

Marjorie Patterson Papers, 1947-1999



Marjorie Patterson, 1963

Overview of the Collection

Title:	Marjorie Patterson Papers, 1947-1999
Creator:	Marjorie Patterson (1922-2016)
Accession:	PPL-2011-013
Size:	0.75 linear feet of records, comprised of: One (1) legal-size document box One (1) small box
Repository:	Plainfield Public Library, Local History Department, 800 Park Avenue, Plainfield, NJ 07060
Abstract:	The personal papers of Marjorie Patterson document her work with the Plainfield Area YMCA, including the Moorland Branch, and the Tenants Organization of Plainfield. Record types include organizational minutes, committee reports, programming plans, letters and cards, ephemera, newspaper clippings, publications, and photographs.
Language:	The records are in English.

Biographical Information

Marjorie Patterson worked at the Plainfield Area YMCA from 1947 until her retirement in 1987. She dedicated her life to helping the youth and underprivileged community of Plainfield. Her first years with the YMCA were spent as a program aide at the Moorland Branch - known as the "Black Y." She spent many lunch hours "sitting in" at restaurants where blacks were refused service. She often met the director of the local NAACP branch for lunch (or lack of it). Because the Moorland Y had to raise its own money, she became an extraordinary fundraiser. As quoted in a newspaper interview, Marjorie said: "we had two bowling alleys, and when money was needed, we'd organize a tournament. We had suppers and dinners...everybody helped out." She was called the "Pied Piper of Teenagers" when she led forums and training for young people. The Royal Banquets of the Hi-Y and Tri-Hi-Y Council for area youth that she helped to organize became an annual tradition in which teenagers from seven local communities were recognized for leadership.

Marjorie Patterson served the YMCA in leadership roles on numerous regional boards, the national council and several task forces. She directed day camping for two years, worked with young adult, junior high school and grade school groups. She directed the teenage program for ten years. In 1966, Marge was chosen as one of the 21 American leaders to give guidance to an international YMCA teenage conference in Norway. In 1968, she was promoted to Youth Executive of the Association. She was instrumental in forming the Women's Auxiliary, Moorland Players, Youth and Youth Adult Clubs, *Semper Fidelis*, and Mixmasters.

On March 10, 1973, a surprise testimonial dinner was given in her honor to pay tribute for her years of outstanding community service. An assembly of over 175 of her friends and colleagues attended the event. Despite her significant contributions and service to the community, she was still paid less than what the City of Plainfield paid a starting policeman, and \$2,500 to \$3,500 less in salary than other Plainfield YMCA executives. In February 1986, Marjorie was named "Citizen of the Year" by the Union County Association of Black Social Workers.

She served on Plainfield's Human Relations Commission for 13 years, and was chairperson and president of the Tenants Organization of Plainfield, and an officer with the local NAACP chapter. She was a member of Camp Crusade, the Community Welfare Council, Union County Welfare Advisory Board, and United Community Services. Her dedication and willingness to aid Plainfield's youth and community earned her the heart-felt nickname of "Plainfield's Little Dynamo."

[Source: Box 1, Folder 18]

Scope and Contents

The personal papers of Marjorie Patterson include a variety of material dating from 1947 to 1999, with bulk dates from 1971 to 1979. The collection documents her work with the Plainfield Area YMCA, beginning with the Moorland Y; and later, the Tenants Organization of Plainfield (TOP). Record types include organizational minutes, committee reports, programming plans, letters and cards, ephemera, newspaper clippings, publications, and photographs.

Moorland Y materials are limited and include organizational records about programs; there are also several photographs. Plainfield Area YMCA materials document various youth, after-school and summer programs, including Camp Tamenend. There are items regarding the Youth Legislature and Youth Leader Royal Banquet, YMCA Mid-Atlantic Region meetings, and YMCA Executive Committee meetings. There is a letter regarding the 1967 Plainfield Riots and later items about criminal justice planning.

There is a scrapbook of documents and photographs regarding the 1973 and 1983 dinners held in her honor, as well as photographs of a Black United Fund march in 1999.

Also included are several publications, both Y-related and unrelated, as well as newspaper clippings about the YMCA, Plainfield, and Marjorie herself.

Arrangement

The Marjorie Patterson Papers are arranged into six series:

Series 1: Plainfield Area YMCA (includes the Moorland Branch YMCA)

Series 2: The Tenants Organization of Plainfield

Series 3: Other organization materials

Series 4: Publications (non-YMCA)

Series 5: Newspaper Clippings (non YMCA)

Series 6: Photographs and oversized materials

Index Terms

People:

Lambert, Margaret

Lambert, Thelma

Patterson, Marjorie

Organizations:

Moorland Branch YMCA

Plainfield Area YMCA

Places:

Plainfield (N.J.)

Subjects:

African Americans --History

Children and youth organizations

Moorland Branch YMCA (Plainfield, N.J.)--History

Plainfield (N.J.)--Clubs and organizations

Plainfield (N.J.)--History

Young Men's Christian associations (Plainfield, N.J.)--History

Related Items

[Records of the Plainfield Area YMCA, 1869-2010](#)

Please note that the following books are non-circulating and must be viewed on site:

Developmental Study of the Plainfield Y.M.C.A. / Central Atlantic Area Council of YMCAs (Newark, N.J.). **PR 267.3 CEN**

A Forward Movement to Meet a Civic Need : a Jubilee Gift to the Young Men and Boys of Plainfield and Vicinity, 1867-1917. **PR 267.3 FOR**

[*A History of the Moorland Branch Y.M.C.A. of Plainfield, New Jersey*](#) / Frederick A. Johnson. **PR 267.3 JOH**

Plainfield Area Y.M.C.A. HI-Y-TRI-HI-Y Council Recognition of Youth as Leaders Royal Banquet. **PR 267.3 PLA 1963/1976**

Plainfield Area Y.M.C.A. HI-Y-TRI-HI-Y Council Recognition of Youth as Leaders Royal Banquet. **PR 267.3 PLA 1977/1982**

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

This collection consists of paper documents that do not require any additional technology for access.

Series Description

Series 1: Plainfield Area YMCA [1947-1980]

Y.M.C.A. Moorland Branch

The first YMCA in the world to serve African Americans was established in Washington DC in 1853; the principal founder was a freed man named Anthony Bowen. Although interest in starting an Association for African-American youth in Plainfield surfaced in 1894, it did not occur until 1923 with the creation of the Moorland Branch of the YMCA - the "Black Y." Also known as the Moorland Y, the branch was located on the old Hope Chapel property when it was purchased in 1926. The Central Y set a three-month test period to determine whether this new branch could obtain public support. The Moorland building campaign was led and championed by Dr. A. L. Thompson, Sr., a prominent African-American dentist in Plainfield. A group of citizens from the Black community financed and paid all expenses to establish the branch. At that time in Plainfield, the African American population was approximately 2,800. At the end of that three-month period, Moorland membership grew to 150, and the branch officially became a part of the YMCA and began to receive financial support from the Central Branch. It is believed to have been named after Dr. Jesse E. Mooreland (despite the different spelling), the first paid executive of the first Black YMCA in DC.*

On the evening of September 7, 1955, a fire broke out and by morning the Moorland Y had burned to the ground. It was a devastating blow to the community which had built it – many with their own hands. Some of the leadership in the African-American community felt the branch should not be rebuilt because it aided in the segregation of the Plainfield community. This sentiment was supported by the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). After much controversy, it was ultimately decided that the Moorland branch would not be reconstructed. Instead, a new policy of full integration into the Plainfield Area YMCA came into effect. Both the staff and membership of the Moorland Y were merged into those of the central Y in October 1956.

*For more historical information about the Moorland Branch, please refer to [*A History of Plainfield Moorland Branch YMCA, 1923-1955.*](#)



Series Description

This series contains an award certificate, annual reports, membership drive materials, committee and division reports, letters, and ephemera. There are materials related to: the Moorland Branch, summer programs such as Camp Tamenend and the Vacation Club, the Youth Programs Committee, management operating goals and program objectives, funding proposals, the Youth Leader and Royal Banquet event, Regional and Executive Committee meetings, and the World Youth Conference.

It is composed of paper documents (handwritten and typed) and photographs, slides, and one plastic zippered pouch from the World Youth Conference.

Pictured: Moorland bowling team, 1956.

Arrangement

Series 1 is arranged chronologically by subject, and fills 18 folders. Scrapbook contents were originally housed in a sticky album. All photographs are included with Series 6: Photographs. The zippered pouch is housed with artifacts from other collections in Artifact Box 6. Slides from the conference are housed in a separate box.

Series 2: The Tenants Organization of Plainfield [1985-1987]

The TOP was organized in 1985 as a result of unfair rent levels and gauging (with increases as high as 30%) in the City of Plainfield. The group strove to establish a Fair Rent Commission and to create a process for rent mediation by the City Council. The association addressed a need for tenant protection and rent stabilization, as 50% of Plainfield residents were renters in need of municipal protection. The TOP helped to organize and educate tenants about their rights regarding security deposits, code violations, and rent increases. Marjorie was chairperson in 1985-1986 and president in 1987.

Series Description

This series contains materials related to the Tenants Organization of Plainfield or T.O.P. including committee meeting minutes, a letter, and a working draft of an ordinance for the establishment of a Fair Rent Commission in Plainfield. It is composed solely of paper documents.

Arrangement

Series 2 is arranged by date and fills one folder.

Series 3: Other Materials [1972, 1988, undated]

Series Description

This series contains materials not related to either the YMCA or the TOP. These few items include minutes from the Community EOP (Educational Opportunity Fund Program) Advisory Board meeting, an invitation to the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition awards reception, an excerpt from an untitled and undated story, and an undated excerpt from an address delivered by Mr. Bola Ige. There is also a printed brochure from the IDS Center in Minneapolis and an undated, unidentified photograph taken on a street in Canada.

Arrangement

Series 3 is predominantly arranged by date, and fills one folder.

Series 4: Publications [1993, undated]

Series Description

This series contains non-YMCA publications. It is composed solely of paper documents.

Arrangement

Series 4 is arranged by title and fills two folders.

Series 5: Newspaper Clippings [1963-1998, undated]

Series Description

This series contains newspaper clippings regarding the City of Plainfield and Marjorie Patterson. Clippings about the YMCA are held in Series 1.

Arrangement

Series 5 is arranged chronologically by subject, and fills three folders – one is stored with oversized materials. There is also a folder of YMCA-related clippings included in Series 1, Folder 18.

Series 6: Photographs and Oversized Materials [1940s, 1956-1999, undated]



Series Description

Series 6 contains black and white and color photographs from the Moorland Y, the 1973 Testimonial Dinner, and a 1999 Black United Fund march. Some items are undated, but were taken prior to 1973. There is an oversized paper photocopy of a photo collage from the 1973 National Conference of Black and Non-White YMCA Laymen and Staff. This series is composed solely of photographs and paper

documents.

Pictured: Lambert sisters, circa 1940s

Arrangement

Series 6 is arranged by subject, and fills six folders.

Administrative Information

Access & Restrictions

The Marjorie Patterson Papers are available for research.

Access is restricted to materials prepared by the Local History department staff. All materials must be viewed in the Plainfield Room and may not be removed to another area of the library without permission of the Library Director or designee. Materials must be handled carefully and kept in order. Materials must not be leaned upon, altered, folded, ripped, or traced upon. Marks may not be added or erased from materials. Materials must be returned directly to Local History department staff and inspected before the researcher leaves the Plainfield Room.

One photocopy may be made (by Plainfield Public Library staff) of each document for the purpose of research; official Local History departmental reproduction fees may apply. Permission to publish must be obtained by the Plainfield Public Library Board of Trustees as delegated to the Library Director. Permission to publish does not constitute a copyright clearance. The researcher is responsible for further copyright restrictions. The Plainfield Public Library is not responsible for the misuse of copyrighted material.

Preferred Citation

Identification of item; Date (if noted); "Marjorie Patterson Papers", Box and Folder Number, Local History Department, Plainfield Public Library, Plainfield, New Jersey.

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated in 2011 by Marjorie Patterson.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Sarah Hull in 2011. The finding aid was written and encoded by Sarah Hull in 2011 and updated by Sally Weiner in September 2024. Finding aid content follows the guidelines suggested by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Plainfield Area YMCA [1947-1980]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	1	100 Voice Community Choral Club program	June 1947
	2	Celebratory cards	circa 1973
	3	Executive Committee Meeting	Sept. 16, 1978
	4	Mid-Atlantic Region	1980
	5	Mid-Atlantic Region YMCA's directory and staff roster	1977-1978
	6	Miscellaneous	1963, 1977, undated
	7	Moorland Branch	1947-1957
	8	Plainfield uprising / criminal justice planning	1967, 1972-1975
	9	Programming (Camp Tamenend)	1975-1977
	10	Publication. "I Want to Be Free: a Study Guide for the World Youth Conference at Stavanger" (Norway)	1966
	11	Publication. "National Board of YMCAs Monday" newsletters	1979-1980
	12	Publication. "The New Hi-Y Manual"	1960
	13	Publication. "Selected Black Leaders of the YMCA, 1853-1978"	1978
	14	Testimonial dinner scrapbook. Page 1 - Event Program	March 30, 1973
	15	Testimonial dinner scrapbook. Pages 2-10	March 30, 1973
	16	Youth Leaders Royal Banquet	1971-1975
	17	Youth Legislature	1979
	18	YMCA newspaper clippings	1967-1978, undated

Series 2: The Tenants Organization of Plainfield [1985-1987]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	19	Tenants Organization of Plainfield	1985-1987

Series 3: Other Materials [1972, 1988, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	20	Other materials	1972, 1988, undated

Series 4: Publications [1993, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	21	"Are Parents Worrying About the Wrong Things?"	undated
	22	"Voices," published by Women of Color International	March 1993

Series 5: Newspaper Clippings [1963-1998, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	23	City of Plainfield	1970-1998
	24	Marjorie Patterson	1963-1987

Series 6: Photographs and Oversized Materials [1940s, 1956-1999, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	25	Black United Fund march	September 1999
	26	Patterson Dinner	September 13, 1987
	27	Testimonial Dinner	March 30, 1973
	28	Testimonial Dinner photo album	March 30, 1973
	29	Unidentified panoramic photograph (YMCA?)	undated
	30	YMCA	1940s, 1956, 1963, undated (pre-1973)
2		Slides, YMCA World Youth Conference, Stavanger (Norway)	1966
	*	National Conference of Black and Non-White YMCA Laymen and Staff	1972
	**	Dr. Martin Luther King special issue, "The Voice" (newspaper)	May 8, 1971
	**	"Plainfield Today," Vol. 3, Issue 33 (newspaper)	July 10, 1986
	**	Testimonial Dinner issue, "The Voice" (newspaper)	April 11, 1973

**Housed in Clubs & Organizations Oversize Box 1*

***Housed in separate Plainfield newspaper boxes [Row 12A]*