

∞ The Ward M. Canaday Center ∞  
for Special Collections  
The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ Birmingham Festival Programs ◀

MSS-318

**Size:** 1 linear foot

**Provenance:** Donated by Chris Weisfelder

**Access:** Open

**Collection Summary:** Programs from the annual Birmingham Festival

**Subject(s):** [Ethnic Culture](#)

**Copyright:** The literary rights to this collection are assumed to rest with the person(s) responsible for the production of the particular items within the collection, or with their heirs or assigns. Researchers bear full legal responsibility for the acquisition to publish from any part of said collection per *Title 17, United States Code*. The **Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections** may reserve the right to intervene as intermediary at its own discretion.

**Completed by:** Laura Morillo and Lauren White, February 2017

## **Birmingham Festival Programs Collection, 1975-2002**

### **Historical Sketch**

The Birmingham neighborhood in East Toledo – bound by Consaul, Wheeling, York, and Front streets – became home to many Hungarian immigrants when the National Malleable Castings Company relocated 200 of its Hungarian workers from Cleveland to Toledo in 1892. By the time of World War I, the neighborhood was the site of several thriving steel companies – echoing the success of the manufacturing center of Birmingham, England, from which it derives its name. The numbers of Hungarian immigrants grew as well: from around 700 in 1900 to over 3,000 by 1920.

After World War II, the “Americanization” of Hungarian-born Toledoans led to a decreased sense of community and identity in the neighborhood as many moved into suburbs and Anglicized their names; local newspapers too began printing fewer and fewer articles in Hungarian and more in English. By the early 1970s, the steel and shipping industries that had sustained the Birmingham neighborhood had closed, furthering decreasing the neighborhood’s identity.

In 1974, however, Birmingham’s sense of ethnic pride was rejuvenated. City planners proposed widening Consaul Street and building a new overpass that would split the neighborhood in half. Birmingham’s civic leaders rallied residents to protest, and the construction plans were dropped. To celebrate this achievement, the neighborhood’s leaders founded the Birmingham Neighborhood Coalition and celebrated with the inaugural Birmingham Ethnic Festival on August 17, 1974.

The Birmingham Annual Ethnic Festival has been held annually since 1974. According to the first program, the mission of the event is “to point to the spirit of the original ethnic settlers in Birmingham” by sharing a taste of the ethnic flavor. The event is funded by many local business found in the programs and hosted by several churches in the area. Although the original ethnic settlers were Hungarian, the two-day event features dance performances from around the world, arts and crafts, and ethnic food.

For a detailed history of the Birmingham neighborhood, please see the “Birmingham Days: Life and Times of Toledo’s Hungarian Neighborhood” essay on Toledo’s Attic ([toledosattic.org](http://toledosattic.org)).

**Birmingham Festival Programs  
Collection, 1975-2002**

**Scope and Content Note**

The programs contain many Hungarian recipes, advertisements for local businesses, a schedule of events, and essays on community history and events. The collection dates from 1975 to 2002 and includes the first festival program from 1975.

The inaugural program is noteworthy for its inclusion of a copy of a Proclamation from the City of Toledo, signed by Mayor Henry Kessler, declaring August 17, 1975 as "Birmingham Ethnic Festival Day." The first program also features a copy of a letter from William Nicholson, Deputy Director of the Scheduling Office, on White House stationery. He expresses President Gerald Ford's regrets at not being able to attend the festival but congratulates the community for the event.

Recurring features across the programs include Proclamations from the City of Toledo, articles on the Hungarian Club of Toledo, a Birmingham "Hall of Fame," and photographs of community events.

This collection would be of interest to those studying ethnic culture and identity in the Midwest, particularly Hungarian communities. The collection is arranged chronologically.

**Birmingham Festival Programs  
Collection, 1975-2002**

**Folder List**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Item</b>
1	1	Aug 17, 1975
1	2	Aug 22, 1976
1	3	Aug 21, 1977
1	4	Aug 20, 1978
1	5	Aug 19, 1979
1	6	Aug 17, 1980
1	7	Aug 16, 1981
1	8	Aug 22, 1982
1	9	Aug 21, 1983
1	10	Aug 19, 1984
1	11	Aug 18, 1985
1	12	Aug 17, 1986
1	13	Aug 16, 1987
1	14	Aug 21, 1988
1	15	Aug 20, 1989
2	1	Aug 19, 1990
2	2	Aug 18, 1991
2	3	Aug 16, 1992
2	4	Aug 15, 1993
2	5	Aug 21, 1994
2	6	Aug 20, 1995
2	7	Aug 18, 1996
2	8	Aug 17, 1997
2	9	Aug 16, 1998
2	10	Aug 15, 1999
2	11	Aug 20, 2000
2	12	Aug 19, 2001
2	13	Aug 18, 2002