

In April 2012, the Woman's Club of Albany (WCA) donated more than 40 boxes of materials to the M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives at the University Libraries at the University at Albany, SUNY. The Department of Special Collections & Archives collects, preserves, provides access to, exhibits and encourages use of unique manuscript, book and archival collections in support of scholarship documenting an array of subjects. The institution holds more than 600 collections and 40,000 volumes. Among these collections are many related to the history of New York State, Albany and organizations from the Capital District, such as the Empire State Federation of Women's Clubs, League of Women Voters (Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer and Saratoga County branches), M.C. Lawton Civic and Cultural Club, Business and Professional Women's Club (New York Statewide as well as Albany and Schenectady branches), Pine Hills Fortnightly Club and Versatile Club of Troy.

Beginning in summer 2012 archivists from the Department of Special Collections began to arrange and describe the Woman's Club of Albany Records according to archival best practices and standards. This months-long process involved: reviewing all the materials in each box, documenting how the WCA kept its records, creating an organizational scheme and sorting the records which adhered to the WCA's "original order," and ultimately rehousing the materials in acid-free files and boxes all in a climate controlled storage area for long-term preservation. As a final step, archivists created a finding aid to the collection which provides an organizational history of the WCA, an overview of the types of materials in and subjects covered by the collection, administrative information including the provenance of the collection and copyright and detailed inventories of each box. The finding aid is located on the Department's web site at: <https://archives.albany.edu/description/catalog/mss139> Using the finding aid, researchers may pinpoint the precise file in which to find the ca. 1910 constitution, the Garden Department's expenses from 1927-1928, materials about the 6th Annual Holiday House Tour in 2009 and much more.

As of spring 2014, the WCA scrapbooks are the only items in the collection to remain inaccessible to researchers because of a lack of stability. The scrapbooks are treasure troves of information about the WCA; however, many of books are of concern because of loose attachments, brittle pages, and acidic newspaper. Given the conditions, researchers should not be allowed to review these fragile scrapbooks. The Department of Special Collections & Archives is currently consulting with the University at Albany's Library Preservation Department about appropriate elective conservation treatments which may be taken to stabilize and preserve the scrapbooks.

Several scholars have already consulted the Woman's Club of Albany Records as part of their research and the number continues to grow. For example, during the spring 2014 semester, a professor teaching an undergraduate U.S. history class assigned her students to review specific materials from five collections related to local women's history. The Woman's Club of Albany Records was among the group. In addition, archivists in the Department of Special Collections frequently guest lecture to the University's graduate and undergraduate students and have begun to utilize select WCA records as tools to teach students about interpreting primary sources or arranging collections.

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