

**S0176 Bureau For Men (1925-1982),
Records, 1920-1981
328 Folders, 3 Volumes**

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In 1925 the St. Louis Provident Association,- the St. Vincent De Paul Society, and the Salvation Army organized the Central Bureau For Transient Men in order to concentrate the care of unemployed drifters under one organization. Prior to 1925, the Provident Association and the Municipal Lodging House had cared for transients, but the emphasis of the Provident Association was to provide social services to needy families and the Municipal Lodging House offered only short-term lodging.

Administratively, the Bureau began as an experimental department of the Community Council, a precursor to the Health and Welfare Council (see collection S0434). After 18 months, the Bureau became a separate member agency of the Council. The first executive was Walter Hoy (1925-1932). In 1926 the Bureau changed its name to the Central Bureau For Transient and Homeless Men. The name was shortened to the Bureau For Men in 1937.

The Bureau For Men was organized as the first agency in the United States to provide social services to transient and homeless men. The ostensible purpose was to care for these men, but its immediate goal was to rid the streets of indigents and drifters and to screen relief applicants to establish their actual needs. By 1928 the Bureau had established an Anti-Begging Committee, employing a social worker to make arrangements with the courts to refer men arrested for begging to the Bureau's office.

The Bureau began with a caseload of 391 people and gradually accepted more and more clientele from the Municipal Lodging Home and the court's referrals. The Bureau's caseload grew immensely during the Depression. By late 1932, it provided social services to over 8000 transients.

Under the direction of Executive Secretary G. Myron Gwinner, the Bureau opened a cafeteria on North 16th Street in November 1932 to provide free meals to the unemployed. By this time it also ran a lodging house on Chestnut Street; a farm located at 4258 Goodfellow; and a work program for men age 17 to 25, called the Henry Shaw Camp, located at the Missouri Botanical Garden's Arboretum in Gray Summit, Missouri. The Bureau also employed 200 people, including 60 caseworkers, many taken from the ranks of the unemployed. The Bureau's cafeteria served over 2000 meals a day before the end of the year.

Isaac Gurman joined the Bureau as assistant secretary in 1932. In addition to developing programs to relieve the poverty of the Depression, Gurman defended the Bureau from its critics. In December 1932, members of the Unemployed Council of St. Louis, a group of communist organizers, were arrested for disturbing the peace at both the cafeteria and at the Bureau's Pine Street branch office. Gurman handled such demonstrators, who also picketed

his apartment with placards reading "Gurman Starves the Poor,," by regularly inviting them into his apartment for coffee and rolls and an evening of calm discussion. Gurman became executive secretary in 1940 when Gwinner left the Bureau to accept a position with the Social Planning Council.

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration ruled in 1933 that federal funds could be disbursed only through public agencies. In response to this ruling, the Citizens' Committee on Relief and Unemployment (a public agency) created units to relieve private agencies of their excessive case-loads during the Depression. Many of the Bureau's responsibilities were assigned to Unit F, later renamed the Men's Unit. In August 1935 the Men's Unit separated completely from the Bureau and assumed total responsibility for the Gray Summit Camp, the cafeteria, and the lodging house. This reorganization of the public relief system left the Bureau with only its executive secretary, one case worker and a reduced caseload of about 40 men.

As a result of the reduction in its staff and mission, the Bureau For Men developed a program for older boys by forming the St. Louis Youth Commission with the Social Planning Council. The Commission conducted several surveys on the problems of young people. The Bureau also began doing casework with transients having criminal records referred by the city's Probation and Parole Department. These contacts led the Bureau to suggest improvements in the routine processing of offenders and to identify problems regarding out-state and rural area offenders being released in St. Louis.

The relationship between the Bureau and the Probation and Parole Department continued to grow in the 1940s and 1950s as a high percentage of the Bureau's clients had a history of law violation. Beginning in the 1940s, the Bureau conducted studies of the city workhouse involving petty offenders, recidivists and jail conditions in general. Bureau directors served on various committees on penal reform. As the Bureau developed expertise in providing social work to convicts, it also began providing advisory service to law enforcement agencies and correctional institutions. Although the Bureau continued to provide direct service to non-family men during this period, the emphasis of its work gradually shifted to institutional consultation service.

Charles Mann', chief probation and parole officer of the St. Louis circuit court, served as the executive director for the Bureau from 1966 to 1981, when Susan Corrington took over the position. The Bureau also merged with the Crusade Against Crime, a citizens' crime prevention group, in 1981. In the spring of the following year, the Bureau stopped seeing clients. Because of a lack of public support and a decision by the United Way to discontinue funding, the board of directors voted to close the Bureau in September 1982.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection is divided into eight series: (1) bylaws, charters and histories; (2) board of directors; (3) financial records; (4) correspondence; (5) agencies, committees, and subjects; (6) studies and surveys; (7) scrapbooks; and (8) case files. The collection is a combination of the Bureau's administrative files and the professional files of two of its four directors, Isaac Gurman and Charles Mann. The records document the founding of the Bureau until its demise in 1982 and the change of its focus from beggars, transients, and homeless men in the

1930s to ex-convicts in the 1950s-1980s.

There are few records from the 1950s. The material from the 1930s is particularly good for studying the Depression. As one of many social agencies in St. Louis,, the Bureau's files show the interrelationship between the private organization and government agencies that were responsible for dealing with the problems of poverty.

As the Bureau changed emphasis from transients to ex-convicts the directors were appointed to many correctional commissions, committees, and councils. The records from the 1960s-1980s reflect the decreased -work with individual men and the increased emphasis on planning and studies for other agencies such as the Missouri Law Enforcement Assistant Council, the city jail, and the State Board of Training Schools.

The last series, case files, is restricted. Researchers wishing access to case files must promise not to record or publish the names of individual clients or their families. The staff reserves the right to check research notes. The case files represent only a fraction of the men served by the Bureau For Men but the sample is large enough to illustrate the case work of the Bureau. The case files give detailed information on each client's family history, employment, schooling,, religious background, police records, and action taken by the Bureau. Other case files were not donated and presumably were destroyed.

Topics include: Depression, juvenile delinquency, corrections, jails, probation and parole, social work, welfare, beggars, alcoholism, St. Louis Workhouse, Missouri Law Enforcement Assistance Council, National Association of Social Welfare.

Complementary collections include: Health and Welfare Council, Dismas House, Crusade Against Crime, St. Louis Provident Association, and Metropolitan Youth Commission.

SERIES DESCRIPTION SERIES 1 - BYLAWS, CHARTERS, AND HISTORIES, 1925-1981, 9 folders. Arranged alphabetically.

SERIES 2 - BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 1925-1978, 18 folders. Correspondence, monthly and annual reports, and minutes. Separated by form, arranged chronologically.

SERIES 3 - FINANCIAL RECORDS, 1926-1981 16 folders. Audits, budgets. Separated by form, arranged chronologically.

SERIES 4 - CORRESPONDENCE, 1925-1979, 33 folders. General correspondence with other social work and relief agencies, colleagues, citizens, academics, state agencies. Arranged chronologically.

SERIES 5 - STUDIES AND SURVEYS, 1925-1948,, 18 folders. Reports on health, juveniles. Arranged alphabetically.

SERIES 6 - SUBJECTS, AGENCIES, COMMITTEES, 1923-1981. 232 folders. Correspondence, minutes, newsclippings on alcoholism, transients, capital punishment, jails, juvenile delinquency, Missouri Association for Social Welfare,, Missouri Law Enforcement Assistance Council, Missouri State Penitentiary,, the police, the Citizens' Committee on Relief and Employment, probation and parole, St. Louis Workhouse, the United Fund, and

discharged prisoners. Arranged alphabetically.

SERIES 7 - CASE FILES, 1930-1960s, 4 folders. Arranged chronologically. RESTRICTED - No personal names may be cited by researchers.

SERIES 8 - SCRAPBOOKS, 1930s, 3 volumes. Photographs and newsclippings on beggars and relief efforts during the Depression and Isaac Gurman's MA thesis on social work techniques used in the professional care of homeless men in St. Louis. Arranged chronologically.

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