Background note

In 1932, following a statement from the Representative Meeting of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting on the subject of divorce (“...due to defects in education which manifest themselves in a ruthless demand for individual freedom, in a much exploited belief in happiness as a right...”), and believing in the institution of marriage according to religious and social tenets of American society, a decision was made that a committee comprised of 15 members to be known as the Committee on Marriage Relations study the implications of the problem and present the results of their study the following year. In 1933, the committee proposed the formation of an advisory board of professional and lay persons to act as counselors for those members of the Yearly Meeting as would want to consult them. The board would be known as the Marriage Council, and its functions would include education, personal advice and collection of factual data. The committee focused on promoting successful marriages rather than curing problematic ones. By 1965, known then as the Family Relations Committee, the focus was on problems of the young, though it continued to provide counseling service to its members on all family-related issues. Lovett Dewees, who had chaired the committee for over 20 years, died in 1965.


Other descriptive information

Collection inventory

PHILADELPHIA YEARLY MEETING - MARRIAGE COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS (ALSO KNOWN AS FAMILY RELATIONS COMMITTEE) RECORDS, (1933-45)/(1945-65). 2 boxes. 315 items.

Records include accounts, correspondence, lists of members, minutes, reports of the committee, speeches, and statements of function and services. Chaired by Lovett Dewees, M.D. from 1933 to ca. 1954, the committee dealt with issues such as divorce, sex education, and marriage and established a marriage counseling service in 1954. Under Dewees’ chairmanship, the Committee published Marriage in the Religious Society of Friends, 1944 (shelved at Haverford in BX 7698 M3M3). In 1955, the Committee published Why Does the Religious Society of Friends Need a Committee on Family Relations which was updated in 1963.

For further details, see table of contents, which follows.

Accounts, 7 items. [Including treasurer's reports of the Marriage Council and Counselor Service]
Correspondence, 76 items. [Deals with marriage, marriage statistics, human sexual behavior, counseling service (primarily to or from Lovett Dewees)]
Lists of Committee Members,
Lists of books [used by the Committee and circulated], 1 item; list of questions for discussions on family living, 1 item.
Minutes of the Marriage Council, 34 items. [Deal with advice, education and data gathering on the subject of marriage, sex education, adolescence and sex, birth control, divorce]
Minutes of the Marriage Council and Counselor Service Committee, 68 items. [Deal with marriage, sex education through films, literature, in schools, youth and sex, family relationships, intercultural marriages, and the establishment of a counseling service]
Minutes of the Family Relations Committee, 47 items. [Deal with problems of aging, group therapy, planned parenthood, problems of adolescence]
Miscellaneous. 8 items. [Study on inter-marriage; articles on marriage; announcement of course on health and human relations at U. of P.; marriage license regulations; membership of Family Relations Committee in Pennsylvania Conference on Family Relations; meeting announcement; statistics forms]
Reports of the Marriage Council to Arch Street and Race Street Yearly Meetings and General Meeting,
[Deal with material noted for Minutes above]
Speeches, 1 items. [Talks and notes on talks given before the Marriage Council by authorities such as Alfred Kinsey]
Statements of function and services of the Committee on Family Relationships, 9 items. [Concern counseling services and education in family matters, premarital to old-age; typescript of published article, “Why Does the Religious Society of Friends Need a Committee on Family Relations”; Marriage Council statement on divorce; counseling process]