

McLean County Museum of History

**Bloomington Business and Professional Women's Club  
Collection**

Processed by Angela Mehelic  
Summer 1995

**Collection Information**

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| VOLUME OF COLLECTION: | 2 Boxes   |
| COLLECTION DATES:     | 1925 - 1988   |
| RESTRICTIONS:         | None  |
| REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:  | Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History |
| ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:  | None  |
| OTHER FINDING AIDS:   | None  |
| LOCATION:             | Archives  |
| NOTES:                |   |

**Brief History**

During World War I, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker sent out an urgent call to make women more active in the war effort. The War Work Council, composed of members of the Young Women's Christian Association, took the initiative in calling a conference in New York City on May 11 and 12, 1918, to discuss the advisability of establishing a nation-wide association of business and professional women. Five organizers were sent to various parts of the country to enlist the interest of existing groups of business and professional women and to establish additional clubs in each state.

In July 1919, representatives of these clubs convened at St. Louis, Missouri. The meeting was attended by 212 women representing every state but three. These women formed a permanent, independent organization, **The National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs**, to promote the interests of business and professional women. Bylaws were adopted and the Federation received its certificate of incorporation on July 18, 1921, as a non-profit

corporation under the laws of the state of New York. "A Better Business Woman for a Better Business World" was the slogan adopted to indicate the program of the Federation

Inspired by the St. Louis meeting, Mrs. Beatrice Cowlin of Elgin, Illinois, called the first meeting in Illinois in 1921, from which grew the Illinois Federation. On April 14 and 15, 1922, the First Annual Convention of the **Illinois Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs** was held in the Senate Chambers of the State House in Springfield. Forty-three delegates were present, representing ten clubs, with a total membership of 775.

In early 1923, Miss Laura H. Jacke, Industrial Secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association, seeing the need for a club in Bloomington, organized a group of twenty young women to meet once a week for a luncheon at the YWCA. From this the **Business Women's Luncheon Club** was formed. In September 1923, a committee was chosen to draw up a constitution and by-laws.

On June 5, 1925 these documents were approved and charter No. 602 was issued by the National Federation. A dinner was held for the eighty-one charter members of the Bloomington Business and Professional Women's Club on June 17, 1925.

Over the years the Club formed additional committees (Education and Scholarship, Publicity, Health and Personal Research, Legislation and Finance) to conform with the national organization, and membership grew (164 by 1934). The Club continued to increase its presence in the community by helping in the war effort (especially through the purchase of war bonds) and sponsoring public lectures (including speeches by Eleanor Roosevelt, Rachel Crothers, and the Rev. Peter Marshall), raising money for the Red Cross, local hospitals and other charities, sponsoring theater events and concerts, and caring for the welfare of children (raising money for Girl Scouts and orphanages, "adopting" and "sponsoring" underprivileged youth, and raising money to help girls attend school).

Between 1945 and 1988, the Club maintained its public role by sending CARE packages to families in need, contributing to a polio fund, visiting the sick at local hospitals, holding fund raisers, donating blood, aiding young women in paying college tuitions, raising money for local playgrounds, donating volunteer services, and ringing bells for the Salvation Army at Christmas time. Money from the Club was also raised and donated to the McLean County Historical Society, Miller Park Zoo, Salvation Army, various day care facilities, the Illinois Special Olympics, and homes for battered women.

On June 1, 1988, the Bloomington Business and Professional Women's Club made the decision to disband because of low membership and decreased activity. The last meeting of the Bloomington B&PWC was held on July 6, 1988. The final history of the chapter was sent to the State Historian. Many members received invitations from and joined the Pontiac, Peoria, or Clinton chapters.

## Scope

This collection contains minutes, annual reports, newspaper clippings, program booklets, and treasurers' records from the Club, which met from 1925 to 1988. The collection also contains the original charter, constitution and bylaws, as well as newsletters and two scrapbooks. The collection was donated by the chapter upon disbanding in 1988.

As stated in the Club's 1966 printed history, many hours of research through microfilms of the *Daily Pantagraph* for the years 1923 through June 1929 were necessary since all records for these years had been destroyed. The history also gives the only available recollection of events from 1930 to 1936, since minutes from that period are not in the collection

The Club's newsletter, "The Flashlight," is located in the Local Newsletter Collection. Two scrapbooks from 1946 to 1949, which include a few photographs, newspaper clippings, and additional copies of "The Flashlight", are housed in the Scrapbook Collection [Scrapbooks O-B-1 and O-B-2]. A copy of "History of the Bloomington Business and Professional Women's Club" (1966) is in the library collection.

## Box and Folder List

### Box 1

- Folder 1: Charter (1925)
- Folder 2: Constitution and Bylaws
- Folder 3: National Organization Charts (1930-1931) and Report of National Finance Committee (1930-1931)
- Folder 4: Minutes (1926-1943)
- Folder 5: Minutes (1944-1954)
- Folder 6: Minutes (1955-1959)
- Folder 7: Annual Reports (1942-1946)
- Folder 8: Annual Reports (1960-1988)
- Folder 9: News Clippings from the *Pantagraph* (1942-1944)
- Folder 10: Publicity Clippings (photocopied news articles: 1943-1944)
- Folder 11: Club Events (1944-1946)
  - 11.1 Rachel Crothers lecture
  - 11.2 Peter Marshall lecture
- Folder 12: National B&PWC Scrapbook Contest Rules
- Folder 13: Illinois State Federation Memorabilia
  - 13.1 State Report (1944-1945)
  - 13.2 State Guides (1944-1949)
  - 13.3 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention (1946)

**Box 2**

- Folder 14: Annual Program Booklets (1941-1947) and Membership List (1930-1931)
- Folder 15: Annual Program Booklets (1947-1955) and Membership List (1950-1951)
- Folder 16: Annual Program Booklets (1955-1963; 1985-1986) and Membership List (1987-1988)
- Treasurers' (1933-1936) and Dues Payment (1927-1938) Records