



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 3050

Philadelphia Federation of Women's Clubs and
Allied Organizations., Inc. (PFWC)

Records

1943-1998

6 boxes, 2.2 lin. feet

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Restrictions: None

Related Collections at HSP: American Association of University Women
(Collection 2138)

Aleene L. Hervey papers (Collection 2174)
Philadelphia Friendship Fete (Collection 3074)
Stephanie Wochak collection of Philadelphia
Federation of Women's Clubs and Allied
Organizations, Inc. records (2004.071)

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Abstract

The Philadelphia Federation of Women's Clubs and Allied Organizations, Inc., was organized in 1922 and was affiliated with the Pennsylvania Federation of Women's Clubs, which had been in existence since 1895. Its objectives, as stated in its Charter and By-Laws, were "to unite Women's Clubs and other organized groups of women existing in Philadelphia and adjacent territory for purposes of mutual benefit and to promote their common interests in civic, educational and moral measures which make for individual and community welfare."

The clubs constituting the federation had varying objectives, but all aimed to serve some segment of the community. The federation made it possible for them to join together for shared agendas and for a stronger voice beyond their individual memberships. The presidents of the clubs formed the backbone of the federation's operation under the guidance of its board and elected officers.

The records of the organization are concentrated in banking and other financial activities associated with managing its affairs. There is also substantial material on a public forum presented by the federation in the midst of World War II to consider planning for postwar U.S. world positioning.

Background note

The Philadelphia Federation of Women's Clubs (PFWC) was organized at the end of 1922 (and incorporated in 1940) as an umbrella group for women's clubs, both senior and junior, active throughout the Philadelphia area. The federation had its first headquarters at Gimbel Brothers, and later moved to the Engineer's Club at 1317 Spruce Street. It was a member of the Pennsylvania Federation of Women's Clubs and of the National Council of Women.

The local clubs were formed at different times to serve a variety of objectives, but were all built around community service. The PFWC brought them together for the benefits gained through regular meetings and shared activities and events. The common thread was the engagement of women in the life of their communities and

creating support in whatever way they could for issues of their choosing. The federation made it possible for them to represent and speak for their local interests as well as to join together to participate in a broader agenda of issues for the Philadelphia area as a whole. In an age of limited public life, public expression, and public recognition for women, they were able to develop, test, and use their organizational, administrative, and planning skills during some seventy years of active participation. It was a productive effort with an admirable record of continuity until 1993, when a drastically reduced active membership (from over a hundred member clubs in 1949 to less than fifty by 1990) forced it to disband. Despite this, however, the federation was left with enough funds to support several charitable functions into the late 1990s.

The PFWC functioned within the guidelines of by-laws drawn up by the organization's board, which consisted of its officers and chairs of standing committees, and was supported by the extended board of presidents of the constituent organizations. It conducted itself much like a small business enterprise and benefited from many leaders with strong organizational and management skills. Most of the clubs were largely governed by their own by-laws.

The federation showed greatest strength from the early years through the 1970s, by which time the growth of opportunities for women in the community at large as well as the rapidly increasing participation of women in the workplace seems to have made serious inroads into women's organizations. As their numbers dwindled, so did participation in the PFWC.

The federation pursued some activities for a substantial period, such as annual teas, fundraising sales of various sorts, and special efforts to provide fellowships and scholarships for nursing training. But the outstanding activity in the federation's history was its 1943 event billed as the Women's Forum. It was sponsored jointly with Gimbel Brothers – a major force for charitable work in the Philadelphia area at the time – and represented the Federation's most notable accomplishment in the public arena. On behalf of its 130,000 members, it staged a full-day public forum for postwar planning and to assist in determining what the U.S. position should be in international reorganization. In effect, the PFWC posed the question of how the U.S. should shape postwar world organization prior to the formation of the United Nations, and what the role of the U.S. should be in any related planning. Organizing the event was a major undertaking and illustrated the energy, self-confidence, and formidable organizing ability of the women involved.

Scope & content

This small collection of records from the Pennsylvania Federation of Women's Club's and Allied Organizations (PFWC) has been divided into three groups: administrative records, financial records, and records from the 1943 Women's Forum for Post-War Planning. Spanning six boxes, these papers date from the 1940s to the 1990s, and offer limited insights into the club's planned activities, daily

operations, and financial standing. Each group of material has been arranged chronologically.

Among the administrative records are the PFWC by-laws, lists of board members, board meeting minutes, annual reports, and club membership applications. The applications contain scant details on constituent clubs, records of dues paid by the clubs, and the years during which many of them were active members. Additional papers include those relating to fundraising and giving activities, such as the club's 1998 Avenue of the Arts Bell Project and its nursing scholarship. There is also a folder of correspondence between the PFWC and various local and federal officials on federal excise taxes and appointment endorsements. The series also contains issues of PFWC's newsletter dating from 1980 to 1993; papers on special events, such as a 1978 seminar on crime reduction; and reports of meetings on women's issues sponsored by UNESCO and the World Affairs Council.

The banking and financial records span from the 1950s to the 1990s and include bank statements, deposit slips, check stubs, bills and receipts, and treasurer's reports. The group also contains two folders pertaining to dues owed by clubs that held memberships with the PFWC.

Comprising the final group of records are those from the 1943 Philadelphia Women's Forum for Post-War Planning, held 2 April 1943 at Philadelphia's Gimbel Auditorium. This event was sponsored by PFWC and the Gimbel Brothers, and was intended to prepare attendees for life after the Second World War. It included a variety of educational presentations, such as "Preparation for a Dynamic Peace," "Russia—Our Partner in Victory," and "When a Woman Looks at Post-War Planning." Plans for this event were based on PFWC's ambitious intentions to reach women in the upper echelons of government and public life, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Madame Chiang Kai-shek of the Republic of China, and Madame Maxim Litvinoff of the Russian Embassy. Much of the material in this group relates to the planning of this event and includes correspondence to and from speakers, copies of speeches, lists of speakers, programs, logistical plans, and invitations.

Separation report

None.

Related materials

American Association of University Women (Collection 2138)
Aleene L. Hervey papers (Collection 2174)
Philadelphia Friendship Fete (Collection 3074)
Stephanie Wochak collection of Philadelphia Federation of Women's Clubs and Allied Organizations, Inc. records (2004.071)

Subjects

Businesswomen – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia
Philadelphia (Pa.) – Social life and customs
Women – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia – History
Women – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia – Intellectual life – 20th century
Women – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia – Societies and clubs
Women – Social life and customs – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia – 20th century.
Women – Social networks – 20th century.
Women – Societies and clubs – Programs
Women – Societies and clubs – United States – History – 20th century

Philadelphia Federation of Women's Clubs and Allied Organizations, Inc.
Philadelphia Women's Forum for Post-War Planning (1943)

Administrative Information

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Most of the records were a gift of Pauline Schultz, Immediate Past Treasurer, 2000; the provenance of the 1943 Women's Forum papers is unknown.

Accession numbers: 000727.4

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Philadelphia Federation of Women's Clubs and Allied Organizations, Inc. (Collection 3050), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Box and folder listing

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
By-laws; By-laws revisions	1947-1972	1	1
Member club officers	1949-1990	1	2
Member clubs	1976-1985	1	3-4
Member club correspondence	1976-1994	1	5
Minutes	1952-1984	1	6
Board meeting minutes and annual reports	1951-1982	1	7
Club applications	1943-1980	1	8
Club applications	1943-1980	2	1
Newsletters	1980-1993	2	2
Special events	1950-1998	2	3
Correspondence with state and federal officials	1949-1981	2	4
Nursing scholarships	1951-1952	2	5
Donations to and from PFWC	1960-1991	2	6
Miscellaneous	1951-1992, n.d.	2	7
Girard Trust Corn Exchange statements	1958-1963	2	8
Girard Trust Corn Exchange deposit slips	1958-1962	2	9
Girard Trust Corn Exchange cancelled checks	1958-1963	2	10
Girard Trust Corn Exchange check stubs and cancelled checks	1959-1963	3	1
Girard Bank cancelled checks	1970-1972	3	2
Girard Bank check stubs, deposit slips, bank statements	1983-1992	3	3
Cheltenham Bank deposit slips, check stubs, cancelled checks	1983-1992	3	4
Cheltenham Bank check stubs and cancelled checks	1983-1994	3	5
Cheltenham Bank statements	1984-1992	3	6-7
Corestates statements	1992-1997	4	1
Corestates account booklets	1992-1995	4	2
Miscellaneous	1984-1993	4	3
Printing bills and receipts	1959-1990	4	4-5
Miscellaneous bills and receipts	1957-1992	4	6-7
Treasurer's reports	1976-1993	4	8
PFWC dues paid	1958-1994	5	1
Member club dues	1977-1992	5	2
Member club records	1979-1992	5	3
Women's Forum: planning	1943	6	1
Women's Forum: correspondence (includes letters about speakers)	1943	6	2-3

Women's Forum: introductory remarks and invitees	1943	6	4
Women's Forum: miscellaneous correspondence	1943	6	5
Women's Forum: requests for admission/invitations	1943	6	6-8