

**Roanoke Public Libraries  
Virginia Room  
Urban Renewal Collection of Mary Bishop**

**Collection Description:**

**Repository:** Roanoke Public Libraries, Virginia Room

**Accession Number:** 2017.05.23

**Title:** Urban Renewal Collection of Mary Bishop

**Physical Characteristics:** 3 record storage boxes

**Donated by:** Mary Bishop

**Arrangement:** Collection is arranged in four series and alphabetically by document type within each series.

**Creator:** Mary Bishop

**Reproduction Restrictions:** No known restrictions on publication. Virginia Room copy fees apply.

**Processor:** Dyron Knick, 28 June 2017

**Historical Note:**

After World War II, governments and developers across the United States began initiatives of revitalization, officially known as “urban renewal”. Urban renewal involved the use of eminent domain as a means to acquire private property for city-initiated development projects resulting in the displacement of many, predominately African American communities across the country.

Urban renewal in Roanoke began in 1955 with the Commonwealth Project.

Commonwealth was located in the area that now encompasses the Civic Center site in Northeast. The Commonwealth Project included the widening of Williamson Road, and the removal of homes, schools, businesses and churches to make property available for various commercial structures. In 1964, the Kimball Project began to make way for a new main post office, Norfolk & Western computer center and Roanoke Gas offices.

Like Commonwealth, the Kimball Project would see the removal of homes, schools, businesses and churches. By 1973, the Gainsboro neighborhood began to experience the effects of urban renewal. Unlike the previous two projects, Gainsboro’s urban renewal would consist of many small projects focusing on only a couple of blocks at a time and lasting over 27 years. In total, the 395 acres seized for Roanoke’s urban renewal projects resulted in the demolition of 1600 homes, several schools, two dozen churches, and over 200 small businesses.

Mary Bishop became interested in the urban renewal of Roanoke neighborhoods after readers began suggesting the *Roanoke Times* should write about the black neighborhoods that once stood north of downtown. As the *Times*’ minority affairs and neighborhoods writer, Bishop began researching the neighborhoods, interviewing former and current residents, scouring records and consulted with others throughout the United States who have researched urban renewal. Bishop’s years of tireless work culminated in a 12-page *Roanoke Times* special report entitled, “Street by Street, Block by Block: How Urban Renewal Uprooted Black Roanoke”.

### **Scope and Content:**

This collection is housed in three record storage boxes. Content consists of all of Mary Bishop's research for "Street by Street, Block by Block: How Urban Renewal Uprooted Black Roanoke". The collection is arranged into four series:

- Series I: Neighborhoods – consists of any notes, correspondence, news clippings, interviews with residents, neighborhood plans, maps, memoranda and news releases and historical information.
- Series II: Related Research – consists of information on other urban renewal initiatives across the country, including publications, news clippings, contacts, city demographics,
- Series III: Organizations – consists of information related to the organizations involved, either as advocates for or opponents of urban renewal, including general information on the organizations, financial statements, notes from meetings, correspondence, interview notes and records.
- Series IV: Projects – information regarding Bishop's urban renewal projects, including speaking engagements, editorials, proofs of story for "Street by Street", reader's response to "Street by Street", photographs used in the story and information related to Bishop's "Invisible Inner City".

### **Container List:**

#### **Box 1 of 3**

##### Series I: Neighborhoods

Folder 1: Downtown East – General Information

Folder 2: Gainsboro – Businesses

Folder 3: Gainsboro – Churches

Folder 4: Gainsboro – Churches, First Baptist

Folder 5: Gainsboro – Churches, Greater Mount Zion Baptist

Folder 6: Gainsboro – City Directory Listings, 1898, 1935, 1944, 1948-49, 1958, 1968, 1969, 1978, 1991, 1994

Folder 7: Gainsboro – Correspondence, City of Roanoke

Folder 8: Gainsboro – Correspondence, Coca-Cola Bottling Company

Folder 9: Gainsboro – Correspondence, Freedom of Information Act requests regarding allocation of funds for development project with notes

Folder 10: Gainsboro – Correspondence, Regarding construction of Social Security Building on Henry Street

Folder 11: Gainsboro – Correspondence, Regarding redevelopment plans

Folder 12: Gainsboro – Correspondence, Regarding Wells Avenue

Folder 13: Gainsboro – Demographics

Folder 14: Gainsboro – Financial Information – copies of ledgers, correspondence and memoranda regarding Gainsboro Project funding

Folder 15: Gainsboro – Financial Information – general notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding

Folder 16: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1969-1969

- Folder 17: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1971-1972
- Folder 18: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1972-1973
- Folder 19: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1973-1974
- Folder 20: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1974-1975
- Folder 21: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1975-1976
- Folder 22: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1976-1977
- Folder 23: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1977-1978
- Folder 24: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1978-1979
- Folder 25: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1979-1980
- Folder 26: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1980-1981
- Folder 27: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1981-1982
- Folder 28: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1982-1983
- Folder 29: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project Funding, 1983-1984
- Folder 30: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1984-1985
- Folder 31: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1985-1986
- Folder 32: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1989-1990
- Folder 33: Gainsboro – Financial Information – notes regarding Gainsboro Project funding, 1990-1993
- Folder 34: Gainsboro – Gainsboro Branch Library, history
- Folder 35: Gainsboro – Grants – Urban Development Action Grant, Coca-Cola Bottling Company
- Folder 36: Gainsboro – Interviews – Gilmer, Emerson – notes
- Folder 37: Gainsboro – Interviews – Heller, George – notes
- Folder 38: Gainsboro – Interviews – Heller, George – cassette audio regarding Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Committee and Project Area Committee, (cassette was given to Bishop and is not her interview with Heller)
- Folder 39: Gainsboro – Interviews – Hirst, Julian – notes
- Folder 40: Gainsboro – Interviews – Pillis, William – notes
- Folder 41: Gainsboro – Interviews – Reynolds, Earl – notes

Folder 42: Gainsboro – Legal Questions  
Folder 43: Gainsboro – Maps  
Folder 44: Gainsboro – Memoranda, News Releases, etc. – Wells Avenue  
Folder 45: Gainsboro – News Clippings, general (folder 1 of 2)  
Folder 46: Gainsboro – News Clippings, general (folder 2 of 2)  
Folder 47: Gainsboro – News Clippings, Coca-Cola Bottling Company  
Folder 48: Gainsboro – News Clippings, First Baptist Church  
Folder 49: Gainsboro – News Clippings, Henry Street  
Folder 50: Gainsboro – News Clippings, History  
Folder 51: Gainsboro – News Clippings, Wells Avenue  
Folder 52: Gainsboro – Notes, general  
Folder 53: Gainsboro – Notes, Coca-Cola Bottling Company  
Folder 54: Gainsboro – Notes, Henry Street  
Folder 55: Gainsboro – Notes, search for former residents  
Folder 56: Gainsboro – Notes, Wells Avenue (folder 1 of 2)  
Folder 57: Gainsboro – Notes, Wells Avenue (folder 1 of 2)  
Folder 58: Gainsboro – Ordinances  
Folder 59: Gainsboro – Plans, Comprehensive Revitalization Plan, July 1981  
Folder 60: Gainsboro – Plans, Conservation Plans, 1969, 1980, 1981, 1983  
Folder 61: Gainsboro – Plans, Fairfax/Harrison Corridor  
Folder 62: Gainsboro – Plans, Gainsboro Neighborhood Plan, 2003

## **Box 2 of 3**

### Series I: Neighborhoods

Folder 1: Gainsboro – Plans, Henry Street Revitalization (folder 1 of 2)  
Folder 2: Gainsboro – Plans, Henry Street Revitalization (folder 2 of 2)  
Folder 3: Gainsboro – Plans, Redevelopment plans, 1971, 1975, 1993  
Folder 4: Gainsboro – Residents – Claytor, Dr. Walter S. (folder 1 of 2)  
Folder 5: Gainsboro – Residents – Claytor, Dr. Walter S. (folder 2 of 2)  
Folder 6: Gainsboro – *Roanoke Tribune*  
Folder 7: Gainsboro – 2<sup>nd</sup> Street/Gainsboro Road Corridor  
Folder 8: Gainsboro – Surveys – Cultural Resources Survey for Proposed Widening and Realignment to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street/Gainsboro Road and Wells Avenue  
Folder 9: General – Census Demographics, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1990s  
Folder 10: General – Chronology of urban renewal in Roanoke neighborhoods  
Folder 11: General – Contractors  
Folder 12: General – Financial Records, payments made to displaced persons  
Folder 13: General – Historical information (folder 1 of 2)  
Folder 14: General – Historical information (folder 2 of 2)  
Folder 15: General – Housing projects  
Folder 16: General – Interviews, surnames Adams-Kegler – notes  
Folder 17: General – Interviews, surnames Nash-Morton – notes  
Folder 18: General – Maps (folder 1 of 2)  
Folder 19: General – Maps (folder 2 of 2)  
Folder 20: General – Notes from interviews with long-time white residents

Folder 21: General – Plans, Comprehensive Development Plan for Roanoke, 1985-2005  
Folder 22: General – Plans, Report of City Planning Commission on Neighborhoods of Roanoke, 1965  
Folder 23: General – Publications, “An Evaluation of the Impact of Federal Urban Renewal & Redevelopment Programs on Three Roanoke, Virginia Neighborhoods” by Reginald Shareef, PhD  
Folder 24: Hurt Park/West End – General Information  
Folder 25: Inner City – Plans, Inner City Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy  
Folder 26: Loudon-Melrose/Shenandoah West – General Information  
Folder 27: Melrose-Rugby – General Information  
Folder 28: Northeast – City Directory listings, 1898, 1944, 1950, 1954  
Folder 29: Northeast – City Directory listings, Gilmer Avenue, 1892, 1914, 1922, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1956, 1966, 1976, 1986, 1996  
Folder 30: Northeast – Maps  
Folder 31: Northeast – News clippings  
Folder 32: Northeast – Notes  
Folder 33: Northeast – Notes, Gilmer Avenue residents  
Folder 34: Northeast – Plans, Commonwealth Project, 1959

Series II: Related Research

Folder 35: City Council race, 2006  
Folder 36: Demographics  
Folder 37: Excerpt – “The Roots of Segregation in the Eighties: The Role of Local Government Actions”, from *Divided Neighborhoods* by Yale Rabin  
Folder 38: News clippings, general  
Folder 39: News clippings, African American History (folder 1 of 2)  
Folder 40: News clippings, African American History (folder 2 of 2)  
Folder 41: News clippings, Biographical sketches (folder 1 of 2)

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Series II: Related Research

Folder 1: News clippings, Biographical sketches (folder 2 of 2)  
Folder 2: News clippings, Housing  
Folder 3: News clippings, Poverty  
Folder 4: Oral Histories – Transcripts of “A Hidden History: the Black Experience in the Roanoke Valley”  
Folder 5: Political leaders, Federal, State and Local, 1962-1994  
Folder 6: Publications, miscellaneous (folder 1 of 2)  
Folder 7: Publications, miscellaneous (folder 2 of 2)  
Folder 8: Publications, *Black Pages*, 1993-1994, 1999-2000  
Folder 9: Segregation  
Folder 10: Urban renewal in other US cities

Series III: Organizations

Folder 11: Community Development Block Grant – funding

- Folder 12: Community Development Block Grant – general information
- Folder 13: Community Development Block Grant – notes
- Folder 14: Gainsboro Project Area Committee – Plans, Proposal for Revitalization of the Gainsboro Project Area, 1983-1984
- Folder 15: Gainsboro Project Area Committee/Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Corp. – Financial Statements, 1982-1986
- Folder 16: Gainsboro Project Area Committee/Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Corp. – Financial Statements, 1987-1992
- Folder 17: Gainsboro Project Area Committee/Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Corp. – General Information
- Folder 18: Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Corp. – Plans, Rutherford Avenue Improvements, 30 June 1982
- Folder 19: Henry Street Revival Committee – General Information
- Folder 20: Historic Gainsboro Preservation District – General Information
- Folder 21: Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority – Notes, from records on microfilm
- Folder 22: Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority – Plans, Conservation/Development
- Folder 23: Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority – Records, Financial statements of renewal programs
- Folder 24: Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority – Records, related to community relations with Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Plan
- Folder 25: Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority – Records, related to Program Area Committee, Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Program, from records on microfilm
- Folder 26: Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority – Records, related to project and site improvements for Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Project, from records on microfilm
- Folder 27: Southwest Virginia Community Development Fund – General Information
- Folder 28: Total Action for Progress – General Information

Series IV: Projects

- Folder 29: Editorials
- Folder 30: “Invisible Inner City” – General Information
- Folder 31: Presentations/Panel Discussions – talking points
- Folder 32: “Street by Street, Block by Block” – Contacts, academics/scholars
- Folder 33: “Street by Street, Block by Block” – Photographs
- Folder 34: “Street by Street, Block by Block” – Photographs, copies and prints used in research with notes
- Folder 35: “Street by Street, Block by Block” – Photographs, disc containing photos and page layouts
- Folder 26: “Street by Street, Block by Block” – Readers’ response
- Folder 27: “Street by Street, Block by Block” – Story plans

