

A Guide to the Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs Records, 1907-1958

Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs Records, 1907-1958
1907-1958

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There are no restrictions.

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There are no restrictions.

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Biographical/Historical Information

The Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs was founded in 1907 in Lynchburg, Virginia. The first president elected was Mrs. James Kyle, of the Lynchburg Woman's Club. The Virginia Federation was a state branch of the national organization, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, which had been established in New York in 1892. The organization consisted of literary, sewing, and social clubs that were founded primarily as a means for self-education and development for women. Gradually, the emphasis of most local clubs changed to community service and improvement.

The Virginia Federation was organized into six geographic districts, with a seventh added in 1932, and further divided into several departments, American Home, Education, Fine Arts, Legislation, International Relations, and Public Welfare. Issues addressed included penal reform, highway beautification, birth control, illiteracy, and education. Among the many accomplishments of the club was the establishment of the Etta Belle Nature Camp in 1945 (Natural Bridge, Va.); the restoration of the McLean House (Appomattox, Va.) in 1951; the association of Mary Washington College (Fredericksburg, Va.), a women's liberal arts college, with the University of Virginia in 1944; and numerous libraries established in Virginia during the 1920-1930's. As of 1999 the Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs was still in existence.

For further information on women's clubs, researchers should consult: THE VIRGINIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS: 1907-1957, by Etta Belle Walker Northington; THE HISTORY OF THE GENERAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS FOR THE FIRST TWENTY-TWO YEARS OF ITS ORGANIZATION, by Mary I. Wood; and REACHING OUT: A STORY OF THE GENERAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS, by Mary Jean Houde.

Scope and Content Information

The Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs (VFWC) records are housed in 18 archival boxes and are arranged alphabetically by folder title, with oversized materials and research cards arranged to the rear. The collection documents the history of the Federation's contribution to Virginia's social welfare, including environmental conservation, homefront service during both World Wars, improvement of health conditions, child welfare, volunteer work, fund-raising, and charities. The records consist of research materials gathered by members of the VFWC in connection with the organization's golden anniversary celebration in 1957. The materials were also used in the writing of Etta Belle Walker Northington's book, THE VIRGINIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS: 1907-1957.

These records include biographical files, clippings, correspondence, district reports, financial records, histories, minutes, pamphlets, photographs, research cards, scrapbooks, serials, and other sundry materials. The records of the Junior Women's Clubs, a subsidiary of the Federation, are also included. Of note within the collection are the biographical files, district reports, and research cards. The biographical files are organized by presidential terms and contain pamphlets, correspondence, clippings, yearbooks, club directories and genealogical information, 1907-1958. The correspondence is rather limited, although some letters to Virginia politicians are included. The files of Etta Belle Northington, for example, contain correspondence with Governor William M. Tuck, 1946. It should be noted that the biographical files also contain minutes, and

researchers should consult both the biographical and minute files for each specific year.

The district reports are arranged alphabetically by club name and are a good source of information on club activities and events. The reports include information on club history, yearly activities, officers, finances, and often contain photographs and programs. The research notecards contain indexed information from the federation files and were established as a reference guide for the Golden Anniversary Research Committee. The cards are arranged chronologically in two sections: grouped by presidential term and by year. Each section is then subdivided into subjects, for example, projects, war work, personalities, Virginia history, and awards.

The collection also includes a number of scrapbooks from the federation and its districts. Of note is a war bond scrapbook, 1943-1946, chronicling the efforts of Virginia club women to sell bonds and raise money for military equipment during World War II. Fighter planes were purchased through the efforts of the Virginia clubs, namely, the "Wings of the Alexandria Woman's Club" in 1944, and "H.J. Miracle", for the Hilton Village Juniors, in 1943.

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by folder title.

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