

ArMs1985.081, ArMs 1977.206
2 Record Carton boxes and 3 scrapbooks
in custom enclosures
(3.5 cubic feet)
NYKI590-940-0532 (1977.206)
4-C: 5.4.C

Marcy Avenue Baptist Church
1872-1939

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Abstract

This collection contains the administrative and organizational records of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church, which began as an outgrowth of the Washington Avenue Baptist Church. The Church, located in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area, was formed in 1872 and dis-banned in 1939. The church experienced rapid growth and underwent several expansions in the 1870's and 1880's. By 1900 Marcy Avenue Baptist Church was the largest Baptist church in Brooklyn. The administrative records include Membership Rolls, Registers, and Marriage Stubs as well as Deacons reports, Ladies Aid Society reports, Sunday School Superintendent Reports, Benevolent Society reports, Reports of the Board of Trustees, and general Church Statistics. In 1939 the church became home to the Concord Baptist Church of Christ.

Provenance

ArMs 1985.081: For materials with the Accession number 1985.081 the donor is unknown. These materials include four dense scrapbooks of administrative history that document the organizational growth of the church, as well as Membership Rolls, Registers, and Marriage Stubs.

ArMs 1977.206 : Materials with the accession number 1977.206 came to the Brooklyn Historical Society through a donation by Emily Austin Madden. This donation includes six folders of materials including: a scrapbook, correspondence, church programs and souvenirs, printed church histories and clippings. The scrapbook was made by Mrs. Madden's grandmother Emily Parker Fox. Her grandfather was William Brownell Fox, who for many years served as the Superintendent of the Sunday school at Marcy Avenue Baptist Church. Mr. Fox was in the hardware business and this scrapbook was pasted into the pages of one of his hardware catalogues.

Administrative History

The Marcy Avenue Baptist Church came about as an expansion of the Washington Avenue Baptist Church. Its original location (Marcy Avenue and Monroe Street) in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood formerly belonged to the Central Congregational Church. The church was purchased in June, 1872 by the Trustees of the Washington Avenue Baptist Church where it functioned as a Sunday-school. The first meeting was held in a small frame building. In short order, other functions were incorporated such as prayer meetings and in September 1872 preaching services were begun. These services were conducted by several pastors from various Baptist churches in the area. With the addition of worship services it was determined that steps should be taken to organize a new church. The full development of the church began on November 10, 1873. The Rev. Reuben Jeffery D.D. assumed the charge as first pastor of the congregation.¹

The chapel and adjoining lots were donated by the Washington Avenue Baptist Church for the purposes of starting a new church, but the building was found insufficient to house a growing congregation. The building of a new church proved to be a necessity and additional lots were purchased. (One hundred and twenty-five feet on Marcy Avenue by one hundred feet on Monroe

¹ The New York Times, Published June 14, 1874 "A New Church in Brooklyn"

Street). This expansion was completed in October 1874.² The church was growing at such a rate that additional expansion projects were completed in 1876 and again in 1878.

With growth continuing, by 1887 plans were under way to construct a new church which was to be built at the corner of Putnam and Marcy avenues ; estimated cost \$140,000. The church was to be built of pressed bricks and terra cotta in the Romanesque architectural style. The ground dimensions were to be 190 feet on Marcy Avenue by 95 feet on Putnam Avenue. The seating capacity would be 1,500 and the Sunday-school room 2,000 making the grand total 3,500.³ The plot of ground on which the church was built belonged to Mr. Theodore Banta, who exchanged it for the lots on which the church presently stood.

By 1900, Marcy Avenue Baptist Church was the largest church in Brooklyn of the Baptist denomination.⁴

In March 1939, the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church was taken over by the Concord Baptist congregation to meet the rapidly increasing need for a large church for African-American worshipers in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area.⁵ Concord Baptist was established in 1847 and occupied other sites before moving to Marcy and Putnam Avenues in 1939.⁶

Scope and Content

This collection contains the administrative and organizational records of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church, as well as much church ephemera, 1872-1939. This collection is comprised of two accessions, which have been processed as separate series.

Series I: ArMs 1985.081

The *Church Community* subseries consists of four scrapbooks. These scrapbooks are incredibly dense and full of information both substantive and trivial. All four volumes of scrapbooks contain: Deacons reports, Ladies Aid Society reports, Sunday School Superintendent Reports, Benevolent Society reports, Reports of the Board of Trustees, Statistics. They include everything from yearly itemized budgets to comments on the weather for individual prayer meetings and from theological discussions to discussions of the proceeds from a Christmas Bazaar. The scrapbooks dutifully contain dismissals granted to departing members, new baptisms, deaths of members and many obituaries and remembrances. Each prayer meeting and Sunday service is noted. There is a record of delegates elected and funds raised. In short these scrapbooks contain all manner of concerns both business and community-oriented that were of importance to members of the church. All scrapbooks are chronological in order.

Sub-Series A. Scrapbooks 1872-1927 – volume of reports, minutes, correspondence, and ephemera.

Below is a synopsis of each volume:

² See Scrapbook 1. History of the Church written by Theodore M. Banta, President of the Board of Trustees

³ See Scrapbook 2. The Brooklyn Illustrated Church Weekly, Dec. 3, 1892

⁴ See Scrapbook 3.

⁵ See Box 5, Folder 19. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, undated.

⁶ The New York Times, April 2, 1956, "Brooklyn Church Marks Reopening"

Vol. I, 1872-1883. This volume is handwritten throughout, except where printed materials have been pasted in. It begins with a handwritten church history prepared by Theodore M. Banta. (Printed histories by Mr. Banta also appear in this volume). Other items of note include: a program from the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church Dedication Exercises, Oct. 6, 1874; Pastor Rev. Jeffery's letters sent to his congregation from Paris; Church expansion and re-opening in October 1876; A statement by Rev. Jeffrey on the question of open and closed communion. This volume also contains much discussion regarding the question as to whether or not the Marcy Avenue Baptist church would be admitted into the Long Island Baptist Association.⁷ There is a detailed account of the action taken upon the church's application for admission to the Association as well as the eventual admission to the Long Island Baptist Association. At the center of the discussion is a question of open communion practices. Also included is the Chapel expansion (with seating accommodations for 1,200 worshippers), Fifth anniversary celebrations Nov. 21, 1878. It chronicles the two-year tenure of second pastor, Hugh O. Pentecost, called to the pastorate on April 11, 1881.

Vol. II, 1883-1896. This volume is also handwritten throughout, except where printed materials have been pasted in. Items of note in this volume are: the Rev. W.C.P. Rhoades, D.D. becomes the church's third pastor in November 1885; planning and discussion concerning new church construction in 1887. The new church is to be built at the corner of Putnam and Marcy avenues; the ground dimensions will be 190 feet on Marcy Avenue by 95 feet on Putnam Avenue. The plot of ground on which it is to be built belonged to Mr. Theodore Banta, who exchanged it for the lots on which the present church now stands. This scrapbook also chronicles the "breaking ground" on a new church edifice; Pamphlet "Programme of Public Services in connection with Depositing Box in Corner-Stone of the New Edifice of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church, Brooklyn, NY October 1, 1887. 4:15 P.M."; Program for the 4 days of services and events in conjunction with the dedication of the new house of worship, Oct. 1-4 1888 including opening exercises and Dedicatory Service. Sept. 30 – Oct. 4th, 1888; Letter from the committee appointed to prepare a Memorial for the late Rev. Dr. Reuben Jeffery 1889. Discussion of Rev. Jeffery's contributions in general; Program for the 22nd anniversary of the Sunday School of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church, June 3, 1894; Printed history of the Sunday School and the Societies of the Church

Vol. III, 1896-1919. Handwritten throughout, though some typewritten pages are beginning to emerge and be pasted into the scrapbook.

This volume contains clippings and a program for the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the installation of Rev. W.C.P. Rhoades, D.D., as pastor of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church, Brooklyn, NY 1885-1910; Clippings and Program of Marcy Avenue Silver anniversary 1873-1898; a letter regarding "individual service" at the communion; series of letters regarding Bro. John Hills by Mr. Fox, W.E. Atkins, J.M. Hudnut, Mr. Parson, Mr. Lupton, and Mr. Snow; a letter regarding the passing of John Hills and Rev. F.A. Douglass, Secretary of the American and Foreign Bible Society, and Deacon Henry E. Tompkins; Theodore M. Banta enters his 26th year as the Superintendent of the Sunday School, Dec. 1897; Rev. Rhoades appointed chaplain of the Thirteenth Regiment by Colonel David E. Austin, 1900; Multiple letters regarding the adoption of a pledge card system for collections to support the church, referred to as "The Plan"; Application for membership form to be enrolled in the

⁷ See: *The Marcy Ave. Baptist Church, Brooklyn, N.Y. and the Long Island Baptist Association*. [New York : Franci Hart & Co., 1880]. (Call number: F128K BX6480.M37 M37 1880)

Marcy Avenue Baptist Boys' Brigade; 3 page report of the Summer Vacation School held at Marcy Avenue Baptist Church July 10-Aug 20 1912. ; Materials relating to Rhoades resignation after 30 years in pastorate; various letters regarding John M. Moore new election as pastor February/March 1917. Letter by John M. Moore Oct. 1st, 1919 on "What's the matter with our world" and asking for regular attendance form members; a 5 page outline of a sermon or speech, author unknown.

Vol. IV, 1917-1927. In this volume printed "Calendars for the Week" have been pasted in throughout the volume. The calendars list such events as Young People's Night, Wenonah Camp Fire Meeting and Choir Rehearsal; Other items of note include a pamphlet for the Commencement Exercises of the Junior Department of the Bible School of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church Class of 1920, 1921; a letter regarding a committee appointed to arrange suitable recognition of the service of four of its members who had either recently passed or were approaching 80 years old. The letter discusses the contributions of Mr. William B. Fox, Mr. Dexter M. Swaney, Mr. Stephen R. Branch, Mr. Albert W. Webber; a lengthy memorial for Mr. William B. Fox by James M. Hudnut May 3, 1922; Tribute to Mr. Fox by George S. Knapp May 3, 1922; a 3 page Statement from John M. Moore regarding the question: "Is the Marcy Avenue Church ready for a real forward movement under his continued leadership"?; a copy of a souvenir booklet, "The Building of an Institution: The Golden Anniversary of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church 1873-1923". Contains facts, names of pastors, associate pastors, golden anniversary goals and histories of Pastors Rev. Reuben Jeffery, Rev. W.C.P. Rhoades and Rev. John M. Moore; Golden Anniversary Week ephemera; 6 page letter titled Remarks by James M. Hudnut at 50th anniversary dinner, Nov., 7th 1923 – In the essay he mentions the contributions of Theodore M. Banta, John Hills, William B. Fox, and Edwin Ives; discussion of the early church in regards to the communion question – "was it permissible for members of a Baptist Church to partake of the communion in a "paedo-Baptist" or "pedo-Baptist" church"? i.e., open communion and the Baptist doctrine of Soul Liberty. ; Memorial meeting for Mrs. Emma Payne Elliott, long service in the W.C.T.U., known as "Mother Elliott" among the sailors, she worked as Kings County superintendent of the sailors' work. Letters regarding referendum to members of church on the question of "open membership" – should the church change its rules so as to admit into some sort of membership, "Persons who are evidently Christians, but who conscientiously do not wish to be immersed". Pastor John Moore receives a calling to become a General Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. His possible resignation is discussed, and officially announced to the church on August 15, 1926. In Memoriam – James M. (Monroe) Hudnut, Deacon Emeritus and secretary of the New York Life Insurance Company. Biographical information and quotes from his 50th anniversary of service with New York Life Insurance Company. Pastor, Rev. Wilbour E. Saunders accepts invitation to become next pastor at Marcy Avenue Baptist Church February 9, 1927.

The *Administrative Records* subseries consists of Membership Rolls, Registers, and Marriage Stubs. Items include Register of letters, minutes of annual meetings, 1875-1916; various reports and treasurer's reports, 1872-1910; register of members, 1875-1890; and marriage stubs, 1886-1919.

Series 2: ArMs 1977.206

The accession 1977.206 forms the second series. Six folders were maintained and put into chronological order.

Folder 1. Correspondence – 1908-1922

- a. Handwritten draft of a poem featuring references to parishioners of Marcy Avenue Baptist Church.
- b. Letter from the Westinghouse Church Kerr & Company in regards to boiler renovations and boiler installation. May 19, 1908.
- c. Typed sheath of children's hymns. 4 pages, no date.
- d. Typed Remarks by James M. Hudnut at the memorial of William B. Fox, May 3rd, 1922, 6 pages.
- e. Typed tribute to William B. Fox by George S. Knapp, May 3rd, 1922. 2 pages.
- f. Letter from George Case to Mrs. Emily Parker Fox on the memorial of her husband, William B. Fox, May 21, 1922. 2 pages

Folder 2: Programs & Souvenirs – circa 1900 - 1923

- a. Marcy Avenue Baptist Church Souvenir for the Fair, December 4th, 5th, and 6th. No date (190?)
- b. Thoughts From Our Friends: "Favorite Quotations" compiled and published by The Ladies of Marcy Avenue Baptist Church, Brooklyn, NY 1902. 58 p.
- c. Printed floor plan provided by the Sunday School of the March Ave. Baptist Church. "The diagrams printed hereon are to enable our members to find the seats assigned them at our Christmas Exercises without delay or confusion". December, 1902.
- d. Souvenir program of Marcy Avenue Baptist Church.
- e. Souvenir program for Rally Sunday, September 24, 1905
- f. Program – 25th Anniversary Celebration Rev. W.C.P. Rhoades, D.D. 1885 – 1910, December 4-9, 1910.
- g. The Record, a bulletin published semi-annually to reflect the life and spirit of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church, January 1913.
- h. Program, Sunday May 13th, 1917
- i. Program for Golden Anniversary Week, Nov. 4-11, 1923

Folder 3: Church Histories and Press Clippings – 1908 -1923

- a. Membership Register, 1908
- b. Booklet – "Marcy Avenue Baptist Church 1910 Yearbook", Church business directory for the year 1910. 20 p.
- c. Printed History - "The Making of an Institution: The Golden Anniversary of the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church" 1873-1923.

Folder 4: Scrapbook – 1874-1923

- a. Scrapbook made by Mrs. Emily Parker Fox, wife of William Brownell Fox, relating to Marcy Avenue Baptist Church. They were constituent members of the church and Mr. Fox was for many years Superintendent of the Sunday School. The contents of this scrapbook have been pasted into the pages of a hardware catalog (Catalogue P&F Corbin, 1874). Not all clippings relate to the Marcy Avenue Baptist Church. Many of the clippings are of current events of the day. The pasting of clippings is inconsistent, not on every page. The condition of this scrapbook is exceptionally fragile.

Folder 5: Misc. Clippings – 1897-1958

Folder 6: Theodore Banta Clippings - 1883- 1892

System of Arrangement

This collection consists of two accessions: 1985.081 and 1977.206. In following the archival principle of *respect des fonds*, the accessions have been processed as two series. Series I contains materials from the accession number ArMs1985.081. It is comprised of two sub-series. Sub-series A. Church Community, and Sub-series B. Administrative Records. Series II consists of 6 folders.

In processing all materials were arranged within their respective series and sub-series chronologically.

Series II contains materials from the accession number ArMs 1977.206. It is comprised of six numbered folders, and arranged within each series by date.

Conditions of Access and Use

Brooklyn Historical Society archives and manuscripts must be examined on site. Appointments to examine archives and manuscript materials must be made in advance. Please contact the Brooklyn Historical Society to learn of any additional conditions of access and use.

Preferred Citation

Marcy Avenue Baptist Church, 1872-1939, ArMs 1985.081, ArMs 1977.206, Brooklyn Historical Society.

Language of Materials

All materials in English.

Related Material

Brooklyn Historical Society Archives and Manuscripts

Brooklyn Miscellaneous Baptist Churches; ArMs 1986.013; Brooklyn Historical Society Othmer Library, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

Records of the Central Congregational Society and Church (now Cadman Memorial Church) 1845-1945; ArMs 1989.003; Brooklyn Historical Society Othmer Library, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

Washington Avenue Baptist Church (1851-1929); ArMs 1985.064; Brooklyn Historical Society Othmer Library, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

Long Island Baptist Association; ArMs 1978.152; Brooklyn Historical Society Othmer Library, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

Library Materials

The Marcy Ave. Baptist Church, Brooklyn, N.Y. and the Long Island Baptist Association. [New York : Franci Hart & Co., 1880]. (Call number: F128K BX6480.M37 M37 1880)

Access Points

Personal Names

Jeffery, Reuben, Rev., D.D.
Rhoades, W.C.P., Rev., D.D.
Fox, William B. (Brownell)
Fox, Emily Parker, Mrs.
Banta, Theodore M. (Theodore Melvin), 1834-1910
Hudnut, James Monroe, 1844-
Elliott, Emma Payne, Mrs., "Mother Elliot"
Snow, Charles Thompson
Stout, George Corwin

Corporate Names

Marcy Avenue Baptist Church (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)
Long Island Baptist Association
Washington Avenue Baptist Church (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)
Marcy Avenue Baptist Church (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.) -- History.
Marcy Avenue Baptist Church (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.) -- Anniversaries, etc.

Topics

Baptists – New York (State) – New York

Geographic Terms

Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) -- Church history.
Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) Religious life and customs – 19th century
Bedford-Stuyvesant (New York, N.Y.)
Marcy Avenue (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)

Form/Genre

Clippings
Correspondence
Ephemera
Scrapbooks

Container List

Series 1: Marcy Avenue Baptist Church ArMs 1985.081, 1872-1939

<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1985.081	1	1	Scrapbook Vol. I	1872-1883
		2	Membership Rolls	1873-1905

		3	Membership Rolls	1905-1916
		4	Membership Records	1873-1879
		5	Membership Records	1873-1890
		6	Membership Records	1890-1910
		7	Register	1910-1920
		8	Register	1922-1939
1985.081	2	9	Scrapbook Vol. II	1883-1896
1985.081	3	10	Scrapbook Vol. III	1896-1919
1985.081	4	11	Scrapbook Vol. IV	1917-1927
1985.081	5	12	Marriage Stubs	1886-1919
		13	Membership Registers	1886, 1903
		14	Program	1924

Series 2: Marcy Avenue Baptist Church ArMs 1977.206, 1874-1958 (Bulk dates 1908 – 1923)

<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1977.206	5	1	Correspondence	1908-1922
		2	Programs, Souvenirs	circa 1900-1923
		3	Church History; Membership Register	1908 - 1923
		4	Scrapbook	1874 - 1923
		5	Misc. Clippings	1897 – 1958
		6	Theodore Banta Clippings	1883- 1892