

## MSS. Collection #165

**Ruth Rypins Papers, 1919-1989 [bulk 1935-1971]. ½ box (20 folders), 203 items.**

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

### INTRODUCTION

This collection consists of writings, research notes, and source materials relating to Ruth Rypins, a Greensboro resident who ran Mrs. Rypins' Private School from the 1930s to the early 1970s. The centerpiece is an original research paper written by one of her students. Through interviews, school files, and additional research, all represented in this collection, the paper crafts a portrait of the school and the teaching approach of a dedicated and effective educator. Also included in the collection are items from Mrs. Rypins' Sabbath School class at Temple Emanuel, where her husband served as rabbi. Revered by all she taught, she inspired planning for a Ruth Roth Rypins Memorial at the Greensboro Historical Museum that did not materialize but is documented in this collection.

**Arrangement:** This collection is organized into four series and arranged within series by document type. The series are: **Memorial**, 1986-1989; **Research Paper**, 1919-1987; **School Files**, 1935-1972; and **Temple Emanuel Sabbath School**, 1938, 1952-1953.

**Provenance:** This collection was donated by Katharine (Kit) Ravenel Dickerson, who was a student at Mrs. Rypins' Private School and the author of the research paper. It was received in September 2002 and assigned the accession number 2002.71.1.

**Processing:** This collection was organized and the finding aid was prepared by volunteer Ann Koppen in May 2022.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

**Ruth Roth** (1897-1974) was born in New York City and at an early age moved with her family to Henderson, North Carolina, where she later returned to teach in the public schools for four years. A graduate of the North Carolina State Normal and Industrial College (now The University of North Carolina at Greensboro), she married Frederick Israel Rypins in 1924. The couple moved first to Wilmington, North Carolina, and then Roanoke, Virginia, before settling in Greensboro in 1931, the same year their daughter Frances was born. Frederick served as the rabbi at Temple Emanuel for the next 31 years, and Ruth taught Sabbath School. Highly respected by other educators, she ran Mrs. Rypins' Private School from the attic of her home at 613 Woodland Drive in Greensboro for nearly 40 years. This small school, considered the last of the "Miss" schools in the United States, grew from Mrs. Rypins' tutoring, which included teaching English to war refugees. She prepared students for standardized school tests and adults for professional tests, including in navigation, surgical pathology, real estate and multiple

languages. The school started with one-year enrollments for remedial learning or preparatory school placement and, at its height, offered a three-year high school program for up to 11 students, with a few graduating classes. The curriculum was rigorous, the school's reputation excellent, and Mrs. Rypins placed her students in leading schools. She was renowned for being able to teach almost anything to anyone. She was also influential in organizing the Susan B. Dudley branch of the YWCA in Greensboro's African American community, and she was active in the Sisterhood of the National Council of Jewish Women and the Eastern Music Festival. Ruth Rypins ran her school until the age of 75 and died two years later.

**Biographical Sources:** The biographical information was acquired from the Greensboro city directories, Ruth Rypins' obituary (*Greensboro Daily News*, July 6, 1974), and the research paper entitled "The Teacher Who Never Knew a Dumb Child" (2:2), which is the centerpiece of this collection.

### **SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE**

The types of materials in this collection include correspondence, notes, a map, a photograph, and printed materials. The highlight of the collection is Kit Ravenel Dickerson's original research paper about Ruth Rypins, while her notes for it and much of her source material are also included. Interviews conducted by Kit Dickerson were a key source, and her extensive notes from interviews with former students and parents, friends of the family, synagogue colleagues, and a long-time housekeeper reveal the range of Ruth Rypins' teaching (2:4). Original school files on students, student work, and curriculum from Mrs. Rypins' Private School (Series 3) and her Sabbath School class (Series 4), as well as Kit Dickerson's summary notes on these (2:5), round out the research materials. Later correspondence and notes document the preliminary planning for a Ruth Rypins Memorial (1:1-2).

### **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

#### **1. Memorial. 2 folders (3 items). 1986-1989.**

This series documents planning by The Steering Committee for the Ruth Roth Rypins Memorial, which was never realized. A letter from the Steering Committee to the Review Committee of the Greensboro Historical Museum outlines the purpose and proposed nature of that memorial (1:1). Also included are notes from a subsequent meeting, including a memorandum from the Steering Committee summarizing ideas for the memorial (1:2).

#### **2. Research Paper. 11 folders (89 items). 1919-1987 [bulk 1986].**

The final draft of the research paper about Ruth Rypins and supporting research notes are contained in this series. "The Teacher Who Never Knew a Dumb Child" was written by a former student of Mrs. Rypins for a 1986 History of Education class at UNC Greensboro. Kit Ravenel Dickerson conducted written, phone, and in-person interviews with former students, close friends, synagogue colleagues, and the Rypins' housekeeper. Detailed lists of those contacted,

notes on all interviews, and some notes by topic, such as tutoring, immigration work, and preparatory schools, are included. The correspondence folder contains a complete listing by year of all students who attended the school (2:1). Dickerson found additional biographical and contextual material in newspaper clippings and the book entitled *Women of Guilford County, North Carolina* (1979). One of the biographical newspaper clippings highlights a controversy over awarding high school diplomas to her graduates and the special consideration given to her students by the Superintendent of Schools at the time (2:10). Other newspaper clippings address trending topics in education when Kit Dickerson wrote the research paper (2:9). Dickerson also took notes on the school files containing student rosters, student information, curriculum, assessments, and teaching materials, all of which comprise the next series.

### **3. School Files. 8 folders (107 items). 1935-1972.**

These original school files, summarized in Kit Dickerson's notes for her research paper (2:5), include correspondence, assessments, student work, report cards, and a school roster. The standardized tests and school assessments reveal the scope and rigor of subjects taught, and the limited samples of student work and report cards provide a glimpse of the quality. Subjects included English, history, mathematics, biology, general science, French, and Latin. One IQ test is included among the standardized tests (3:5). The few pieces of correspondence show Ruth Rypins' connections with leading secondary schools, which some of her students went on to attend. A set of notecards provides the student roster for one school year (3:2).

### **4. Temple Emanuel Sabbath School. 2 folders (4 items). 1938, 1952-1953.**

This series contains a map of the Holy Land (4:2) and records from one Sabbath School class taught by Ruth Rypins (4:1). The latter consist of a class roster, sources used, and the class curriculum, which included Hebrew, Jewish history, and current events.

**FOLDER LISTING**

<b><u>Series</u></b>	<b><u>Folder</u></b>	<b><u>Contents</u></b>	
1	1	Memorial	-- Correspondence (1986-1989)
	2	“	-- Meeting Notes (1989)
2	1	Research Paper	-- Correspondence (1986-1987)
	2	“	-- Final Draft (1986)
	3	“	-- Notes -- Biographical (1986)
	4	“	-- Notes -- Interviews (1986)
	5	“	-- Notes -- School Files (1986)
	6	“	-- Photograph -- Rabbi and Mrs. Rypins (copy, n.d.)
	7	“	-- Poetry Tribute (copy, 1938)
	8	“	-- Printed Materials -- Certificates (1919, 1922)
	9	“	-- Printed Materials -- Newspaper Clippings -- Education (1986)
	10	“	-- Printed Materials -- Newspaper Clippings -- Rypins (1941-1971)
3	1	School Files	-- Assessments (1943-1948)
	2	“	-- Class Roster (1951-1952)
	3	“	-- Correspondence (1967-1971)
	4	“	-- Report Cards (1946-1950)
	5	“	-- Standardized Tests (1935-1948)
	6	“	-- Student Work (1958-1972)
4	1	Temple Emanuel Sabbath School	-- Class Records (1952-1953)
	2	“	-- Map (1938)