

## The Connecticut Historical Society Library Online Catalog

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Database Name: Connecticut Historical Society

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**Description:** 69 linear feet (137 boxes).

**Notes:** Other collections compiled by Keith Hook: Connecticut Valley Hospital, MS 81697; Greater Hartford Council for UNESCO, MS 86607. Additional speeches and correspondence may also be found in MS 79895.

Keith Hook lived in Hartford, Connecticut, for many years and was active with a number of local organizations, including the Hartford School Board. Hook first ran unsuccessfully for the Board in 1953. He was appointed to fill a vacancy from July 1956 to December 1957. In February 1959 he was once again appointed, won an election, and continued to serve until December 1971. For several of those years Hook served as President of the Board. Hook's papers provide a history of Hartford school issues for the 1960s. As a member of the Board, Hook was involved in the hiring of two superintendents, Kenneth L. Meinke and Medill Bair. Area businesses took an interest in the Hartford Public Schools, especially Aetna, which formed a partnership with Weaver High School. The School Board is charged with all aspects of education in Hartford,

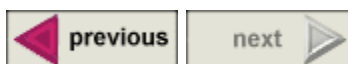
from management of the buildings to salary negotiations for educators. Teachers in Hartford continue to be represented by the Hartford Federation of Teachers. The Board also faces decisions regarding bilingual education, Head Start programs, and similar educational initiatives. During Hook's time the Project Concern program began, allowing minority city students to attend predominantly white suburban schools. From time to time smaller issues, such as whether to allow the Hartford Capitols Basketball team to use school facilities, would be debated. For help planning the best approach for school integration, the School Board commissioned the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Center for Field Studies to study the situation (the study was funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation and is available elsewhere in the CHS collections). Hook fought for and against many policies, ideas, and initiatives during his time on the Board. One for which he accumulated much reference material was the construction of a fallout shelter within the new Hartford Public High School. Hook was involved in the site selection and construction of many new schools in the city, particularly the three high schools: Bulkeley, Hartford Public, and Weaver. One neighborhood elementary school that was much discussed in the early years of Hook's time on the board was the South Arsenal Neighborhood Development (SANDS) School. Blueprints, especially for Hartford Public High School, can be found among the papers. Hartford Public was relocated in part to make room for the expressway now known as Interstate 84. For this reason, a report on the building of an East-West expressway, and several maps are included. One of the largest issues Hook and his Board colleagues had to deal with was integration of segregated schools. Race relations, in general, were part of almost every discussion. Hook and the School Board held occasional meetings with the NAACP. Other education related organizations with which Hook was involved include the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and the Capital Region Education Council. Hook also served on a steering committee for the creation of an educational television station (now Connecticut Public Television) in Hartford. Hook was a proponent of enhancing medical and dental education within the state, and was a member of the Citizens' Committee for the Connecticut Medical and Dental Schools. Following his years on the school board, Hook was involved with Greater Hartford Community College. His papers reflect this involvement, including approving scholarships for local residents. Hook compiled an enormous collection of newspaper clippings. Many of the clippings provide a framework for understanding the issues about which Hook and his colleagues corresponded. Among Hook's many regular correspondents were fellow members of the Board of Education, especially Salvador Fasi, Rev. Richard A. Battles, Lewis Fox, Madelyn C. Neumann, and Belle Ribicoff. Hook also exchanged letters with the city's mayors, William E. Glynn, George B. Kinsella, Antonina P. Uccello, and George A. Athanson. Frequently Hook corresponded with Hartford's City Manager, Carleton F. Sharpe. School business often went hand in hand with projects and policies of the Hartford Chamber of Commerce and the City of Hartford. A number of Hartford City Budgets and Annual Reports are also in the collection.

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**Location:** Manuscript Stacks

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