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Time capsule contents

Photograph courtesy of Brooklyn.cuny.edu, April 12, 2013

Title: Walt Whitman Hall Time Capsule

Dates: Inclusive: 1948-1955
Bulk Dates: 1950-1955

Extent: 2 boxes/ 1ft

Creator: Brooklyn College

Access/Use: The collection is open to researchers.
Copyright is retained by Brooklyn College.
Files can be accessed at Brooklyn College Library Archives & Special Collection, 2900 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, New York.

Languages: English

Finding Aid: The guide is available in-house and online.

Acquisition/Appraisal: Donated by Brooklyn College

Description Control: Finding Aid content adheres to one prescribed by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.
Finding aid written by Laurence Bond.

Historical Note:

The construction of Walt Whitman Hall took five years of building harried by delays brought on not only by the fiscal scope of the construction project, but also the outbreak of the Korean War and the steel strike of 1952. The original \$300,000,000 budget for the project was insufficient after the initial construction bids were made. Over the next five years an additional \$2,000,000 was added to the budget: the entire cost of construction came to roughly \$43,000,000 in 2013 dollars. Dr. Harry Gideonse, president of Brooklyn College (1939-1966), was instrumental in securing the funds for the completion of the project. The building was intended to serve as a cultural and artistic center not only for the students and faculty of Brooklyn College but also for the community at large. Walt Whitman Hall was the broad term applied to the entire structure. One wing of Walt Whitman Hall housed the Walt Whitman Auditorium that could seat 2,500 at full capacity. The George Gershwin Theater was a small theater located in the opposite wing which could seat 500. Walt Whitman Hall also housed lecture halls, classrooms, dressing rooms, and offices. The structure was named for the famed American poet and editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle* (1846-48). The George Gershwin Theater was named in honor of the American composer and Brooklyn resident.

Scope and Content:

The collection consists of the college memoranda regarding construction of the building, newspaper articles, and programs from the dedication ceremony. In addition the contents of the capsule itself are included. The documents all originate in the period between 1950 to 1955 with the exception of the Brooklyn College faculty handbook that was published in 1948 but still in use in 1952. The collection is divided into two sub-groups. The first sub-group includes the documents regarding the building of Walt Whitman Hall in the form of intercollege communications, copies of newspaper articles, and the programs and plans for the dedication ceremony for the building in 1955. In several of the newspaper articles reference is made to the time capsule that was to be incased in the cornerstone of the building. The second sub-group contains the contents of the time capsule itself. The contents of the capsule are divided into two series: the first include the paper contents such as the Brooklyn College Bulletins, pamphlets and two college newspaper issues. The second includes the artifacts; a commemorative medallion of the inauguration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower as well as the copper time capsule itself.

The newspaper article copies of Sub-Group I come primarily from the Brooklyn College *Kingsman* as well as an article from the college's other publication the *Ken*. Other publications include the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald-Tribune* and the *Brooklyn Eagle*. The collection is small: all sub-groups are housed in two archival boxes, and arranged chronologically when applicable.

Sub-Group I: Walt Whitman Hall

Series 1: Newspaper Articles

Dates Inclusive: 1950-1955

Bulk: 1955

Arrangement: Chronological

This series includes newspaper articles that report on the progress of the Walt Whitman Hall construction project. The articles record the difficult progress of the construction due to financial constraints as well as report on the groundbreaking and dedication ceremonies.

Series 2: Intercollege Communications

Dates Inclusive: 1953

Arrangement: Chronological

The Intercollege Communications include Brooklyn College memoranda regarding certain aspects of the building dedication. Included is correspondence between Mrs. Rose Z. Sellers and Dean Adele Bildersee regarding a college-wide competition to choose appropriate lines of dedication for the bronze plaques of Whitman and Gershwin chosen from their respective works. Also included is a general memorandum regarding consistency in the use of the approved nomenclature for the new building and its environs.

Series 3: Dedication Ceremony

Dates Inclusive: 1953-1955

Bulk: 1955

Arrangement: Chronological

The Dedication Ceremony series includes the minutes from a meeting of the Committee on Dedication of Whitman Hall wherein is outlined the planned program for the dedication ceremony. Also included are copies of the programs for the dedication of the George Gershwin Theater (1954) and The Walt Whitman Auditorium (1955).

Sub-Group II: Time Capsule Contents

Series 1: Paper Contents

Dates Inclusive: 1948-1954

Bulk: 1953

Arrangement: Chronological

The paper contents of the time capsule include several pamphlets relating the Brooklyn College student and faculty life: the Air Force ROTC Bulletin, a pamphlet outlining how Brooklyn College serves the community with a signed card by Dr. Gideonse, and the Brooklyn College Faculty handbook. One pamphlet of interest is an issue of the New York Journal-American (November 15, 1952) that chronicles Brooklyn College student backlash against accusations of

Communist Party sympathies. With the help of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, Brooklyn College newspaper staff writers and editors published nine articles countering the charges. The inclusion of this document in the time capsule speaks to the socio-political climate of the time and the American Cold War-era perception of the threat of Communism. The series also contains the college bulletins and course catalog for 1952-1954, as well as two issues of the two Brooklyn College newspaper publications: *The Kingsman* and *The Ken*. Also included is a commemorative poster issued by the Ruppert Knickerbocker Beer Co. that celebrates the 300th anniversary of the founding of New York.

Series 2: Artifacts

Dates Inclusive: 1953

Arrangement: Chronological

This series is the smallest in the collection, it contains only two items. The first is a commemorative medallion of the inauguration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower minted by the Medallic Art Company that still is in operation today (2014). The series also includes the copper capsule itself. The capsule measure 13"x9"x4", it was completely sealed as to be air-tight and this accounts for the remarkably pristine preservation of the contents.

Collection Outline:

Sub-Group I: Walt Whitman Hall

Series 1: Newspaper Articles

Series 2: Intercollege Communications

Series 3: Dedication Ceremony

Sub-Group II: Time Capsule Contents

Series 1: Paper Contents

Series 2: Artifacts

Container List:

Sub-Group I: Walt Whitman Hall

Date: 1953-1955

BOX 1

Folder 1: Brooklyn College *Kingsman* and *Ken* articles 1950-1955

Folder 2: Newspaper Publications 1953

Folder 3: Intercollege Communications 1953

Folder 4: Whitman Hall dedication ceremony 1953-1955

Sub-Group II: Time Capsule Contents

Date: 1948-1954

BOX 1

Folder 1: Brooklyn College pamphlets 1948-1952

Folder 2: Brooklyn College bulletins 1952-1954

Folder 3: Brooklyn College *Kingsman* and *Ken* 1953

Folder 4: New York 300th Anniversary commemoration 1953

Box: Dwight D. Eisenhower commemorative medal 1953

BOX 2

Capsule