

To: Professors/Administrators, Schools/Departments Associated with Religious Studies
From: Roger Hiemstra, Archivist, May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society
Subj: Research Possibilities

Are you a student or a professor looking for a research project associated with religious history? Many archival materials pertaining to the May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society (Syracuse, NY) are available. The richness of this material and its increasing accessibility electronically suggests the possibility of numerous future research projects for anyone interested in religious history, how one church has developed over the years, the impact of a church on a community, and the heritage left by our relatively few but outstanding past ministers. The informational sheet below describes our collections with corresponding web links.

As a recently retired college professor, I understand the struggle that can exist in finding a research question and corresponding resource material for coursework, thesis, and dissertation needs. There is much research potential and material on our church history, a history that is more than 150 years old. I'm convinced there is much that could be learned by studying our collections and encourage you to examine the possibilities.

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May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society Collection

Special Collections Research Center (SCRC)
Syracuse University Library
Syracuse, NY 13244 (315.443.2697)

May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society
3800 E. Genesee St.
Syracuse, NY 13214 (315.446.8920)

Note to Researchers: *SCRC requires advance notice of 3-5 business days prior to a researcher's arrival so archival material can be made available in the research center, 6th Floor, Bird Library. Contact SCRC officials by email scrc@syr.edu, or by calling (315) 443-2697. Material stored at the church can be made available by advance notification of 3-5 business days prior to arrival, depending on availability of a supervising History Committee member. Contact church archivist, Roger Hiemstra, by email rogerhiemstra@gmail.com, or by calling (315) 637-3527. Material currently accessible electronically is described below.*

Description: May Memorial Unitarian Church began in 1838 in Syracuse, NY. Its founders had left the Congregational Church of New England in Boston, preferring to study the gospels for themselves and worship according to individual conscience. The church was originally named "Church of the Messiah." Congregational members were active in the community; their second minister, Samuel Joseph May, was a well-known abolitionist and reformer best remembered in Syracuse for his part in the escape of Jerry, a runaway slave, memorialized in the "Jerry Rescue" sculpture in downtown Syracuse. In 1885 the church moved to James Street and named their new stone building "May Memorial Church" in his honor. In 1964-65 a new church was constructed at the Genesee St. site and the church moved there. Later the group changed their name to May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society. The available material has much potential for research on church history, the struggles of Unitarians as the country expanded, and ministerial impact on a community.

The **May Memorial Unitarian Church Records at Syracuse University**, comprising the papers and records of seven ministers, and related scrapbooks, beginning with Samuel Joseph May, covers over 100 years. The collection is only roughly organized, divided according to the tenure of each minister:

John Storer, Minister 1839-1844
Samuel Joseph May, Minister 1845-1868
Samuel R. Calthrop, Minister 1868-1911
John H. Applebee, Minister 1911-1929
John C. Fuller, Minister 1961-1973

Waldemar W. Argow, Minister 1930-1941
Robert E. Romig, Minister 1941-1946
Glenn O. Canfield, Minister 1946-1952
Robert L. Zoerheide, Minister 1952-1961

Contents include letters, photographs, deeds, wills, pew rental contracts, legal papers, marriage records, clippings, photographs, articles, books, Orders of Service, Sunday School reports, and many other items. The collection at the church continues with similar material, plus various forms of media, beyond 1952.

Size of collection: 5 boxes from 1995 (see library.syr.edu/digital/guides/m/may_mem.htm for details), 5 boxes from 1998, and 2 boxes from 2008 (see history.mmuus.org/suarchives.html for details). Several file cabinets and boxes also are available through the church's archive room, including information on religious education and women's' group activities (see history.mmuus.org/status1.html for a brief description). **Inclusive Dates:** 1830-2008; **Bulk Dates:** 1839-1952. **Authors:** MFW revised 2/86 and RH 10/08

Electronic access: Material is being made available electronically as rapidly as possible and is being updated frequently. The following web sites display some of this information:

1. www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history.html
2. www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/sjmay.html
3. www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/ministers.html
4. www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/church-buildings.html
5. history.mmuus.org/index.html