

# A Guide to the Mary Riley Styles Public Library Archives Record Group, 1935-2024

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1935-2024

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A Collection in Mary Riley Styles Public Library Record Group 2-1  
Mary Riley Styles Public Library  
2025

## History

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## Title Statement

A Guide to the Mary Riley Styles Public Library Archives Record Group, 1935-2024

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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

### Collection Number

Record Group 2-1

### Language

Materials in this collection are in English.

### Repository

Falls Church History Room, Mary Riley Styles Public Library

## Administrative Information

### Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use.

### Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description was completed in June 2024. Archival files were created by the librarians responsible for the history room. The process of forming the library archive is ongoing.

## Biographical/Historical Note

The Mary Riley Styles Public Library Archives Record Group portrays the history of people committed to the idea of creating a library, who understood the role of enlightenment in society, who did not stop in the face

of obstacles, and who have been carefully collecting the library archive for years.

The Falls Church Library was founded in 1899. The first collection of 650 books was located in a house that was erected specifically for the library. The first official address of the library was on Columbia Street, behind the house of George W. Hawxhurst at the corner of North Washington and East Columbia Streets. Later this building was used as a garage and eventually demolished.

In 1906, the books were removed from Columbia Street to a room in the Post Office where Mr. George W. Hawxhurst was Postmaster and his daughter Miss Nellie Hawxhurst was his assistant and library custodian. Unfortunately, the Library Association was inactive and for several years the books were stored in this back room.

Looking at the Record of Books Taken (Lohico 634, FC Library circulation records), we can see that the records stop in 1909, and after a few blank pages, the records resume in 1913. Despite the uncertainty of permanent premises for the library, in 1913, with the help of the Civic League, a local women's organization, another 500 books were collected for the library. Since there was no permanent library building, the collection was moved from the Post Office to the old Congregational Church. A few years later, the library collection moved again, this time to a building next to Brown's Meat Market in East Falls Church. According to Mrs. John F. Bethune, "There was no heat in that building, but there was a fireplace in the room used for the library." Such conditions were not the best for the proper preservation of books, and in 1919 the library returned to the Congregational Church building which was owned by the School Board since the disbanding of the church congregation.

For many years the library was operated by the Woman's Club on a small budget and volunteer help. In 1928, the Town Council recognized the direction of the Woman's Club and began to appropriate money for the support of the library. At the suggestion of the Mayor, John Bethune, Town Council passed an ordinance establishing "The Falls Church Public Library."

In 1931, Miss Annie M. Lester was hired as the first paid employee and her duties were solely those of the circulation desk. Book selection, accessioning, cataloguing, and everything else was done by the Library Committee. By this time the number of books had grown to 1,000. In 1940, the Town Council bought the old church building from the School Board. The library moved out during the renovation and then back when the renovation was finished.

In 1948, library space again became a matter of great concern. The Library was moved into two rooms in the Murphy Building at 151 East Broad Street. One year later, in September 1949, Miss Jewel Drickamer, a certified librarian, was hired. In 1948, the library also received its first grant of State aid, \$625.00 a year, providing that the whole amount should be spent for books within the year.

In 1950, when the library moved to an old house built in 1855, the building inspector would not permit public use of the second floor because the old worn boards could not stand the strain of the weight of books and people. By 1953, there was little more than standing room on the library's first floor and the number of books was about 18,000.

In January 1955, the library moved to 201 East Broad Street. However, this building presented as many difficulties as the previous quarters.

In 1946, Elizabeth Styles and Francis Styles, children of Mary Riley Styles, graciously offered a portion of their estate at 120 North Virginia Avenue for a future library. For many decades this address has been associated with a wonderful, cozy library for generations of residents of the Falls Church, Fairfax, and DC area.

Unfortunately, the documents for the period from 1899 to 1934 were lost and today the oldest official document in the library archive dates back to 1935.

## Scope and Content

The library archive from 1935 to 2024 consists of the following documents: Corporate Statistics, Reports, Plans, Correspondence, Programs, Resolutions, etc.

The archive is organized as follows:

- Series 1: Bibliography
- Series 2: Automation
- Series 3: Reports
- Series 4: Anniversaries
- Series 5: Plan
- Series 6: Correspondence
- Series 7: Circulation Statistics
- Series 8: Library Equipment
- Series 9: Resolution
- Series 10: Projects

- Series 11: Finances
- Series 12: Reports
- Series 13: Establish a Public Library
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