



GENERAL FEDERATION  
of WOMEN'S CLUBS

# WHRC NEWS

Newsletter of the GFWC Women's History and Resource Center



Summer 2017

Dear Friends of the WHRC,

For those of you who haven't had the opportunity to walk into the archives at GFWC Headquarters in D.C., it is a truly awe-inspiring experience. The room where the archives are held, also known as the "spite room," once held the treasures of General Nelson Miles. Turning it into something comparable to a museum, Miles would use the room to house the artifacts which he brought back from his expeditions, prompting the *New York Times* to refer to the entire home as a "veritable collection of interesting artifacts." When GFWC acquired 1734 N Street in 1922, the purpose of the room remained analogous to that of an earlier time. Like General Miles, the women of GFWC chose the room to house past treasures and documents, and used the space to conduct research and to write.

Today, the archival room remains steadfast to the mission which it was used for more than 120 years ago. It is truly a room of treasures. The WHRC contains the documents of 127 years' worth of stories and information. Focusing on the national level of GFWC, the archives include past president's papers, convention records, board minutes and program records. Smaller collections contain sheet music written by clubwomen, manuscripts of club histories, photographs and scrap books. The room also houses a museum collection, inclusive of art work. However, like any collection of treasures that needs polishing, an archive requires maintenance and fine-tuning.

As part of GFWC's ongoing efforts to improve the condition and accessibility of the archives and collections, we have decided to take concrete action in reorganizing and professionalizing the archives. Different WHRC managers have utilized different archival methods, making organization not as consistent as we would prefer. In an effort to remedy these problems, GFWC has contracted the archival firm History Associates Inc., to help to enact a three phase plan to improve the archives, and their accessibility. The first phase, which was completed this

## GFWC Women's History and Resource Center

**Kathy Canzano**

WHRC Chairman

**Debbie Grieder**

Committee Member

**Sandra Mattocks**

Committee Member

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**Sheila E. Shea**

International President

**Michelle Furman**

Director of Communications  
and Public Relations

**Alyssa Constad**

Women's History and  
Resource Center Manager

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The mission of the GFWC  
Women's History and Resource  
Center is to collect, preserve,  
interpret, and promote the  
history of the General

past March, involved two archivists coming into Headquarters to inventory our entire archival collection. The inventory helped to identify preservation concerns, and established a base of information to write a cohesive catalog for the entire collection.

Phase I was funded through donations you, our supporters, made to the WHRC. Because this project fulfills the mission of maintaining the collections and improving its usability, we felt it was an appropriate use of funds which helps to further the mission of the WHRC. However, phase II and III, which will involve writing a detailed cataloging plan and digitization, will be a long-term project. In the coming months, I will be working on obtaining grant funding in order to accomplish phase two of the project.

While I look forward to updating you on the progress of this project, I most look forward to the thought of a more user-friendly archive to be enjoyed by you and future generations of clubwomen. In the spirit of archival progress, I am happy to present a newsletter dedicated to the amazing archival work which has been completed by GFWC clubs across the county. Reading your stories and your triumphs have been an inspiration over the past few weeks, and I hope you enjoy reading about them as much as I know I did.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer and happy archiving!



Alyssa Constad  
Women's History and Resource Center Manager

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## Women's Club of Farmingdale Unveils Memorabilia Display Case

**Submitted by Maria Ortolani**

For over 114 years, The Women's Club of Farmingdale (WCF) (New York) has collected and preserved precious mementoes which tell a wonderful story of the club's achievements and contributions to the community. Inspired by all this history, WCF Membership Chair Ann Lomonte, Co-Chair, Judy Vilas, Historian Loda Romanelli, and many WCF members, spent numerous hours sorting through and cataloging the many boxes of memorabilia.

Federation of Women's Clubs  
and women volunteers.

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### Subscribe to the WHRC Newsletter

The Women's History and Resource Center is excited to announce that it will now be opening up its quarterly newsletter to all clubwomen. The WHRC newsletter provides an in-depth look at the celebrated history of GFWC on the national, local, and individual levels. A publication primarily written by clubwomen, the newsletter proudly publishes articles written by you and about your history. The WHRC newsletter is also the best way to stay up-to-date on the latest events and happenings in the Women's History and Resource Center. To sign up, please visit [www.gfwc.org](http://www.gfwc.org). An enrollment box is located at the bottom on the website, underneath the *News & Notes* sign up. You can also sign up by providing your name, mailing address, email, and club name to GFWC Membership Services Manager Kate Garlick at [kgarlick@gfwc.org](mailto:kgarlick@gfwc.org).

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Finally, on March 3, 2017, coinciding with Women's History Month and with the assistance of Farmingdale Public Library Director Debbie Podolski and her staff, a beautiful display case was unveiled. Some of the artifacts on display include: the club's original membership book and minutes circa 1913; the WCF handbook 1935-36; a photo of the club's 22nd anniversary; a copy of club's civic project on the Women's Suffrage Movement; and the first Metropolitan Long Island photo. Among the most valued artifacts is an article by Abigail E. Leonard the club's founder, and a letter from the WCF dated June 27, 1925 addressed to the Idle Hour Tennis Club stating the club's greatest public interest is peace and demanding nationwide action.

On hand to mark this auspicious occasion were Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino, Nassau County Legislator Rose Marie Walker, Assemblyman Thomas McKeivitt, Library Trustees Laurie Rozakis and Laura Ulrich, school district board trustees Kathy Lively and Suzanne D'Amico, Farmingdale/Bethpage Historical Society President Ted Dorfmeister and members of both the WCF and the Junior League. In his remarks, Supervisor Saladino commented that "this cabinet will be a reminder to all women, girls, and men of the innumerable accomplishments and contributions of women everywhere."



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## Organizing Ossoli

**Submitted by Nancy Camron**

GFWC Ossoli Circle (Tennessee) was organized in 1885. Consequently, the club is in possession of a multitude of old newspaper clippings, photos, and scrapbooks. However, there is no place at the Ossoli Circle Clubhouse that provides the conditions that will adequately care for the

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- Preserve and maintain GFWC collections
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delicate records. Looking to preserve Ossoli Circle's history, a local archival repository was contacted. The repository agreed to take the records under the conditions that they were organized and placed in proper storage containers. The Ossoli Circle Memorial Fund payed for the purchase of the organizational materials, and then the hard work began— sorting, filing, following archiving protocols, and copying items that the club wished to keep in the library.

Notably, a shawl was found in a drawer with an amazing historical note. The shawl was woven by Mary Ann Shife Luttrell, wife of James Churchill Luttrell who was a farmer and a shoemaker living in Ritta, Tennessee. James was born in 1826 and was a Civil War veteran. Mary raised sheep and hand dyed the wool. The shawl was given to GFWC Ossoli Circle by clubwoman Mrs. Roy Miller in 1976. The donation was possibly meant to be used in a production with period costumes.

After much hard work, everything is finally boxed and ready to send. It was a long but rewarding process, and an amazing journey of discovery and preservation of GFWC Ossoli Circle's history from 1885 to 2017!



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## Woman's Club of Coconut Grove: The History Behind the History

**Submitted by the Woman's Club of Coconut Grove Archives Team**

Six women of Coconut Grove, Florida founded the Housekeeper's Club in 1891. Flora McFarlane, Mary Barr Munroe, Mrs. Joseph Frow, Mrs. Charles John Peacock, and Mrs. Benjamin Newbold joined Isabella Peacock in the Public School building she made available for their meetings. Preserving historical records was a priority from the beginning.

Secretary Mary Barr Munroe was the first of many clubwomen who wrote articles detailing the history of Coconut Grove, the State Federation, and the national history of Women's Clubs. While contending with the many challenges of daily life, the Housekeepers created the cornerstones of their community--the church, library, and public school.

In 1897, the Housekeepers built their first clubhouse. However, in 1917 the deteriorated wooden building was torn down. Records were disbursed among the members for safekeeping, and later collected and moved to our present stone clubhouse in 1921. Within the walls of the clubhouse, historians and clubwomen used the archival material to write newspaper articles throughout the 20th century. When a devastating hurricane hit Coconut Grove in 1926, Club President Minnie Kent managed to save the records which were later transcribed in celebration of the club's 50th anniversary.

In the 1970's, after a major cataloging project, the Historical Association of Southern Florida persuaded the Miami Dade Library System to microfilm the club's minutes from 1891 to 1977. The film would belong to the Library System but be available to any person at the Main Library's Florida Room. In this way, the records on film would be stored safely in case of destruction of the originals.

In 2006, an agreement with UM Richter Special Collections was made and all original materials boxed or in envelopes were delivered to the library to be organized, catalogued, and made ready for researchers. In 2012 we found the 1897 deed to the original clubhouse and charter, Florence Haden's 1937 History of the Club, the 1957 Charter with Change of Name, and the Abstract of Title 1875-1950. All of the documents were photocopied and the originals were sent to the UM Richter Library. Also found was a list of the documents signed by President Mary S. Pierce in 1977. Six women founded our Club in 1891. As archivists we will preserve their legacy.

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## Archiving the History of Morgan Park Junior Woman's Club

**Submitted by Frances Oehmen, Archiving Chairman**

GFWC Illinois Morgan Park Junior Woman's Club's history goes back to 1934 when the club was formed as an offshoot to the Morgan Park Woman's Club. Morgan Park Junior Woman's Club's records have been kept by the local Ridge Historical Society. While conducting research in

preparation for an anniversary celebration, the club decided to retrieve the papers from the Ridge Historical Society, and undertake the project of organizing them. An Archiving Committee was formed and met once every month during the club year to file all the documents, pictures, and other related papers that were collected from members' basements or attics. After six years, the project is finally nearing completion. Thirty large binders have been filled and now rest on their own shelving unit in a temperature controlled room at Ridge Historical Society.

Many members worked on this project and found themselves reminiscing about events and activities that were found in the records and also laughing at some of the pictures of our younger selves. Archiving the club records has been a long, time-consuming project. The club's history has now been preserved for future generations to discover.

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#### **Our Contact Information**

General Federation of Women's Clubs

1734 N. Street NW

Washington, DC 20036

202-347-3168

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