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THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE FARM LABOR PROJECT COLLECTION
ACCESSION NO. 88-009



Dates	1940-1945
Extent	2 boxes (1 Standard, 1 Oversize) / 1.5 cubic ft.
Creator	Brooklyn College
Access/Use	The collection is open for research. Copyright is retained by Brooklyn College. Files can be accessed at the Brooklyn College Library Archives & Special Collections, Brooklyn College, 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Language	English
Finding Aid	This guide is available in-house and online.
Acquisition/Appraisal	This collection was given to the library by various donors in 1988.
Description Control	Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by <i>Describing Archives: Content Standard</i> . Processed by Erin Allsop, 2013.
Preferred Citation	Item, folder title, box number, Brooklyn College Country Fair Collection, Archives & Special Collections, Brooklyn College Library.
Subject Heading	Brooklyn College - History New York Farm Cadet Victory Corps Benedict, Ralph Curtis Gideonse, Dr. Harry D.

HISTORICAL NOTE

The **Brooklyn College Farm Labor Project** was designed as a way for young men and women to become more involved in the war effort throughout the early 1940s in order to help alleviate the labor and production shortages. The concept of farm labor aid was prevalent during World War I and by World War II; the societal movement of “Victory Gardens” was rapidly on the rise once again, but in a new way. President Gideonse saw this concept as a way to not only provide his students with the opportunity to fulfill their patriotic duties, but also as a way provide them with an opportunity to experience life outside of the congested and confined city of Brooklyn, New York. The beginning stages of this project began in 1940 through the efforts of President Gideonse when he reached out to the Associate Director of the American Youth Commission in Washington D.C., Howard McClusky, to discuss the “application of the work camp idea” at Brooklyn College. By 1941, President Gideonse had met with other administrators of youth labor organizations (such as the Work Camp Committee, for example) and was able to create a well-rounded Work Camp project which focused on the education of students inside and outside of the classroom; providing hands-on experiences that most could not get at home.

Students who were interested in volunteering for this project had to apply and undergo a review by the College Placement Office, the Faculty Committee on Employment and the Student Council Committee. Students who were accepted were able to earn a class credit as well as a weekly stipend for their services. A “trial-run” of the project was held at a farm located in Red Hook, Brooklyn in 1942 where over 80 students learned how to grow and pick various fruits and vegetables including cherries, strawberries and lettuce. By 1943, the Farm Labor Project was more of a triumph than a failure and it was at this time that President Gideonse was able to successfully create a “Brooklyn Bridge to Morrisville” by working with local agricultural defense committees. Over 100 students (mostly women) were enrolled in the Farm Labor Project during the years of 1943 and 1945; also becoming honorary members of the New York Farm Cadet Victory Corps. In Morrisville, students were able to experience a true farm life where they learned to grow and harvest various fruits and vegetables, milk and tend to cows and other animals, and work in collaboration with local farmers.

Housing and weekly stipends were provided for students; however, by the Morrisville years; the same opportunities were provided for African-American families of low income who wanted to help with the war effort. Although the Farm Labor Project was successful at providing new opportunities for college students and families during this time, the project had faced harsh criticism in the beginning. During 1940-1941, President Gideonse was criticized by leftist members of the Brooklyn College chapter of the American Student Union (A.S.U) who felt the Labor Camp project was similar to Hitler’s Nazi Labor Camps of this time. President Gideonse strongly defended his beliefs by stating the benefits of the project for the country and the opportunities it provided the students and local families of Brooklyn. The Farm Labor Project can be seen as another facet to the war effort of World War II; however, it is also a very integral chapter to the history of Brooklyn College.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Brooklyn College Farm Labor Project** collection is divided into three series which are Project Planning, Administrative Documents, and Morrisville. The Project Planning series contains a number of correspondence, information pamphlets from government sponsored “Labor Camp” programs, as well as five issues of the “Work Camp” newsletter which were collected by President Gideonse towards the development of the Farm Labor Project at Brooklyn College. The dates of the Project Planning series range from 1940 to 1941 and are separated by subject into three folders. The Administrative Documents series includes the correspondence, memorandums, reports, and meeting minutes between President Gideonse, Professor Ralph C. Benedict, Barbara O’Neill, and members of various committees involved in the project including the Faculty Committee on Employment and the Student Council Committee; the bulk dates of this series range from 1942 to 1945 and are organized by subject into four folders. In the Morrisville series, researchers will find numerous photographs, publications, newsletters, and pamphlets that were created between the years of 1943 and 1945; when the Brooklyn College Farm Labor Project worked in conjunction with the State Agricultural and Technical Institute at Morrisville; this series is separated by subject into three separate folders. The oversized box contains one oversized publication and various oversized news clippings.

SERIES STATEMENT

SERIES I. PROJECT PLANNING

SERIES II. ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS

SERIES III. MORRISVILLE

SERIES I. PROJECT PLANNING, 1940-1941

3 FOLDERS

The Project Planning series provides insight as to how the Farm Labor Project was created and installed into Brooklyn College life during World War II. Within this series, researchers will find various correspondences between President Gideonse, faculty of Brooklyn College, and representatives of government labor organizations; pamphlets sent to President Gideonse from government organizations such as the International Student Service, the American Youth Commission and the American Council of Education; as well as Volume 1, Issues 1-5 of the "Work Camp" newsletter distributed by the International Student Service. A rare correspondence from 1941 can be found in this series from James Ayer to President Gideonse sharing his opinion on the installation of the work labor project at Brooklyn College. The bulk dates of this series range from 1940-1941; all materials have been placed in Mylar sleeves for handling purposes, are organized by subject and placed in chronological order.

SERIES II. ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS, 1942-1945

4 FOLDERS

In the Administrative Documents series, researchers will find documents pertaining to the "back bone" or inner-workings of the Farm Labor Project. Such documents include correspondence regarding the establishment of educational committees for financial aid, employment, and student services between the project director, Prof. Ralph Benedict, and other faculty members; reports on the Farm Labor Project from 1942 to 1945; memorandums and announcements that were sent to various academic departments within Brooklyn College (History, Social Science, etc.); as well as minutes from the project meetings that were held throughout 1944. A rare registration form which was issued by Brooklyn College in conjunction with the New York Farm Cadet Victory Corps (Victory Farm Volunteers) is included in this series as well. All materials have been placed in Mylar sleeves for handling purposes, are organized by subject and placed in chronological order.

SERIES III. MORRISVILLE, 1943-1945

3 FOLDERS

By the second year of the Farm Labor Project (1943), President Gideonse was able to give Brooklyn College students a “true farm experience” by collaborating with the State Agricultural and Technical Institute at Morrisville. Within this series, researchers will find rare photographs bearing images of the entire process of the Farm Labor Project including Student Orientation during the winter season and the time spent at Morrisville in the summers of 1943, 1944 and 1945. Pamphlets and newsletters distributed by the BC Farm Labor Project during these years can also be found in this series, along with rare publications created by the students involved in this project. One pamphlet included is dated from 1952 and involves Brooklyn College and the issue of the “Red Scare” during the McCarthyism-era of the 1950s. Though this pamphlet seems to not be involved with the Farm Labor Project, it in fact relates to some opinions shared about the link between “Communism and the Farm Labor Project.” All materials have been placed in Mylar sleeves for handling purposes, are organized by subject and placed in chronological order.

CONTAINER LIST

BOX 1.

SERIES I. *Project Planning (1940-1941)*

Folder 1. Correspondence

Folder 2. Labor Camp Pamphlets

Folder 3. "Work Camp" Newsletter (Vol. 1, Issues 1-5)

SERIES II. *Administrative Documents (1942-1945)*

Folder 4. Reports on Farm Labor Project

Folder 5. Memos and Announcements

Folder 6. Correspondence

Folder 7. Meeting Minutes (1944)

SERIES III. *Morrisville (1943-1945)*

Folder 8. Photographs

Folder 9. Pamphlets, Newsletters and Bulletins

Folder 10. Publications (Article) – "Brooklyn's Bridge to Morrisville", *Brooklyn College Magazine*, September 1985

Folder 11. Books – *A Brooklyn Bridge to Morrisville* (4 copies)

BOX 2. OVERSIZE

Folder 1. Publication (Morrisville)

Folder 2. News Clippings (1940-1945)