Finding Aid to the
Agassiz Garden Club Records

Agassiz Garden Club
Agassiz Garden Club Records, 1954-1991
4.4 linear ft.
Collection number: Mss 270
Oversize Collection 8

History Scope and Content Box and Folder List

OVERVIEW

Access: The collection is in off-site storage. A 24-hour turn-around is required to make the records available for use at the Institute Research Room. The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Marcella Melsted, 1997 (Acc. 2486).

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Citation: [Identification of item]. Agassiz Garden Club Records, MS 270, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

HISTORY

In 1954 Mrs. H.D. Long held an organizational meeting with nine other women for the purpose of creating the Agassiz Garden Club. The club served a large area including Walsh, Cavalier, and Nelson counties. At the first meeting Mrs. Long was elected the first president of the club, and Mrs. M.C. Flaten provided sample constitutions she had collected from other garden clubs. The name Agassiz was chosen

in honor of Swiss horticulturalist, Dr. Lewis R. Agassiz. This name was considered appropriate as the region served by the garden club lies on the former bed of the ancient, glacial Lake Agassiz.

As North Dakota was not a member of the National Federation of Garden Clubs until 1966, the Agassiz Garden Club was affiliated with the South Dakota Federation of Garden Clubs from 1955 until 1958. In 1966 the garden club joined the North Dakota and the National Federation of Garden Clubs. One of the club members, Agnes Sticha, created the seal for the North Dakota State Federation of Garden Clubs. The design for the seal included a meadowlark and prairie roses and can be found in the club's records.

The garden club meetings were held in the homes of the members between March and November. The club participated in a variety of activities including flower shows, flower sales, and other fundraisers. The club also applied for and received various grants and monetary awards in order to continue their work in the community. Proceeds from fundraisers generally went to garden development in the local community. Two of the earliest projects the club participated in included the donation of fundraising proceeds to the Park River swimming pool (1955), and to landscaping the grounds of St. Ansgar's Hospital (1956). Beginning in 1959 the club's primary project was the Homme Dam Recreational area near Park River, N.D. In this location the women chose to establish a Pioneer Memorial Garden, a bird sanctuary, and installed a marker for the Blue Star Highway project.

The actual planning for the Pioneer Memorial Garden began in 1955. The club wanted to establish the garden at the Homme Recreation Area, but first it was necessary to create a park board for Walsh County. The park board was created and acted as an intermediary between the garden club and the United States Army Corp of Engineers. This was all necessary in order for the club to get permission to establish a garden at the recreation area. The garden club was thus instrumental in establishing the Walsh County Park Board.

One of the fundraising projects the Agassiz Garden Club developed was the sale of the "Homesteading" spoon. This spoon was created for the garden club featuring an image taken from a well-known photograph that was originally taken in the area. The photo featured John Bakken and his family standing in front of a sod house. This image was also used as a United States stamp design commemorating the Homestead Act. Proceeds from the sale of the spoon were used by the club to develop the Pioneer Memorial Garden.

In 1970 the Pioneer Memorial Garden and the Homme Recreational Area were established as a bird sanctuary and listed in the National Audubon Society guide

The Blue Star Marker was a project of garden clubs across the nation, but was the first of its kind in North Dakota. It required state legislation allowing for the formal dedication and naming of a section of highway as an official Blue Star Highway. The purpose of this is to commemorate the men and women who have served, and will serve in all wars. For many years after the first dedication of the Blue Star Marker in 1971 along Highway #17, Memorial Day services were held in the Pioneer Memorial Garden.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Agassiz Garden Club Records** have been organized into of five series: Constitution and Bylaws, Treasurer's Records, Project Plans, Subject Files, and Scrapbooks.

The **Constitution and Bylaws Series** consists of an undated constitution, undated list of bylaws, and an undated list of amendments. The series also includes an amended version of the club's constitution and bylaws dated 1973, and a copy of the 1966 *Bylaws of North Dakota State Federation of Garden Clubs.* Apparently the club did not maintain meeting minutes since none were found in its records.

The **Treasurer's Records Series** includes both general records for the club, a separate record for spoon sales and memorial profits, and tax records. To raise funds for the club's ongoing project of maintaining the Pioneer Memorial Garden, a special spoon was made and sold by the club. Memorials were also sold, and these records were kept separate from the club's general records of income and expenses. Not all of the records were effectively separated and some of the ledgers and loose documents contain various bits of information from all of the club's activities. Membership records can also be found in both the ledgers and loose documents.

The **Project Plans Series** contains information and records about the various projects the garden club worked on over the years. The primary project for the club was the creation and maintenance of the Pioneer Memorial Garden at the Homme Recreational Area near Park River, N.D. Other projects that the club worked on were usually associated with the major project of the primary project of the memorial garden. Some of these projects include building a lily pond/fountain at the Homme Recreation Area, establishing the area as a bird sanctuary, participating in the American Revolution Bicentennial, and participating in the Keep North Dakota Clean movement. Another primary activity of the club was to participate in and host annual flower and hobby shows. The club hosted flower sales also with the proceeds usually earmarked for the memorial garden project.

The information included in this series includes maps and plans of the Pioneer Memorial Garden (Oversize Collection 8). Also included is a history of the project written by club members, applications for grant money for the memorial garden, papers regarding the methods for establishing a memorial garden, and lists of other memorial gardens in the state.

Information for the bird sanctuary project includes the official petition to the Walsh County Park Board requesting the Homme Recreation Area to be designated a bird sanctuary. The chairman of the park board signed the petition granting the garden club's request. There are also grant applications and organizational documents proving general information about birds and bird sanctuaries.

Information for the flower and hobby shows consists mostly of annual programs listing the various schedules and classes for each flower show. Other information included consists of guest books for some of the shows and expense records for some of the shows.

The records for the American Revolution Bicentennial and the Keep North Dakota Clean project include both correspondence and resource materials for the projects. These two projects were affiliated through

the state program and were community beautification programs that solicited the help of all state garden clubs. The Agassiz Garden Club involved itself in the programs as an extension of what they were already doing to maintain the Homme Recreation Area.

The **Subject Files Series** includes a booklet written by club members, *Agassiz Garden Club, 20th Anniversary History*. This was a history of the club, the Homme Dam Recreation Area, the creation of the Walsh County Park Board, the Pioneer Memorial Garden, and other projects of the club. Other items in this series include awards won by the club, brochures and pamphlets, correspondence, membership lists, memorial lists, miscellaneous records, organizational information, newsletters, newspaper clippings, and a press release from 1976 detailing the development of the Homme Recreation Area.

The **Scrapbook Series** consists of two categories of scrapbooks that were created by the club. One set of scrapbooks were a general record of the clubs activities that included newspaper clippings, programs, photographs, letters, lists of officers, and organization records such as a copy of the constitution. The later scrapbooks, from 1980 and later, follow the political career of one of the club members, Rosemarie Myrdal, a former Lieutenant Governor of North Dakota. The other set of scrapbooks (1968-1976) were formal books displayed at state conferences. The books were well maintained and organized for the purpose of winning awards and recognition for the club. The formal scrapbooks from 1971 to 1976 are each adorned with a hand-painted porcelain medallion. One of the images is the state seal of the North Dakota Federation of Garden Clubs, which was designed by a member of the Agassiz Garden Club, Agnes Sticha. The formal scrapbooks contain photos, letters, programs and newspaper clippings documenting the activities of the club.

SEPARATION RECORD

Photographs (unprocessed, Acc. 2486)

- 8 album pages with color snapshots of Homme Dam
- File of snapshots (ca. 46 items) of people at Homme Dam and aerials of area

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Historical material, and Finding aid
1/2	Constitution and Bylaws, 1973
	Treasurer's Records Series
	Ledgers—
1/3	1954-1959
1/4	1960-1974
1/5	1974-1991

1/6	Spoon sales and Memorial funds, 1978-1984
	Loose records—
1/7	1965-1970
1/8	1971-1983
1/9	Tax records, 1970-1984

Project Plans Series

1/10	Pioneer Memorial Garden Project History, 1959-1972
1/11	Pioneer Memorial Garden Project Plans
Oversize 8	Pioneer Memorial Garden maps and drawings (4)
1/12	Bird Sanctuary Project Plans
1/13	Flower Shows and Hobby Shows, 1954-1977
	American Revolution Bicentennial and Keep North Dakota Clean Project: Correspondence and Resource Material—
1/14	1974
1/15	1975

Subject Files Series

1/16	*Agassiz Garden Club 20th Anniversary History, 1974*
1/17	Awards, 1971, 1975
2/1	Brochures and pamphlets
2/2	Correspondence, 1954-1977
2/3	Membership lists, 1961
2/4	Memorial lists, 1961
2/5	Miscellaneous records, 1957-1974
2/6	Organizational information
2/7	Newsletters, 1954, 1959, 1972, 1975
2/8	Newspaper clippings
2/9	Press release, 1976

Scrapbooks Series

	General scrapbooks—
3/1	1954-1966
4/1	1967-1973
11/1	1977-1979
12/1	1980-1985
13/1	1986-1990
	Formal scrapbooks for competition—
2/10	1968-1969
4/2	1970
5/1	1971

6/1	1972
7/1	1973
8/1	1974
9/1	1975
10/1	1976

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