspondence Sept. 8, 1919

FF72 Resolution Sept. 27, 1919

FF73 Thanksgiving Donors 1919

FF74 Correspondence Sept. 15, 1920

FF75 Correspondence Nov. 25, 1920

FF76 Correspondence Dec. 1920

FF77 Correspondence and Thanksgiving Day Donors 1920, 1921

FF78 Notes July 1921

FF79 Correspondence Aug. 15, 1921

Bound Books

FF80 Correspondence Nov. 2, 1921

FF81 Correspondence 1921

FF82 List of Donors 1921

FF83 Officers and Board of Directors 1926-1927

Bound Books 1881-1921

FF84 Record Book of Orphans 1881

FF85 Newspaper Clippings of Orphanage 1883-1902

FF86 Record of Indentures 1884-1893

FF87 Financial Ledger 1908

FF88 Record of Minutes 1915-1921

FF89 Record Book of Orphans 1916-1921

FF90 Secretary Minutes 1881-1886

FF91 Secretary Minutes 1886-1893

FF92 Secretary Minutes 1893-1897

Bound Books

FF93 Secretary Minutes 1898-1899

FF94 Secretary Minutes 1901-1907

FF95 Secretary Minutes 1907-1915