

**S0189 Mathews-Dickey Boys' Club (1960- )  
Records, 1957-1984  
49 Folders, 1 Microfilm Roll, 1 Tape**

**MICROFILM**

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Hubert "Dickey" Ballentine and Captain Tom Brooks of the St. Louis City Police Department started a baseball team in 1954 to give black children in North St. Louis an opportunity to participate in organized sports. Two years later Martin Mathews, who had played semi-professional baseball as a young man, took over the management of a North St. Louis neighborhood baseball team as a favor to a dying friend. Ballentine and Mathews met at Hanley Park where both teams were practicing. Walking home from practice, the two men began discussing the need to develop an organization to accommodate the large demand for ball teams among black children of various age groups. Both men were familiar with similar clubs in South St. Louis through their work in the Khoury League. In 1960 they held an outdoor meeting at W.C. Handy Park and founded the Mathews-Dickey Boys Club under a shade tree.

Mathews and Ballentine collected revenues for the club from the parents of the ball team children. The Mathews-Dickey Club also established an annual benefit dinner held at neighborhood churches to raise funds. As the club grew, Martin Mathews mortgaged his home and Hubert Ballentine went into debt to accommodate its budget. In 1961 the club's juvenile team won the division championship of the Khoury League. By 1965 it had 37 member baseball teams.

The club opened its headquarters in a converted sporting goods store on Natural Bridge Road in North St. Louis. The proceeds collected through an annual dinner were spent on uniforms and equipment. The club borrowed athletic fields and gymnasiums for ball games.

By 1975 the club had grown to include 75 baseball teams, 17 football teams and 2 basketball teams and the need for more permanent playing facilities became great. In 1976 the club unsuccessfully applied for public funds from the Human Development Corporation of Metropolitan St. Louis. It also unsuccessfully attempted to acquire the Penrose Park area near Kingshighway from the city and a vacant building across from its Natural Bridge location, but both attempts failed principally because of lack of funds.

Martin Mathews received the St. Louis Globe-Democrat's Humanities Award in January 1976. Globe publisher G. Duncan Bauman was later awarded the Silver Crown by St. Louis' Jewish community in part for serving as a "behind-the-scenes" force in organizing the Mathews-Dickey Club. In 1977 the United Way agreed to finance part of the Club's operating budget.

In February 1980, the club began a fund-raising campaign to build a new headquarters with gymnasiums, an indoor pool and playing fields. August Busch III of Anheuser-Busch and Charles F. Knight of Emerson Electric co-chaired the fund-raising effort, which solicited funds from Monsanto, Ralston-Purina, Union Electric and other major corporations in the St. Louis area. The campaign also collected money from North side churches and civic organizations. It raised \$2.5 million to construct the facility.

The Sherman Park Community Council resisted plans for building the center at the Public School Stadium near its residential district, so a site on the unused portion of Penrose Park that the club had previously tried to acquire from the city was chosen for construction. The city leased the land for 50 years with the provision that the center be available to the public by arrangement. Opened in 1981, the center included a 35,000 square foot building with rooms for mechanical and drafting courses, an indoor pool, photo lab, locker facilities, a library, a day care center, gymnasiums, and meeting rooms. A covered pedestrian bridge was constructed to connect the building with athletic fields built on the opposite side of a railroad right-of-way.

President Ronald Reagan visited the facility in July 1982, in part to assuage the public perception of his administration as racist, a perception that threatened Republican congressional seats in the fall election. President Reagan also called the new facility's construction a good example of the private sector volunteerism he felt was needed to replace government involvement. He awarded the Presidential Citizen's medal to Martin Mathews and Hubert "Dickey" Ballentine.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The Mathews-Dickey Boys Club Records, 1957-1984, primarily document the growth of the club from its incorporation to the construction of its \$2.5 million sports complex. Most of the material is from the mid-1970s to early 1980s. One newsclipping from 1957 appears in the first volume of the scrapbook series. Only the club's certificate of incorporation dates from 1962. One annual banquet program dates from 1965 and some correspondence and newsclippings are from the mid-1960s.

The records include annual banquet programs, correspondence, constitution and bylaws, parent group meeting minutes, board of directors meeting minutes, enrollment sheets, financial records, invitations and programs, sports schedules, awards and United Way memoranda.

The construction of the new sports center is documented by a student report from 1977, the 1980 construction agreement, groundbreaking ceremonies memoranda, newsclippings, correspondence with the Sherman Park Community Council and site construction plans. The collection also includes the program for the Black Athlete in Missouri Conference in 1981, a memorandum proposing a youth assessment center sponsored by Anheuser-Busch, minutes of the McDonnell USO from 1981 to 1984 that document financial and consulting contributions to the Mathews-Dickey Club, an Urban League data book from 1983, and a high-school consolidation survey conducted in 1984. President Reagan's 1982 visit is documented with newsclippings and a press release transcription of his remarks. An oral history interview

conducted with Martin Mathews in November, 1984 is included at the end of the collection (T-744.) These files are arranged alphabetically. The collection also includes three volumes of microfilmed scrapbooks of correspondence and newsclippings and photograph #Is 5740-5764, which date from 1963-1983.

## **FOLDER LISTING**

### **BOX 1**

1. Alumni Association, 1981
2. Annual Banquet Program, 1965, 1972, 1977-1984
3. Athletic Boys' Club Yearbook, 1974-1975
4. Awards, 1972-1980
5. Black Athlete in Missouri Conference Program, 1981
6. Board of Directors Minutes, 1974-1983
7. "Building a New Mathews-Dickey Boys Club," by Diana P. Wells, 1977
8. Busch Youth Assessment Center, 1981
9. Business Correspondence, Incoming, 1977-1979
10. Business Correspondence, Outgoing, 1979
11. Certificate of Incorporation, 1962
12. Concerned Parents Association, 1977-1980
13. Constitution and Bylaws, 1976
14. Construction Agreement, 1980

### **BOX 2**

15. Correspondence, 1966-1979
16. Correspondence, 1980-1981
17. Correspondence, 1981-1982
18. Correspondence, 1983-1984
19. Enrollment Sheets, nd.
20. Expansion Fund, nd.
21. Financial Records, 1965-1979

### **BOX 3**

22. Financial Records, 1979-1982
23. Fund Raising, 1980
24. Groundbreaking Ceremonies, 1981
25. High School Consolidation Survey, 1984
26. Insurance Forms, Deeds of Trust, 1971-1972
27. Invitations and Programs, 1982-1983
28. Life Insurance and Retirement Plans, 1982
29. McDonnell USO Minutes, 1981-1984
30. Metro Collegians Instructional Baseball League, 1980
31. Neighborhood Assistance Program, 1980-1981

32. Newsclippings, 1966-1980
33. Newsclippings, 1981-1983

#### **BOX 4**

34. Operating Fund, 1979
35. St. Louis Community Development Policy Plan, 1981
36. Sherman Park- Community Council, Correspondence, 1980
37. Site Plans, nd., 1980
38. Sports Schedules, 1976-1981
39. Stadium Complex Benefit, 1984
40. Staff Information, 1982
41. Status Offender Service, 1978
42. Supply Requisitions, 1979
43. Supply Requisitions, 1979

#### **BOX 5**

44. Tournament of Champions, 1978-1979
45. United Fund, 1970-1976
46. United Way, 1977-1981
47. United Way, 1982-1984
48. Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Data Book, 1983
49. Photograph #'s 5740-5764, 1963-1983

#### **MICROFILM-ROLL**

- Volume 1. Correspondence, Newsclippings and Photographs, 1957, 1961-1980.
2. Newsclippings and Photographs, 1975, 1979-1980.
3. Alpha Nu's Citizen of the Year Scrapbook, 1980.

#### **MATHEWS-DICKEY SCRAPBOOKS, 1957-1980**

- VOL.1 Correspondence, Newsclippings and Photographs, 1957, 1961-1980
- VOL.2 Newsclippings and Photographs, 1975, 1979-1980
- VOL.3 Alpha Nu's Citizen of the Year Scrapbook, 1980

#### **INDEX**

- Afro-American Youth, f.1-49
- Afro-Americans in Sports, f. 1-49
- Anheuser-Busch, f. 8, 33
- Athletic Boys' Club, f. 2
- Ballentine, Hubert "Dickey," f. 1-49
- Baseball Hall of Fame, v. I
- Baumaun, G. Duncan, f. 33
- Bell, James "Cool Papa," f. 32, 39
- Black Athlete in Missouri Conference, f. 3
- Busch, Augustus III, f. 33
- Concerned Parents Association, f. 12
- Desegregation, f.15, v. 2
- Eagleton, Thomas, f.15

Human Development Corporation, f.15, v. 2  
Integration, f.15, v. 2  
King, Dr. Martin Luther, v.1  
Mathews, Martin, f. 1-49  
Mathews-Dickey Boys Club, f. 1-49  
McDonnell USO, f. 29  
McNeal, Theodore, v. 2  
Metro Collegians Instructional Baseball League, f. 30  
Neighborhood Assistance Program, f. 31  
Phi Delta Kappa Sorority, St. Louis Chapter, v. 3  
Reagan, Ronald, f. 17, 33  
Sherman Park Community Council, f. 33, 36  
Sports, f. 1-49  
Soulard Restoration Group, f. 33  
Sunnen, Joseph, v. 2  
United Fund, f. 45  
United Way, f. 46-47  
Urban League, f. 48  
Webb, Normal "Tweed", v. 1

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