

Guide to the Hugh Mitchell Environmental Activism Collection 2017.026

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Local History & Genealogy Division

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Summary Information

Repository:	Local History & Genealogy Division
Creator:	Mitchell, Hugh P.
Title:	Hugh Mitchell environmental activism collection
ID:	2017.026
Date [inclusive]:	1926-2001, bulk 1970-2000
Date [bulk]:	bulk 1970-2000
Physical Description:	2.0 Cubic Feet 2 record cartons, 1 film reel.
Language of the Material:	English
Mixed Materials [box]:	1-2
Abstract:	This collection consists of the papers of Rochester, New York based environmental activist, Hugh Mitchell. The materials date between 1926 and 2000, with a bulk of the materials dated between 1970 and 1999. The materials consist of newspaper articles, handwritten notes, correspondence, maps, flyers, meeting minutes, slides, a film reel, reports, and proposals.

Preferred Citation

Hugh Mitchell Environmental Activism Collection, [box#:folder#]. Local History and Genealogy Division, Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County N.Y.

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Biographical Note

Hugh Mitchell is a retired New York State Certified Social Worker who spent most of his career helping individuals with developmentally disabilities at Monroe Developmental Center where he filled a number of roles such as service coordination, case management, family support, and clinical social work for institutionalized intellectually handicapped individuals. He taught anger management to offenders in the secure intensive treatment unit which was a prison for young men. He also worked four years for New York as a Marriage Conciliation Counselor in the Conciliation Bureau of the New York Supreme Court

and he served two years as Assistant to the President of the State University of New York at Binghamton. Early in his career he was selected in a nation-wide competition as the Barnett Fellow, representing the American settlement movement in Great Britain, where he studied at The London School of Economics 1966-67. Previous to that he taught English, reading, and study skills at various schools and was the Education Programmer at the Five Towns Community House in Inwood, New York.

Hugh is well known in the Rochester, New York region for his “other vocation” as an environmental activist, watch dog, and conservation leader. He led a successful eight year battle to save Genesee Valley Park, which resulted in the development of the cross-state Erie Canal Hiking-Biking Trail. Hugh also worked on various coalitions which succeeded in the preservation or creation a number of new parks in the Rochester area. He engaged in coordinating a multi-year effort to create a new park on Pinnacle Hill, which was described as “The Emerald Necklace” - a green belt on the hills across the southern side of the city. This effort failed but the hill was preserved from development after an extensive organizing effort.

In 2000 Hugh Mitchell became the chairperson of the 2,000 member Rochester Regional Group of Sierra Club. Some of the projects they were engaged in included fighting to control suburban sprawl, saving wetlands, saving threatened parks, population control, and “persuading” Kodak to control their air pollution. He spearheaded the creation and publication of a ‘Green Paper’ exposing the way the local Republican controlled Monroe County Water Authority operated to encourage sprawl. The paper, titled “Sprawl Follows the Pipes”, was sold nationally and resulted in the NY Attorney General investigating the agency. Perhaps Hugh’s best environmental advocacy effort came after a 25 year effort to preserve the wild forests around Hemlock & Canadice Finger Lakes which were threatened reservoir lands.

Subsequently to his local leadership work Hugh became chairperson and coordinator for four years of the conservation programs of the NYS Atlantic Chapter of Sierra Club with 22 environmental committees. One of his administrative achievements was creating the Chapter-wide Conservation Council who reviewed the conservation budget and awarded conservation grants.

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Scope and Contents

This collection consists of the papers of Rochester, New York based environmental activist, Hugh Mitchell. The materials date between 1926 and 2001 with a bulk of the materials dated between 1970 and 2000. The materials consist of newspaper articles, handwritten notes, correspondence, maps, flyers, meeting minutes, slides, a film reel, reports, and proposals.

This collection documents Hugh Mitchell’s involvement in the preservation of Pinnacle Hill Park and Genesee Valley Park. The collection documents the timeline and actions taken by both environmental activists and the Rochester City Council prior to construction of the “Outer Loop.” The “Outer Loop” was originally planned to cut directly through Genesee Valley Park. Environmentalists were trying to preserve Genesee Valley Park during the 1970’s from the construction of the “Outer Loop” as well as from potential sale and development of the Park by the University of Rochester.

The collection contains handwritten notes by Mitchell, news articles, regarding Pinnacle Hill Park and Genesee Valley Park, correspondence to and from City of Rochester, Federal Government, and New York State officials. It also includes Environmental Impact Surveys, reports from experts, and proposals. The collection also includes slides of Pinnacle Hill Park, a film reel by a Rochester Institute of Technology student regarding Genesee Valley Park and its preservation, and photographs of Genesee Valley Park in the 1970's.

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Arrangement

This collection consists of two boxes divided into two series:

Series I: Genesee Valley Park preservation, 1956-1984

Series II: Coalition for Pinnacle Hill Park, 1926-2001

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Local History & Genealogy Division

115 South Ave.

Rochester 14604

585-428-8370

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was donated to the Local History and Genealogy Division of the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County N.Y. by Hugh Mitchell, date unknown [Accession number 2017.026].

Conditions Governing Access

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this collection.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright is held by the Rochester Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Division. Copyright of the papers in the collection may be held by their authors, or the authors' heirs or assigns. Researchers must obtain the written permission of the holder[s] of copyright and the Local History and Genealogy Division before publishing quotations from materials in the collection. Most papers may be copied in accordance with the library's usual procedures unless otherwise specified.

Processing Information

This project was made possible by a grant from the Documentary Heritage Program of the New York State Archives, a program of the State Education Department.

Processing Information

This collection was left in its original order. All metal fasteners were removed due to rusting. All newspaper clippings were interleaved with acid-free paper or placed in envelopes. Photographs that were showing signs of deterioration or had glue residue were placed in viewing sleeves.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Parks--New York (State)--Rochester.
- Nature conservation -- New York (State) -- Rochester
- Conservation easements
- Landscape protection
- Environmental impact statements--New York (State)
- Cities and towns--Growth
- Mitchell, Hugh P.
- University of Rochester
- Action for the environment (ACTFORE)
- Monroe County Conservation Council (Rochester, N.Y.)

Bibliography

Mitchell, Hugh. "Biography as of 2013." *MitchellHistory.Tumblr.com*. 2013. Accessed November 7, 2017.

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Collection Inventory

Series I: Genesee Valley Park preservation, 1956-1984

box 1

Scope and Contents

This series consists of correspondence, handwritten notes, articles, newspaper clippings, flyers, agendas, and meeting minutes for Hugh Mitchell's fight to save Genesee Valley Park. In 1965, the City of Rochester sold 37 acres of developed park land to the university of Rochester. In exchange, the City of Rochester purchased 180 acres of undeveloped, swampy park land. Environmental activists strongly opposed the sale stating that it was an unfair sale. The undeveloped land that was sold to the city would cost millions of dollars to develop. Activists also cited the loss of bike and walking paths, memorial trees, and developed land. Activists also opposed the construction of the "Outer Loop" through the Genesee Valley Park, thus losing more parkland. Environmental activists argued that a tunnel could be constructed under the park or that the "Outer Loop" could be moved to bypass the park. After an almost decade long fight, the city decided to construct the "Outer Loop" as an aquaduct. This kept precious park land and created minimal damage to the park.

Title/Description	Instances	
Monroe County Conservation Council Inc. vs. Brock Adams, October 1977	box 1	folder 1
Route 390 expressway and city, 1969-1971	box 1	folder 2
ACTFORE organization documents, 1970-1978	box 1	folder 3
University of Rochester - Genesee Valley Park documents, 1971-1978	box 1	folder 4
Rochester City Council, 1970-1972	box 1	folder 5
Outer Loop (later 390), 1971-1977	box 1	folder 6
Monroe County legal actions - Parks and roads etc., 1970-1973	box 1	folder 7
Document copies, 1966-1977	box 1	folder 8
U of R I.P.D., 1977	box 1	folder 9
U of R institutional planning, 1965-1978	box 1	folder 10

"A People's Park", 1971	box 1	folder 11
"Genesee River South Corridor Land Use and Development Plan", 1984	box 1	folder 12
ACTFORE position paper, Undated	box 1	folder 13
Department of Parks, County of Monroe, Annual Report, 1970	box 1	folder 14
"The Case for an Alternative Alignment for Route 47 Through Genesee Valley Park", July 1977	box 1	folder 15
ACTFORE organization, 1970-1978	box 1	folder 16-17
ACTFORE - News, publicity, 1970-1974	box 1	folder 18
Rochester community organizations, leaders, 1970-1975	box 1	folder 19
Photographs, 1970-1972	box 1	folder 20
History parks merger-City/county, 1956-1963	box 1	folder 21
Outer Loop/I-390, 1971-1977	box 1	folder 22-23
Outer Loop/I-390 documents, 1970-1972	box 1	folder 24
Outer Loop documents - A4, 1966-1977	box 1	folder 25
Outer Loop/Route 390 III documents, 1967-1975	box 1	folder 26-27
Rochester Outer Loop Final Environmental Impact Statement, circa 1977	box 1	folder 28
Rt. 390 - Outer Loop 1970's battles, 1957-1978	box 1	folder 29
Red Creek, 1971-1975	box 1	folder 30
37 Acres - University of Rochester, 1965-1978	box 1	folder 31-32
Legal documents, 1965-1972	box 1	folder 33
Rush landfill, 1970-1971	box 1	folder 34
Tryon Park preserved, 1971	box 1	folder 35
Photographs, 1970-1972	box 1	folder 36
Genesee Valley Park preservation film, October 1971	box 1	item 37

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Series II: Coalition for Pinnacle Hill Park, 1926-2001

box 2

Scope and Contents

This series consists of correspondence, slides, news articles, reports, handwritten notes, and proposals regarding the movement to save Pinnacle Hill Park from further

development. Pinnacle Hill was a land mass created by receding glaciers. It was the highest point in the city of Rochester. It was used for hiking, a scenic area, was home to birds and other wildlife, and was the former site of St. Patrick's cemetery. In the 1990's, a developer from Texas became owner of about five acres. The developer wanted to construct a luxury housing subdivision. Environmental activists fought the development and wanted the city to designate Pinnacle Hill as "forever wild" so that no development could happen. The activists opposed the development to retain the urban green space for wildlife, hiking, and to connect what the activists called the "Emerald Necklace." The "Emerald Necklace" is a green belt of the hills across the southern side of the city. The movement to designate Pinnacle Hill as a park ultimately failed but the hill was preserved from development.

Title/Description	Instances	
Pinnacle Hill slides, 1997	box 2	carton 1
[Volunteer and donation cards], Undated	box 2	folder 1
Pinnacle Hill older docs, 1947, 1990-1997	box 2	folder 2
Pinnacle history, 1929, 1947, 1998-2004	box 2	folder 3
News stories - Contacts, 1997-2001	box 2	folder 4-5
Map/Documents, 1998	box 2	folder 6
Nature, 1998	box 2	folder 7
Cemetery history, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 8
Carl Penn, 1997-2000	box 2	folder 9
Coalition for Pinnacle Hill Park, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 10
Hillside Home, 1995-2000	box 2	folder 11
Trails Pinnacle Hill Park, 1975	box 2	folder 12
Published documents, 1929-1998, bulk 1998	box 2	folder 13-14
Scoping documents, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 15
Environmental Impact Hearing documents, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 16
Display, 1997-2000	box 2	folder 17
Handouts, 1998	box 2	folder 18
Lake Effect article, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 19
Brighton, 1998	box 2	folder 20
Action committee - Future, 1998-1999	box 2	folder 21
Pinnacle, 1926	box 2	folder 22
City Council - Mayor, 1997-1999	box 2	folder 23

Federation - Resolution, 1997	box 2	folder 24
Letters - Documents, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 25
Leaders, meeting, 1998	box 2	folder 26
Legal, 1998-1999	box 2	folder 27
Printed documents, 1997-1999	box 2	folder 28
Information packets, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 29
Full petitions, Undated	box 2	folder 30
Meetings - Issues, 2000	box 2	folder 31
News conference, 1998	box 2	folder 32
Housing notes, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 33
Preliminary scoping documents, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 34
SEAC neighborhoods, 1997-1998	box 2	folder 35
Strategic planning, 1997-2001	box 2	folder 36
Publicity committee, 1998	box 2	folder 37

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