



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Louise Chazin papers

1965-1990

MssCol 526

Compiled by Valerie Wingfield, February 1991. Additional materials were integrated into the collection by Robyn Hjermsstad, June 2015.

Summary

Creator: Chazin, Louise, 1903-1999

Title: Louise Chazin papers

Date: 1965-1990

Size: 6.4 linear feet (15 boxes, 1 oversized folder)

Source: Gift of Louise Chazin, 1990.

Abstract: Louise Chazin (1903-1999) was a novelty designer turned activist for the aged, a career that she launched at the age of 70 in New York City. The Louise Chazin papers date from 1965 to 1990 and document her involvement with community and governmental organizations, such as the Bronx Council on the Aging, Community Board #7, the New York City Human Resource Agency, and the New York City the Metropolitan Transit Authority Senior Citizens Advisory Committee. The collection contains correspondence, reports, meeting minutes, business records, printed material, and a small amount of photographs.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Louise Chazin papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

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Creator History

Louise Chazin (née Rosenzweig, 1903-1999), community activist for the aged and founder of many New York City community-based organizations, was born in Austria-Hungary in 1903. In 1921, she immigrated to the United States, settling in Milwaukee. After two years of working in Milwaukee, Chazin left for New York City where she met and married Max Chazin. After mourning the loss of her husband in 1969, she channeled her energies into direct positive action. At the age of 70, having long since retired from a career as a novelty designer, Chazin came out of retirement and launched her second career as a civil rights activist for the aged.

Louise Chazin's objectives went beyond memberships in existing organizations concerned with the environment and the psychological and social welfare of the aged. Chazin was the founder and co-founder of the Mid-Bronx Jewish Community Council, the North Central Council on Aging, and the Bronx Council on the Aging (BCA). The Bronx Council on the Aging deserves special mention because it drew its membership from New York City senior citizen centers and interested individuals. The BCA became one of the most important voices from the Bronx to speak to the New York City government on behalf of the elderly.

Chazin served as chairperson or board member of the following organizations: Northwest Bronx Council for Older Adults, Community Council of Greater New York, Comprehensive Health Planning District E, Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council, Montefiore Outpatient Department, Mosholu-Montefiore Senior Citizens Center (advisory Board member), Bronx YMCA Senior Citizens Center, Congress of Senior Citizens of New York, National Council of Senior Citizens, and Community Board #7 in the Bronx.

Chazin also maintained a working relationship with politicians in and out of office and with New York City agencies. One agency of particular importance to Chazin was the Human Resources Agency (HRA). Chazin needed to be aware of the daily operations of the HRA since this agency had, under its management, the Department of Aging and the Department of Social Services. The latter department oversaw the Medicaid Program and the Community Alternative Systems Agency (CASA). CASA was specifically designed to manage long term health care. Both of these programs were created for thousands of elderly New Yorkers on fixed and moderate incomes and these vital programs provided services which the elderly person might not otherwise be able to afford.

The other New York City agency closely monitored by Chazin and her colleagues was the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA). The Senior Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan Transit Authority was the watch-dog group that afforded Chazin the opportunity to inform the MTA about the needs of elderly citizens. Through this organization and the Bronx Council of Aging, Chazin won two important victories: half-fare for the elderly and buses equipped to provide transportation for the wheelchair bound.

During the years 1970 through the late 1980s, Chazin attended hundreds of meetings advocating for the civil rights of the elderly. She addressed many groups and attended demonstrations on behalf of the elderly. Chazin's crowning achievements included her selection as a national delegate by United States Congressman Jonathan Bingham to represent New York State at the 1981 White House Conference of the Aging. Preceding this conference, Chazin attended the New York State Governor's Conference on Aging in Albany, New York.

On October 13, 1983, Chazin was honored at a scholarship luncheon held at Herbert H. Lehman College (Bronx, New York). The theme was "A Tribute to a Woman of Courage and Extraordinary Achievement in the Service of Others." The newsletter published by The Bronx North-Manhattan Coalition for the Elderly and Long Term Care stated in its November 1983 issue that over 200 people attended. Bronx Borough President Stanley Simon and Congressman Mario Biaggi co-chaired this event. Other political and public figures who honored Louise Chazin on this day were Congressman Robert Garcia; State Assemblyman George Friedman; Commissioner Janet Sainer of the New York Department for the Aging; Glen Flynn, vice president of Lehman College; and representatives from the offices of Senator Flynn, Councilman Eisland, Mayor Koch, and Representative Kenneth Kearns. Louise Chazin's family, friends and colleagues were also present. A scholarship in honor of Chazin was presented to Lehman College for students who pursued studies involving the elderly, health and humanitarian care. This scholarship was bestowed upon Lehman College in conjunction with the start

of a fund raised to complement the award.

An article in the *New York Times*, dated April 1, 1983, reported on the opening of thirty New York City senior citizen centers. During the news conference, former Mayor John V. Lindsay assailed Governor Rockefeller for not contributing state funds towards the centers' operations. After the news conference, Chazin was quoted as stating, "Twice I have been to Albany this year for these centers and if the Governor does not help, I tell you we will be back and we will tear down those marble walls of his mall and sell them." This statement attests to the fighting spirit of Chazin who was willing to battle the state of New York for the rights of senior citizens.

Louise Chazin died in 1999.

Scope and Content Note

The papers reflect Louise Chazin's commitment to improve the quality of life of the aged through her activism in organizations that focused on their medical and social needs. It is also reflective of the organizations Chazin founded or co-founded, and the interaction between Chazin and the organizations and individuals with whom she worked.

The general correspondence, subject files, conference papers, reports, notes, and printed material chronicle many of the organizations that Chazin was actively involved with. The General Correspondence (1972-1988) reflects many of the organizations in which Chazin was an executive member of the board, including the Bronx Jewish Community Council Inc., Bronx-North Manhattan Coalition for the Elderly and Long Term Care Inc. (member), Congress of Senior Citizens of New York City (executive board member), Montefiore Outpatient Department, National Council of Senior Citizens (delegate), and Victims Services Agency (Elder Abuse Project). The Organization Files (1971-1990) are the most voluminous section of the papers and contain correspondence, reports, meeting minutes, and other business-related documents pertaining to organizations with which Chazin was involved, such as The Bronx Council on Aging, Community Board #7, New York City Human Resources Agency (HRA), and the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) Senior Citizens Advisory Committee. Organizations represented to a lesser extent are the Community Council of Greater New York, the Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council, and the North Central Bronx Council for Older Adults.

The collection contains correspondence, schedules, meeting minutes, and reports of two major conferences that Chazin attended in 1981: the New York State Governor's Conference on Aging and the White House Conference on Aging. The remaining papers consist of reports issued by individuals and organizations concerned with the welfare of the elderly; writings by Chazin; printed material; and miscellaneous organizational documents and photographs.

Key Terms

Subjects

Civil rights -- New York (State) -- New York

Community centers -- New York (State) -- New York

Community development, Urban -- New York (State) -- New York

Older people -- Economic conditions

Older people -- New York (State) -- New York

Older people -- Political activity
Older people -- Social networks

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.) -- History -- 1951-
New York (N.Y.) -- Social life and customs

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs

Container List

Series I: General Correspondence 1972-1989 (1.5 boxes)

The General Correspondence is chronological in its arrangement. It consists of incoming letters, reports, memos and notices to Chazin from New York City-based non-profit organizations (particularly from the Bronx) concerned with the medical and social needs of the aged. The General Correspondence demonstrates the range of organizations Chazin was involved with and it is also reflective of the type of individuals who solicited her support with their concerns. The specific areas of interest for these organizations and individuals with respect to the elderly or aged person include: funds designated from federal, state and city budgets for Medicaid and similar support programs; elder abuse; crime; geriatric care in hospitals and social support programs; housing; and nursing homes. Chazin served as a board member of many community organizations. The organizations in which Chazin played an active role are represented in the General Correspondence by: Bronx Jewish Community Council Inc., Bronx-North Manhattan Coalition for the Elderly and Long Term Care Inc. (member), Congress of Senior Citizens of New York City (Executive Board member), Montefiore Outpatient Department, National Council of Senior Citizens (delegate), and Victims Services Agency (Elder Abuse Project).

b. 1 f. 1-8 1972-1984

b. 2 f. 1-9 1985-1989

Series II: Organization Files 1971-1990 (9.5 boxes)

This series documents Chazin's involvement in senior citizen-related initiatives and organizations in New York City. The principal focus of these organizations and agencies was to advocate for the needs of the elderly. The best-represented organizations in this series are the Bronx Council on Aging, Community Board # 7, the New York City Human Resources Agency (including the Department of Aging, the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services, the Department of Social Services, and the Office of Family Services), and the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) Seniors Citizens Advisory. Other organizations that are represented include the Community Council of Greater New York, the Mid-Bronx Council, and the North Central Bronx Council for Older Adults.

Organization files typically contain correspondence, meeting minutes, and reports. These organizations would often find themselves working towards the same goal and with each other because of mutual objectives. Among the issues addressed in the files are housing, healthcare, transportation, community workshops, and program budgets.

The small chronological run of files preceding the remaining organization files were processed and integrated into the collection at a later date. Researchers should consult these files in addition to the rest of the series, as information on a given event or organization may be represented in both places. The files predominantly reflect the support of Chazin's activism by state and local organizations and members of the United States Congress. Specific events documented include her appointments to the New York City Department for the Aging Advisory Council and Community Board #7; her delegacy to the 1981 White House Conference Aging; the establishment of the Louise Chazin Scholarship Fund at Lehman College in 1983; and several tributes and award ceremonies held in her name. Correspondents include New York City Mayor Edward Koch; Senators John E. Flynn, Abraham Bernstein, and Alfonse D'Amato; U.S. Representative Mario Biaggi; Congressmen Peter Peyser and Jonathan Bingham; and Benjamin R. Epstein of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

b. 2 f. 10-18 1971-1987

b. 15 f. 1 Bills and Legislation 1975-1983

b. 15 f. 2 By-laws and Constitutions 1974

Bronx Council on Aging

b. 3 f. 4-10 Correspondence 1974-1980

b. 4 f. 1-4 Correspondence 1981-1985

b. 4 f. 5-14 Meeting Minutes 1974-1984

b. 4 f. 15-16 Application for Funding and Articles 1975-1984

b. 4 f. 17 Bronx North Manhattan Coalition 1981-1987

Community Board #7

Series II: Organization Files (cont.)
Community Board #7 (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 18 Correspondence 1974-1978
- b. 5 f. 1-7 Correspondence 1979-1987
Meeting Minutes
- b. 5 f. 8-14 1975-1987
- b. 6 f. 1-14 1980-1986
- b. 7 f. 1-2 1987-1989
- b. 7 f. 3-11 Community Council of Greater New York 1973-1987
- b. 7 f. 12-13 Inter-Agency Councils on the Aging 1976-1981
- b. 7 f. 14-16 Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council 1973-1981
- b. 8 f. 1-6 Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council 1982-1990
New York City Human Resources Agency
- b. 8 f. 7-12 Department for the Aging 1974-1984
- b. 9 f. 1 Department for the Aging 1975-1986
- b. 9 f. 2 Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services 1973-1986
- b. 9 f. 3-9 Department of Social Services 1977-1986
Including Community Alternative System Agency (CASA).
- b. 9 f. 10-11 Medical Assistance Program 1974-1986
- b. 10 f. 1 Medical Assistance Program 1987
- b. 15 f. 3 Office of Family Services 1985-1986
- b. 10 f. 2-13 New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) Senior Citizens Advisory
Committee 1973-1989
- b. 10 f. 14 North Central Bronx Council for Older Adults 1975-1976
- b. 11 f. 1-2 North Central Bronx Council for Older Adults 1977-1986

Series III: Conference Files 1980-1981 (1.25 boxes)

This series contains materials relating to two conferences: The New York State Governor's Conference on Aging and the White House Conference on Aging. The files contain correspondence, schedules, and reports of both of the conferences. They reflect the attention given to a delegate who was selected to attend both of these events as well as the lobbying efforts of other groups who hoped to press their own interests through these delegates.

- b. 11 f. 3-6 New York State Governor's Conference on Aging 1981
- b. 11 f. 7-12 White House Conference on Aging 1980-1981
- b. 12 f. 1-2 White House Conference on Aging 1981

Series IV: Reports 1972-1982 (1 box)

The reports were issued from organizations, conferences, and individuals focused on issues of interest to the elderly. Topics discussed in the reports include women and aging; geriatric services; physical and mental health; and social support systems.

- b. 12 f. 3-19 1972-1981
- b. 15 f. 4-5 1973-1982
- b. 13 f. 1-5 Series V: Writings 1973-1984 (.25 box)

The writings consist of addresses, notes, and petitions.

Series VI: Printed Material 1965-1990 (2.75 boxes)

Printed Material is arranged into three categories: alphabetical files, arranged by organization or event; newsletters and bulletins; and directories and guides. Alphabetical files contain press releases, announcements, brochures, and fliers.

- b. 13 f. 6-20 Alphabetical 1972-1990
- b. 14 f. 1-8 Newsletters and Bulletins 1965-1988
- b. 14 f. 9 Directories and Guides 1974-1980s

Series VII: Miscellaneous Papers and Photographs 1972-1987 (2 boxes)

- b. 15 f. 6 1972-1982
- b. 3 f. 1-3 Appointment Books 1972-1978
 - o. 1 Certificates and Awards 1976-1987
- b. 15 f. 7 Photographs 1970s-1980s