

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY ARCHIVES**

**Guide to the Papers of  
STELLA B. WERNER  
1908, 1930-1983**

**Record Group 17: Personal Papers**

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**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:**

Stella Biddison Werner was born in Baltimore in 1901. Her father, John S. Biddison, was a Maryland state senator and her great-grandfather of the same name served in the Maryland State General Assembly and held positions in the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Church. She attended Eastern High School while taking jobs as a playground supervisor and at the Baltimore Sun. After graduating from Goucher College in Baltimore in 1922, she worked as personnel manager for Hutzler Brothers Department Store also in Baltimore. In 1925 she married John H. Werner, a mechanical engineer, and moved to Montgomery County in 1928.

Werner became involved in community groups in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area. In 1934, she organized the Women's Democratic Club of Leland. In 1936 she served as president of the Bethesda Elementary PTA. In 1938, Werner served on the steering committee to establish the Bethesda Public Library. At the same time, she was chair of the committee formed to open the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Recreation Center. During World War II, Werner served on the operating committee of the Bethesda USO and also helped organize the Montgomery County YMCA. She was a member of the Montgomery County Social Welfare Committee.

From 1942 to 1947, Werner worked vigorously as Executive Director of the Montgomery County Charter Committee promoting the home rule movement and leading the fight for council manager form of government for the county. The 1948 Charter established the council manager government and abolished the old order of county government run by commissioners. In 1950, Werner, a Democrat, was elected to the new council she helped to create. In 1952, Werner became the first woman in Maryland to win a Democratic primary election for congressional office. However, she lost the Sixth District race in the general election.

Werner was reelected in 1954 and 1958 to the Montgomery County Council. While on the Council, she was a member of the Executive Committee of the Maryland State Association of County Commissioners and Chair of the Internal Operations Committee of the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments. She also was Vice Chair of urban counties in the National Association of County Officials. She fought for laws prohibiting conflicts in county planning and zoning operations. She was credited as being a major force behind passage of the county's 1962 ordinance prohibiting racial segregation in public accommodation.

In 1959, Werner was chosen President of the Montgomery County Council, making her the first woman to hold that position. In 1962, she made her fourth bid for a seat on the Council but was defeated. After that, she did not hold public office.

For five years she had an interview program, "Club Time with Stella Werner," on a local radio station, and weekly column, "Listening," about local government, in the Bethesda Record. She was the first President of the Women's Society of Christian Service of the Bethesda United Methodist Church. Later she became an honorary member of the Silver Spring Business and Professional Women's Club. Werner received the Good Citizenship Awards from the Bethesda Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. The County Council office building in downtown Rockville is named the Stella B. Werner Council Office Building in her honor.

**EXTENT**

4 cubic feet: 11 letter-size Hollinger boxes, 1 flat file

**SCOPE AND CONTENT**

Stella B. Werner's papers span the years from 1908 to 1983. The bulk of the material covers the period of civic activity, 1940-1963. The collection consists of correspondence, clippings, election material, and photographs. The papers have been arranged primarily by subject matter into four series.

Series I: Council Files, 1950-1962

Series II: Election Materials, 1948-1962

Series III: Other Civic and Political Activities, 1930 - 1983

Series IV: Photographs and Awards, 1908, 1947-1962

**SERIES DESCRIPTION**

**Series I: Council Files 1950-1962**

**(1.6 cubic feet)**

The records are generally in chronological folders and then by topics. Frequent topics include: Capital and Operating Budget issues, Education, Public Works (term is used here to include: development issues, zoning, public buildings and county and regional planning and related legislation before the Council). Chronological Within Series

**Series II: Election Materials 1950-1962**

**(0.6 cubic feet)**

This series includes campaign press releases, letters of support, campaign material and statements and material for Werner and for the Montgomery County Democratic Party in general. Folders also include copy of Washington Spectator that features Mrs. Werner, League of Women Voter election guides and reports of election results. Note that there is no file for either the 1960 primary or general elections.

**Series III: Other Civic and Political Activities**

**(1 cubic foot)**

This series includes some pre and post Council projects including the Charter movement, extra governmental projects in the Council period and copies and transcripts of Werner's Listening newspaper column and Club Time with Stella Werner radio program.

**Series IV: Photographs and Awards**

**(0.6 cubic feet)**

This series includes a 1908 image of Stella Biddison as a young child, images of Mrs. Werner and guests from the radio program, county council group photos, and awards from the Chamber of Commerce.

**CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS**

This collection is open for research. Some material is restricted due to the fragile condition of the items; folders with restricted content are marked as such in the finding aid and will not be served to researchers. If you have questions about restricted material, please contact the archivist.

**LANGUAGE**

English.

**PROVENANCE**

Papers covering 1930-1981 were donated by Mrs. Werner's daughter, Mary Werner Rose on July 27, 2000. Types included in the submission were: photographs; newspaper clippings; correspondence; architectural plans, newsletters, brochures, pamphlets, testimony, petitions, awards and other printed material.

**USING THESE RECORDS**

To request records listed in this finding aid, the following information should be given to the archivist:

Record Group 17, **Papers of Stella B. Werner**, Series Number and Name, Box Number and Folder Title(s).

The preferred citation for materials from these records is:

Montgomery County Archives; Gaithersburg, Maryland. Record Group 17: Personal Papers. Records Title: Papers of Stella B. Werner. Series number and series name. Subseries number and subseries name, if applicable. Box number and folder title, if appropriate.

**PROCESSING PROCEDURES**

Only box 1 has been completely converted to clippings copied to acid free paper. Clippings are in bad condition in this collection. Some were trimmed and flattened to improve their filing in folders. Often clippings and other materials from the same year were submitted in random order. In some cases, these materials have been regrouped to bring related content together in the given year. Folder numbers at time of processing indicated in small numerals.

General processing procedures consisted of discarding duplicates, unnecessary binders, and routine transmittals. Oversized documents and photographs were removed from the original location in their assigned series and placed in separate containers. Separation sheets were inserted in the original location within the folder to indicate the new location of any records placed elsewhere.

Preservation photocopying of newspaper clippings was performed whenever feasible. Records in folders were arranged, unless otherwise indicated, in forward chronological order, with undated records appearing at the end of the folder.

**PROCESSING STAFF/FINDING AID AUTHOR**

MCA staff.

## BOX INVENTORY

### Series I: Council Files 1950-1962

#### Box 1

Council Bills, Gray Courthouse, Hospital Report, Emory Grove School Dedication program, 1950

Recreation Issues including establishment of Recreation Department, 1950-1951

Public Library, Liquor Control Board, Salary and Tax Matters, 1951

Public Works, 1951-52

Council Closed Session Issues, 1951

Minutes of open and closed executive sessions, 1951-52

Media issues, Fire Department & School Siting Issues, 1953

#### Box 2

Solicitation legislation, Welfare Board, zoning and recreation issues, 1954

Public Works: roads, Lyttonsville, transcript of Suburban Maryland Builders Association panel, Bethesda Fire Department regulations, 1954

Budget, 1954

County Departments: Health Council, school nurses, Teen Traffic Safety Conference, 1954

Education Budget, 1955

Public Works: Urban renewal, Lyttonsville, public housing, M-NCPPC appointments, 1955

Liquor Control, Fire Board and Recreation Department, 1955

#### Box 3

Zoning Ordinance materials regarding Upper Montgomery County planning, 1955-56

Zoning Ordinance for Upper Montgomery County: Suggested, 1954, Proposed and Public Hearing, 1956, Adopted, 21 Feb 1956

Public Works, including M-NCPPC's Preliminary General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District 11/56, Safeway store, Lyttonsville, McKinsey report and Council Comments, local group against integration, 1956

Public works: Little Falls Parkway, Eig parking lot, state roads, 1957

Boards: Clippings and Related Council Materials, 1957

#### Box 4

Education Issues, 1958

Council files: Zoning, Route 240, County Jails Inspection, hospitals, Annual Report, 1957

Public Works: M-NCCP, Cabin John Watershed Master Plan and map, Rock Creek Watershed, Wheaton Regional Park and map, 1958

Election as Council President: Letters and clippings, 1958

Diary (appointment book), 1959

Public Works, 1959

Council file: Education, culture and recreation, 1959

Council file: president of council, Milk Ordinance, 1959

Council Files: Werner Council activities, Welfare Board report, 1959

Open Meetings, Press Issue 1959

**Box 5**

Public Works: zoning, planning, aging, "report on conflict of interest," 1958-1960  
Schools, youth services, anti-loitering, Teen Conference, B-CC Chamber of Commerce,  
1959-1960  
Articles by and about Stella B. Werner, compensation, building issues, 1960-1961  
Budget issues including youth, libraries, welfare, 1961  
Budget issues including schools, salaries, zoning, transportation, 1961  
"Ordinance to Eliminate Discrimination in Places of Public Accommodation," list of stores and  
restaurants in Montgomery County that serve without discrimination, 12/12/1961,  
biographical article, annual reports, 1961  
Public Works: WSSC, zoning, 1963 annual report, 1962

**Series II Election Materials 1950 - 1962**

**Box 6**

Primary and General Election, 1950  
Democratic Congressional Primary material, telephone message book, 1952  
General Election, congressional (1 of 2), 1952  
General Election, congressional (2 of 2), 1952  
Primary and General Election, 1954

**Box 7**

Primary and General Election, 1956  
Primary Election, 1958  
General Election, 1958  
Primary Election, includes handwritten draft of announcement to file, 1962  
General Election, 1962

**Series III: Other Civic and Political Projects**

**Box 8**

Women's Democratic Club of Leland, 1930-1939  
Policing, USO, and other issues, 1930-39  
Bethesda Public Library Association, 1933-47  
Bethesda Chevy-Chase Recreation Center and other recreation issues, 1937-42  
Education Issues including Montgomery County Public Health Lay Council Report on Physical  
Condition of Negro Schools Materials, 1941-1945  
Charter Committee Materials and Clippings and Related Materials, 1942-1946  
USO and USO/YMCA Joint Project, 1942- 1947

**Box 9**

Listening Columns and The Record, 1946-1950  
"Club Time with Stella Werner", Radio Program, 1947-1949  
Clippings, 1947  
Charter Committee and other Correspondence and Clippings, 1947-48  
Montgomery County Charter, KenGar housing, 1947-49  
Local Government Issues, Little Falls Parkway, 1948-1949

**Box 10**

Programs, political activities, correspondence, clippings, 1955  
Address to US Congress, correspondence, county holiday greeting, 1958-1959  
National and regional government organization's programs and correspondence, 1959-1960  
Papers from Commission to Study Gas Tax and Motor Vehicle Fund, and State Association of  
County Commissioners, 1960  
Washington Metro Regional Conference, World Conference of Local Governments and other  
correspondence, 1961  
Medical Dispensary Project Isangila, includes materials in French Congo, 1961-62  
Listening Columns and Other, 1963  
National Library Week, 1963  
Correspondence and Clippings includes transcript of 4/7/77 interview on 1954 Democratic  
Primary, 1976 newspaper clipping of her 1925 wedding, 1962-1980  
Condolence letters, service program and naming of Council Office Building in 1983, 1981-1983

**Series IV: Awards, Badges, Photographs**

**Box 11**

Congressional Scrapbook (*see Box 12*)  
Badges, pins and related ribbons 1957-1972  
Childhood photograph, 1908  
Radio Show Photographs without Mrs. Werner  
Radio Show Photographs: more than one guest (19)  
Radio Show Photographs with men only (53)  
Radio Show Photographs with female only (26)  
Medical Dispensary Project Isangila, Congo, 1961-62  
Council Member and Other Activities (39), 1952-1962  
Council Member and Other (6), 1954-1959  
County Council Photograph, Werner, Schweinhaut and Hostelier, n.d.  
County Council (9x14), n.d.  
County Council Photograph, 4/23/57 (11 x 17)  
Congressional Campaign Poster  
Bethesda Junior Chamber of Commerce 1953-54 Good Government Award, June 30, 1954  
Distinguished Service Award Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce, January 29, 1960

**Box 12 (Flat Files)-Stella B. Werner Papers**

Congressional Election Clippings Scrapbook, 1954  
Painted fabric scroll from Leland Jr. High 9<sup>th</sup> graders c. 1956  
Newspaper articles, 1950 **RESTRICTED**  
Newspaper articles, election articles, 1950 **RESTRICTED**  
Newspaper articles, 1950-1952 **RESTRICTED**  
Newspaper articles, 1946-1950, n.d. **RESTRICTED**  
Newspaper articles. 1946, n.d. **RESTRICTED**  
Newspaper articles, 1944-1950, n.d. **RESTRICTED**