

Guide to the American Woman's Association Records BC41

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Barnard Archives and Special Collections
Creator	American Woman's Association.
Title	American Woman's Association records
Date [inclusive]	1911-1981
Extent	62.72 Linear feet ; 41 full size boxes, 1 half size box, 14 custom boxes, 1 binder, 25 bound volumes
Physical Location	This collection is stored offsite and advance notice is required for access. To use this collection, please contact the Barnard Archives and Special Collections at 212.854.4079 or archives@barnard.edu.
Language	English
Abstract	The records of the American Woman's Association consist of materials relating to the founding and functioning of the organization over the course of seventy years, and include administrative documents, brochures, publications, clippings, miscellaneous printed materials, and photographs.

Preferred Citation

American Woman's Association records, 1911-1981; Box and Folder; Barnard Archives and Special Collections, Barnard Library, Barnard College.

Historical Note

The American Woman's Association (AWA) was the final product of various clubs and societies that supported and championed the advancement and efforts of women in both professional and cultural spheres. Throughout its 63 years of existence, the AWA provided safe lodgings, social outlets, and increased financial stability for independent women. A crucial element of the woman's movement, the AWA boasted famous feminists such as Eleanor Roosevelt among its members. The AWA dissolved in 1974 after a period of waning activity. Dorothea Hopper Kassouf ('47), a former president of the organization, claimed that this was because it had "served its purpose" in championing equal opportunities and protecting the rights of women.

The American Woman's Association was initially known as the Vacation Committee which was founded in 1911 as a branch of the Woman's Department of the National Civic Federation. The Vacation Committee was occupied with the Vacation Savings Fund, implemented to help women who did not receive salaried vacation time. Members of the Vacation Committee encouraged women across the country to buy stamps which eventually accrued enough interest to provide profitable vacations for the investors. Around this time, members of the Vacation Committee decided that they wanted to provide female friendly lodgings at a moderate cost for members willing to pay. Those who lodged were called the "taxpayers committee." Lodgings were on W. 36th St in New York City. In 1915, the Vacation Committee split from the National Civic Federation, and Gertrude Robinson Smith became the first president of the now independent organization. In 1922, the Vacation Committee officially became the American Woman's Association and stopped the vacation savings fund. They had raised more than \$1,300,000 through the program. By 1927, members of the Association were searching for a more permanent home, and raised the funds to start their own clubhouse on West 57th Street.

Around this time, the Friendship Dinner Group was started as a subsection of the AWA to foster a feeling of friendship and camaraderie between women. AWA was the blanket association that ran the Friendship Dinner Group, but other unaffiliated groups participated in it as well. In 1931, meetings of the Friendship Dinner Group began to present the AWA Award for Eminent Achievement to women making strides as leaders in their respective fields, among them Frances E. Perkins, Pauline Sabin, Helen Rogers Reid, Virginia Gildersleeve, Dorothy Thompson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Florence R. Sabin, Margaret Chase Smith, Jacqueline Cochran, Marguerite Higgins, Helen Menken, and Mary H. Donlon.

The AWA was very involved with war relief efforts. During World War I, the AWA opened up temporary housing at headquarters for soldiers on leave from the battlefields and ran temporary work rooms in which unemployed women could make supplies for the frontlines and support their families. During World War II, the AWA formed the Red Cross Group, which trained volunteers from the AWA as nurses and sent them overseas, as well as providing supplies for the medical professionals serving in the war. The AWA commissioned reports on financial stability and independence among American women, including "100 Women Look at the Future." In the 1950s, the AWA began to participate in larger, nationwide groups such as the National Council of Women of the United States and the National Committee on Household Employment (for which Dorothy Barko, president of the AWA, was treasurer.) Participation in the AWA dwindled in the 1960s and 1970s, and it functioned more as a social club

than as the figurehead of the woman's movement as it had in the past. In 1974, the AWA was officially dissolved.

A detailed historical timeline of the AWA is available in the Archives or by contacting archives@barnard.edu.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

The office files of the American Woman's Association reflect the growth and development of the organization from 1911 to 1974. The records are arranged topically and include bound volumes of meeting minutes, newspaper clippings, memos, flyers, promotional materials, estate bequests, books, photographs, invitations and guest lists relating to lectures, luncheons, award presentations, and musical concerts. Materials of other social and cultural events presented by the AWA are also included. Highlights from the collection include "100 Women Look at the Future," a report compiled from survey information to chart the growth of women's financial stability, and "Miss Robinson Crusoe, Her Island Clubhouse," a printed brochure about the Robinson Crusoe affair (a campaign designed to raise awareness about the necessity of a new clubhouse of the AWA).

The office files from the two predecessor organizations, the Vacation Committee (1911-1915) and Vacation Association (1915-1922) are incomplete and consist only of the charter and by-laws, savings stamps, and receipts. Also included in the inventory are materials relating to two organizations that the AWA was a chapter of: the National Council of Women of the United States and the National Committee on Household Employment. These records consist of correspondence, financial papers, newsletters, and invitations to various events. The materials representing the AWA (1922-1981) include minutes and reports of the Board of Directors, founding and history of the AWA, administration, including committee reports and correspondence, the American Woman's Realty Corporation, general office correspondence, and activities and programs, including the Woman of the Month Award and the Eminent Achievement Award. In addition, there are many photographs documenting the multitude of events. Lantern slides are also included in the collection, both of promotional posters and candid AWA events. Also included are publications issued by the AWA. There are gaps in the materials available from the 1960's and early 1970's; other than general correspondence, there are few organizational files reflecting the administration of the AWA.

Collection Arrangement

This collection is arranged in four series. The records are arranged topically. The series are as follows:

Series 1. Vacation Committee, 1911-1922.

This series is arranged chronologically. The Vacation Committee was the predecessor of the AWA. Files contain annual reports, correspondence, loan funds, annual reports of and minutes from the War Relief Committee, minutes, and label ribbons.

Series 2. American Woman's Association, 1920-1984.

This series is arranged by subject (following an arrangement devised by previous Barnard archivists) and contains materials that outline the founding and history of the American Women's Association, including administrative files, correspondence, awards and medals granted to and from the American Women's Association, membership records, records of the American Women's Realty Corporation, event ephemera, publications of the Vacation Committee and the AWA, and objects such as printing stamps and a commemorative trowel.

Series 3. National Committee on Household Employment, 1915 - 1974.

These files are arranged chronologically. The AWA participated in both of these organizations in later years. The files contain correspondence between members of the AWA (including AWA President Dorothy Barko, who was also treasurer for the NCHE) and the organizations, memoranda, financial statements, programs, newsletters, newsclippings, invitations, grant applications, and studies.

Series 4. Photographs, 1911-1960s.

The photographs in this series include black and white prints, glass plate negatives, and lantern slides.

This series contains approximately 400 photographs which document activities, events, locations and persons associated with the Vacation Association and AWA (1922-1950s). The bulk of photographs in this subseries are 8"x 10" gelatin-silver paper prints. Photographs are arranged topically, and split into four categories: officers and members, buildings and grounds, ceremonies, activities and events. Photographers include Underwood and Underwood Studios, A. Tennyson Beals, and the Pach Brothers. Notable photographs include from any number of the themed dances the AWA threw—the Bahamian Dance and Norwegian Independence Day, for example—and photographs focusing on the murals in the AWA Clubhouse. Photographs are in black and white; photograph credits, dates, and identification of people/places/event are included with the photograph/written on the file.

This series also contains sixty glass plate negatives (4¼" x 3¼") and ninety-one lantern slides (4"x 3¼"), arranged by access copy item number. Imagery includes members of the Vacation Association/American Woman's Association, interior and exterior images of the Clubhouse at 222 Madison Avenue, and events held within; outings in the countryside; reproductions of VA printed ephemera, such as posters and flyers; and typed song lyric cards.

A detailed, item-level inventory of the collection (which may be slightly out of date as the physical arrangement of the collection has shifted over the years) is available in the Archives or by contacting archives@barnard.edu.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

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Access

This collection has no restrictions; archivists may restrict access to glass plate negatives and lantern slides due to the fragility of the materials.

Publication Rights

Permission to publish material from the collection must be requested from the Barnard Archives and Special Collections. The Barnard Archives and Special Collections approves permission to publish that which it physically owns; the responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

Reproduction Restrictions

Photocopies or scans may be made for research purposes.

Accruals

No additions are expected.

Acquisition Information

A portion of this collection was donated to the Archives in 1980 by the American Woman's Association. The remainder of the collection was donated in 1995 by former president of the AWA, Doris Hopfer Kassouf ('47).

Processing History

This collection was processed by Lucinda Manning in 1988 with additions made to the finding aid by Dianne Stalker in 1989. Further revisions were made in 2011 by Marcia Bassett and Johana Godfrey BC '13. Finding aid updated by Dinah Handel in February 2015 and by Martha Tenney in July 2015.

Controlled Access Headings

Subject(s)

- Barnard College
- Women in the professions--United States

- **Women--Employment**
- **Women--Recreation**
- **Women--Services for**
- **Women--Social conditions**
- **Working class**

Vacation Committee,

Collection Inventory**Series 1 Vacation Committee, 1911-1974 ; 1 document box****Box**

Founding materials/history, 1911-1974

1

Series 2 American Woman's Association, 1915-1974 ; 39 boxes, 25 bound volumes**Box**

Founding materials/history, 1922-1974

2

Annual Reports [1922-1927], Board of Governors, Exec Committee, and Association Meetings Documents/Minutes [1911-1974], 1911-1974

3

Organizational Papers, 1926-circa 1970s

4

Organizational Papers, 1924-1973

5

Committees, 1926-1962

6

Committees, 1922-circa 1982

7

Finances/Estate Documents, 1934-1961

8

Finances, 1927-circa 1980s

9

American Woman's Association,

Finances, 1930-1979	10
Membership, circa 1920s-1974	11
Membership, 1925-1976	12
Clubhouse Building, circa 1920s-circa 1960s	13
Clubhouse Building, circa 1920s-circa 1960s	14
Clubhouse Building, circa 1920s-circa 1960s	15
Clubhouse Building [1920s-1960s], Correspondence [1936-1955], 1920-1969	16
Correspondence, 1956-1957	17
Correspondence, 1967-1974	18
Woman of the Month Award, 1946-1959	19
Woman of the Month Award, 1945-1958	20
Woman of the Month Award, 1931-1959	21
Eminent Achievement Award, 1933-1956	22
Eminent Achievement Award, 1957-1962	23

American Woman's Association,

Eminent Achievement Award, 1931-1965	24
Activities and Programs, 1920-1930	25
Activities and Programs, circa 1920s-1946	26
Activities and Programs, 1947	27
Activities and Programs, 1948	28
Activities and Programs, 1949-1951	29
Activites and Programs, 1952-1959	30
Activities and Programs, 1960-1976, undated	31
Publications, 1915-1929	32
Publications, 1926-circa 1940s	33
Publications, 1942-1964	34
Dissolution of the AWA, circa 1970s-circa 1980s	38
Ceremonial Shovel [1927], 1927	Oversize box 78
Ceremonial Trowel [1928], Seal [1946], Printing Blocks [undated], 1928-1946	39

American Woman's Association,

Ledger Books, 1974-1986	40
Ledger Books, 1960-1983	41
AWA Pins, circa 1920s	42
Medals, 1963	43
Copper Plate Printing Blocks, undated	49
Meeting Minutes, 1929-1936	55
Bulletin, 1930-1936	56
Bulletin [1936-1938], Women Workers Through the Depression by Lorinne Pruett [1935], 1936-1938	57
Publicity Book VI, 1925-1926	58
Publicity Book VII, 1926-1927	59
Publicity Book XI, 1932-1934	60
Publicity Book XII, 1934-1935	61
Publicity Book XVI, 1936-1939	62

American Woman's Association,

Publicity Book XV, 1936-1938	63
Publicity Book XIII, 1932-1936	64
Publicity Book XIV, 1935-1936	65
Publicity Book III, IV, 1925	66
Scrapbooks/Publicity Book II, 1925	67
Scrapbooks/Publicity Book V, 1925	68
Scrapbooks/Publicity Book VII-IX, 1927-1931	69
Scrapbooks/Publicity Book X, 1930-1932	70
Scrapbooks/Publicity Book XVII-XVIII, 1938-1940	71
Scrapbooks/Publicity Book XIX-XX, 1939-1942	72
	Carton
Board of Directors Minutes & Reports Vol. 1-5, 1915-1940	75
Board of Directors Minutes & Reports Vol. 13-17, 1938-1945	76
Board of Directors Minutes & Reports, 1926-1948	77

National Committee on Household Employment, National Council of Women of t...

Series 3 National Committee on Household Employment, National Council of Women of the United States, 1950-1978 ; 2 document boxes, 1 half document box

Box

National Committee on Household Employment, National Council of Women of the United States, circa 1950s-circa 1960s

35

National Committee on Household Employment, National Council of Women of the United States, circa 1960s-circa 1970s

36

National Committee on Household Employment, National Council of Women of the United States, circa 1960s-circa 1980s

37

Series 4 Photographs, 1911-1960 ; 1 binder, 11 boxes

Binder

Photographs, circa 1910s-circa 1930s

44

Box

Portraits of Officers and Members (Single), circa 1930s-circa 1960s

45

Buildings and Grounds, Awards and Ceremonies, circa 1920s-circa 1960s

46

Activities and Events circa 1940s-circa 1950s

47

Lantern Slides, circa 1910s-circa 1930s

48

Photographs,

Oversize Prints, circa 1910s-circa 1930s 50

Glass Plate Negatives, circa 1910s-circa 1930s 51

Lantern Slides, circa 1910s-circa 1930s 52

Glass Plate Negatives, circa 1910s-circa 1930s 53

Lantern Slides, circa 1910s-circa 1930s 54

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