

ArMS 1978.114  
1 Oversize Box, .5 cubic feet  
NYKI590-940-0424  
4.6.C

Charles M. Higgins Papers  
1854-1929  
Bulk dates (1886-1929)

Brooklyn Historical Society  
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Brooklyn, NY 11201

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## Abstract

This collection contains the personal papers of Charles M. Higgins (1854-1929). Mr. Higgins was a prominent ink manufacturer and creator of “Higgins American India Ink”. He was the head of the Charles M. Higgins Company, manufacturers of the drawing ink he invented. The company’s operations were located in Park Slope, Brooklyn. The collection contains many papers, both pamphlets and typescripts, written by Mr. Higgins on the topics of compulsory vaccination, religious ethics, morality and patriotism.

## Provenance

The Charles M. Higgins Papers were donated to the Brooklyn Historical Society by Mr. Higgins’ daughter, Rachel Everson, in 1976 and subsequently accessioned as ArMs 1978.114.

## Biographical Note

Charles M. Higgins (1854-1929) was a prominent ink manufacturer and creator of “Higgins American India Ink”. He was the head of the Charles M. Higgins Company, manufacturers of the drawing ink he invented.<sup>1</sup>

Born in County Leitrim, Ireland in 1854, Mr. Higgins arrived in America at the age of six. The family settled in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, where Mr. Higgins continued to reside for the rest of his life (at 101 Prospect Park West).

Higgins attended school until the age of 9. He was a self-taught draftsman and in his early years he was employed at *Scientific News*. It was here that he saw the need for good quality draftsman and artists’ ink. His experiments led to the development in 1880 of a black writing ink. The Charles M. Higgins Company began behind his house at 101 Prospect Park West and eventually moved to 271 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Brooklyn. John E. Gavin, also of Brooklyn, was a long standing associate of Mr. Higgins in the development of the ink business and other enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

In 1899, he married Alexandra Fransioli<sup>3</sup>. They had three children; a son, Tracy Higgins and two daughters, Lisbeth Higgins Hamm and Rachel Higgins Everson.

Higgins was an early opponent of compulsory vaccination, thinking it harmful. For many years he was the treasurer of the Anti-Vaccination League of America. He wrote many pamphlets on this subject, including “Horror of Vaccination” (1920).

In 1900, Charles M. Higgins wrote an open letter to the editor of the Brooklyn Eagle on “Justice for China”, at the time of the Boxer Rebellion.

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<sup>1</sup> The New York Times, October 23, 1929, “C.M. Higgins Dies; Ink Manufacturer”

<sup>2</sup> Brooklyn Daily Eagle, October 22, 1929, “Chas. M. Higgins, Manufacturer, Dies at Home”

<sup>3</sup> The niece of Father Fransioli.

In 1908 he was a leader in the effort to rehabilitate the Brooklyn Borough Bank, founded in 1832, located on Court Street. He opposed the receivership being placed in the hands of an “up-stater” and was himself appointed as a joint-receiver.

As one of the founding members of the Kings County Historical Society (13 Feb, 1911) he fought to have the Gowanus site of the Battle of Long Island (27 Aug. 1776) restored, especially the old Gowanus Stone House. Shortly after his death Mayor LaGuardia converted this site to a playground. The Kings County Historical Society, through the money of Higgins, donated the ‘Altar to Liberty’ statue on Battle Hill in Green-Wood Cemetery.<sup>4</sup>

Charles M. Higgins was a member of many clubs and served on the Boards of many public service oriented institutions. These include:

Founding Member of: Kings County Historical Society  
Brooklyn Chamber of Congress

Trustee: Brooklyn Ethical Culture Society

Treasurer: Anti-Vaccination League of America

Member of: Manufacturer’s Association

Member of: Montauk Club  
Riding & Driving Club  
Crescent Athletic Club  
Brooklyn Club  
St. George’s Golf Club  
Huntington Bay Club

### **Scope and Content**

The Charles M. Higgins Papers consist primarily of writings (mostly by Higgins), photographs, and clippings relating to his position as a prominent ink manufacturer, as well as aspects of his activities in the Anti-Vaccination League of America, the Kings County Historical Society, and his interests in religious ethics and morality. The collection is comprised of one series.

### **System of Arrangement**

This collection consists of one oversize box housing six folders and two framed certificates. Original order was maintained, and materials were arranged thematically and chronologically into the following seven categories: Pamphlets against compulsory vaccination; Pamphlets on American Diplomacy, Religious Ethics and Morality; Misc. typed manuscripts; Clippings, Photographs, Oversize photographs, and Certificates.

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<sup>4</sup> The Office Appliance Co. newsletter, 1960, “Higgins Ink Co., Observes 80<sup>th</sup> Year – ‘Lengthened Shadow’ of Its Founder”. See accession folder or folder 4, Box 1 for copy.

In processing, metal fasteners were removed, papers unfolded, acidic newsprint copied onto acid-free buffered paper, photographs were housed in mylar and oversize folders were created to house oversize photographs and one mylared certificate. Oversize photographs and one book, "Horrors of Vaccination" were wrapped in tissue paper. All materials were arranged within their respective series chronologically.

### **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**

Charles M. Higgins Papers, ArMs 1978.114, Brooklyn Historical Society.

### **Language of Materials**

All materials in English

### **Related Material**

#### Brooklyn Historical Society Archives and Manuscripts

Kings County Historical Society; ArMs 1977.210; Brooklyn Historical Society Othmer Library, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

Kings County Historical Society; ArMs 1977.305; Brooklyn Historical Society Othmer Library, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

#### Library Materials

Higgins, Chas. M. (Charles Michael), b. 1854. *Memorial to Mayor Gaynor, September 15, 1913 / address of Charles M. Higgins at memorial meeting in honor of Mayor Gaynor at St. James, L.I. Brooklyn, N.Y. : P.J. Collison & Co., 1913. (Call number: CT 275.G3967 H54 1913)*

### **Access Points**

#### Personal Names

Higgins, Chas. M. (Charles Michael), b. 1854

Gavin, John E.

Higgins, Alexandra Fransioli, Mrs.

Higgins, Tracy

#### Topics

Vaccination  
 Vaccination -- Complications  
 Tetanus  
 Businessmen -- Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) -- 19<sup>th</sup> century  
 Businessmen -- Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) -- 20<sup>th</sup> century  
 Prohibition  
 Long Island, Battle of, New York, N.Y., 1776

Corporate Names

Anti-Vaccination League of America  
 Higgins Ink Company, Brooklyn.  
 Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences  
 Brooklyn Bank  
 Brooklyn Ethical Culture Society  
 Manufacturer's Association, Brooklyn  
 Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)  
 Montauk Club of Brooklyn  
 Green-Wood Cemetery (New York, N.Y.)

Geographic Terms

Park Slope (New York, N.Y.)  
 United States—History—Revolution, 1775-1783—Campaigns

Form/Genre

Pamphlets  
 Manuscripts  
 Clippings  
 Photographs

**Container List**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	1	Misc. Pamphlets against compulsory Vaccination	1907-1920
	2	Misc. Pamphlets on Amer. Diplomacy, Religious Ethics and Morality	1900-1926
	3	Misc. Typed Manuscripts	1901-1903, Undated
	4	Misc. Clippings	1920-1960, Undated
	5	Photographs	ca. 1895- ca. 1924
	6	Photographs Oversize	ca. 1895-ca. 1924
	7	Certificates	1876-1927