

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection



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MEMPHIS AND SHELBY COUNTY ROOM

Memphis/Shelby County Public Library & Information Center
3030 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, TN 383111
2004

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection

Papers and Photographs

Scope and Provenance

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection was given to the library some years ago. Susanne Conlan Scruggs, the wife of Judge Thomas Murphy Scruggs, was active in the Progressive Movement in Memphis, especially in working for children to have safe places to play, quality education, and legal representation through a juvenile court system rather than through the adult court system.

The collection contains two photograph albums, newspaper clippings, correspondence, photographs, and other documents that detail Scruggs' efforts in behalf of children. The albums include a variety of photographs which show children playing in unsafe parks, dilapidated housing, and other settings that had a negative effect on young children. The correspondence includes letters Scruggs wrote to educators, doctors and others involved in the health and welfare of children.

The collection provides insight into the type of work that was done for children in the early part of the twentieth century.

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Biographical Profile

Susanne Conlan was born in Boston, Massachusetts in August 1863. She came to Memphis in 1889 following her marriage to Thomas Murphy Scruggs, a prominent Memphis attorney who later became a judge. Their wedding took place on August 23, 1889 at the Catholic Cathedral in Boston, Massachusetts. They had four sons and two daughters: Thomas M. Scruggs, Jr., Susanne C. Scruggs, James Scruggs, Elizabeth Scruggs, Marshall B. Scruggs, and John F. Scruggs.

Susanne Scruggs was active in many clubs and organizations. She was a charter member of the Nineteenth Century Club. Her activities in the Nineteenth Century Club helped to provide books for Cossitt Library.

The majority of Susanne Scruggs' activities were directed towards improving life for the children of Memphis. She organized the Memphis Woman's Public School Association. This organization helped to provide free school books to children who could not afford them, and organized school lunch programs. Scruggs was active in the formation of several Parent-Teacher Associations, and she was president of the Central High PTA. She also founded the Playground Association and was instrumental in the organization of the Juvenile Court system. She served as an officer of the Juvenile Court.

Susanne Scruggs was the first president of the Children's Protective Union. She found adoptive homes for many children through this organization. Scruggs was also in charge of the "Friendly Visitor" program. She and other volunteers made visits to the homes of the poor to see if the children had proper care. Her activities helped to establish the first children's ward in the City of Memphis Hospital and an adequate tuberculosis hospital.

Susanne Conlan Scruggs died on January 29, 1945. Her funeral took place at St. Peter's Catholic Church, where she was a member. Born in the midst of the Civil War, she lived almost to the end of World War II. The mother of six children, she made the orphan, the helpless, the needy her concern. Her life was marked by a strong and unwavering commitment to improving the health and welfare of Memphis children.

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BOX I

Folder	Description
1	FRIENDLY VISITOR REPORTS Folder contains Friendly Visitor Reports. These reports describe the conditions found in the homes of poor families that Susanne Scruggs visited. The Friendly Visitor Program was the forerunner of Social Services Programs. Because information in some reports is sensitive in nature, these reports may be seen only with permission of the History Department Manager.

BOX II

Folder	Description
1	ASSOCIATED CHARITIES Folder contains organizational information, including the Constitution and the Minutes of the meetings. The Constitution was adopted in March 1909. Associated Charities was reorganized in December 1911.
2	CENSUS INFORMATION Folder contains the 1900 U. S. Census for Shelby County with the listing for the Scruggs family. It provides information on each family member.
3	CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL Folder contains information about children in Memphis who were sick. There is much information about the Christie family who was suffering from tuberculosis. There was no children's hospital in Memphis at this time and the content of this folder shows the need for one.

4

CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE UNION

Folder contains information about the lives of children in poor families, as well as information about child welfare conferences that were held in Memphis. Folder also contains information concerning a court case that was brought against Scruggs. A family accused Scruggs of illegally restraining their son.

5

CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE UNION—Articles

Folder contains information about programs of the Children's Protective Union. Many of the documents in this folder are rough drafts of articles that Scruggs later sent to newspapers.

6

CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE UNION—Charter

Folder contains the charter for the Children's Protective Union. The date on the charter is April 23, 1911.

7

CORRESPONDENCE—Associated Charities (1908-1909)

Folder contains correspondence pertaining to the work of Associated Charities in 1908 and 1909. Most of the correspondence is addressed to Susanne Scruggs.

8

CORRESPONDENCE—Associated Charities (1910-1917)

Folder contains correspondence to and from Scruggs. There are many specific charity cases that are discussed in the letters.

9

CORRESPONDENCE—From Charities and The Commons

Folder contains correspondence from a charitable organization that was located in New York City. The letters contain suggestions about the organization and the fieldwork of Associated Charities. Susanne Scruggs sought information from Charities and The Commons (Boston) when establishing Associated Charities.

10

CORRESPONDENCE—Children's Protective Union (1908-1910)

Folder contains information about families who sought to adopt children. Also includes letters from poor families unable to work because of illness and who requested assistance for their children.

11 **CORRESPONDENCE—Children’s Protective Union (January 1911-March 1911)**

Folders contain correspondence from people who wanted to help disadvantaged children through donations of time and money. Also includes letters from families who needed assistance.

12 **CORRESPONDENCE—Children’s Protective Union (April 1911-December 1911)**

Folder contains correspondence from families who wanted to adopt children. Also includes letters and notes in which people sent contributions to the Children’s Protective Union. Susanne Scruggs had heard that United Charities had closed and she wanted information regarding its closing.

13 **CORRESPONDENCE—Children’s Protective Union (1912)**

Folder contains correspondence from families wanting to adopt children and letters from Scruggs inquiring about children who had been adopted. Also includes letters to Scruggs from Senator K. D. McKellar. He inquired about a young boy who was placed in an orphanage.

14 **CORRESPONDENCE—Children’s Protective Union (1913)**

Folder contains correspondence from a woman inquiring about her son who had been placed in the care of a friend. The child was later placed in an orphanage. Also includes correspondence and an application from a family who wanted to adopt a child. There are also letters of recommendation from friends of that family.

15 **CORRESPONDENCE—Children’s Protective Union (1914-1915)**

Folder contains correspondence and applications from families wanting to adopt children. Also includes letters from a woman who wanted to regain custody of a child that she had previously given up.

