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Guide to the Millard Avenue Woman's Club Collection 1878-1956



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.MILLARDAVE
Title	Millard Avenue Woman's Club. Collection
Date	1878-1956
Size	.75 linear feet (2 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract The Millard Avenue Woman's Club was founded in 1878 and was active into the 1960s. The club went through several previous name changes, including the Ladies' Literary Society, the Woman's Literary Club, and the Woman's Club of Millard Avenue. It was based in Chicago's South Lawndale neighborhood, near Shedd Park. Like many women's societies founded at the turn of the century, the club organized courses and educational lectures in literature, art, music, and law, later adding nursing, food safety, home economics, and gardening. They organized for causes, from creating a library branch to founding a Red Cross Unit during World War I, and educated members about women's rights and the vote. This collection is made up of many of the club's yearbooks from 1878 to 1956, an annual publication containing programming, histories, member directories, and reports. Many volumes include marginal notes and ephemera.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Millard Avenue Woman's Club. Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Historical Note

In the suburb south of Chicago known as South Lawndale and later referred to as Millard Avenue, the Millard Avenue Woman's Club was founded on May 31, 1878 with the gathering of around twelve women organized by Dr. Isabella Scott Hotchkiss. First thought of as a social club to provide culture, recreation, and improvement, they initially chose to study John Richard Green's work on the history of England, later supplemented by Shakespeare and Ruskin. They

elected officers, and held their first Annual on June 6 with a membership of thirty-four. They took the name of the Ladies' Literary Society in 1880, and held a lecture that year on "Wimin's Rites." They developed a constitution, set membership dues, and chose the colors gold and white for their society. Starting in 1885, for several years the club studied the yearly readings chosen by the improving organization the Chatauqua Literary and Scientific Circle; it then proceeded to build its own library of one hundred volumes and changed its name to the Woman's Literary Club. The club joined the national General Federation of Women's Clubs in that year, and then the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs in 1896. The Illinois Federation was founded in 1894 by 54 women's clubs, and became a state branch of the General Federation in 1895. The purpose of the Federation was to "promote the common interests of the women's groups in education, philanthropy, public welfare, moral values, civics and fine arts." The Illinois Federation took over the traveling library between 1900 and 1910. After several permutations, the club's name was changed to the Millard Avenue Woman's Club in 1906, the same year that it joined the Sixth District Federation of Illinois. Eventually it would move to a permanent location in the Shedd Park Community House in 1918; it was incorporated in 1927.

The club opened its doors to the public for the first time in 1900 with a series of lectures on Shakespeare. More art and literary programming followed, as well as the organization of a chorus and tours of the Art Institute. In addition to Departments of Art, Music, and Literature, it developed an active Department of Civics, later to become American Citizenship, for example raising money to plant trees in Gads Hill Playground and helping to establish a public library branch in Shedd Park. They added lessons in parliamentary law, endorsed the Eight Hour Law for women and the Child Labor Bill, and worked to have ventilation laws enforced in local theaters. When women were granted partial suffrage in Illinois in 1914, the club organized a study class using the "Handbook for Women Voters of Illinois." They also went on the record in favor of prohibition. Programming increased, with the addition of a daughter's chorus and home economics programs. With the advent of war, the group formed Red Cross Unit Number 31 and used a shop on Ogden Avenue as its base for the entirety of World War I; it would later offer home nursing courses and was active through the flu pandemic and in continued Red Cross drives. They also organized a ward branch of the Council of National Defense. The club grew after the war, with membership increasing 48% between 1934 and 1936; an annual Men's Night was established in 1934. With its growth, the Millard Avenue Woman's Club added a music director, an education department, a garden chairman, and a visitation committee; it was active in South Lawndale into the 1960s.

Scope Note

The collection is primarily of published yearbooks from 1878 to 1956 and is organized chronologically; interleaved items have been foldered with the volume in which they were found as ephemera. Many of the yearbooks are inscribed by their owners and include marginal notations, as well as interleaved materials such as programs and postcards.

The following yearbooks are of possible interest to researchers, either due to their marginalia or ephemera. The 1918-1919 yearbook includes an enclosed postcard from the fall of 1918,

explaining that the year's program had been interrupted "due to the orders of the Board of Health," presumably due to the Spanish flu pandemic. It also states that the War Camps were asking for musical instruments, records, and sheet music to be collected and sent to soldiers. The 1921-1922 yearbook belonged to the treasurer of that year and contains marginal notations on the list of members of dates and methods of dues payments. The enclosures in the 1923-1924 yearbook include a place card and program, including a menu, from an event on May 16, 1924. Enclosed in the 1928-1929 yearbook is a handwritten puzzle and its solution. A history of the club can be found in the yearbooks for 1926-1927 and 1942-1943.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Millard Avenue Woman's Club Records, 1881-1956. Chicago History Museum

<https://explore.chicagocollections.org/marcxml/chicagohistory/30/hd7pm7b/>

Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs Records, 1894-1984. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum:

<http://alplm-cdi.com/chroniclingillinois/items/show/323>

Subject Headings

- Millard Avenue Woman's Club
- Clubs -- Illinois -- Chicago -- 19th century
- Clubs -- Illinois -- Chicago -- 20th century
- Women -- Illinois -- Chicago -- Societies and clubs
- Chicago, IL

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Yearbooks with ephemera, 1891-1902

Box 1

Folder 2

Yearbook with ephemera, 1900-1901

Box 1

Folder 3

Yearbook with ephemera, 1904-1905, 1918, 1930

Box 1

Folder 4

Yearbooks, 1905-1907

Box 1

Folder 5

Yearbook with ephemera, 1907-1908

Box 1

Folder 6

Yearbooks, 1908-1915

Box 1

Folder 7

Yearbook with ephemera, 1915-1916

Box 1

Folder 8

Yearbooks with ephemera, 1916-1922

Box 1

Folder 9

Yearbook with ephemera, 1923-1924

Box 1

Folder 10

Yearbooks, 1926-1933

Box 1

Folder 11

Yearbook with ephemera, 1928-1929

Box 1

Folder 12

Yearbooks and By-Laws, 1933-1939

Box 2

Folder 1

Yearbooks, 1939-1941

Box 2

Folder 2

Yearbook with ephemera, 1941-1942

Box 2

Folder 3

Yearbooks, 1942-1943, 1945-1948

Box 2

Folder 4

Yearbooks, 1948-1950, 1954-1956