

Guide to the Butler University Women's Faculty Club Collection

Special Collections and Rare Books, Irwin Library, Butler University



Contact Information:

Special Collections and Rare Books
Irwin Library
Butler University
4600 Sunset Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46208-3485 USA
Phone: 317.940.9265
Fax: 317.940.8039
E-mail: schildsh@butler.edu
URL: <http://www.butler.edu/library/libinfo/rare/>

Summary

Volume of Collection

2 Manuscript Boxes, 1 Scrapbook, Artifacts

Collection Dates

1923–93, bulk 1929–93

Provenance

Butler University

Restrictions

None

Copyright

Butler University

Citation

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Historical Sketch

The Butler Women's Faculty Club was started in 1908 when Mrs. Christopher B. Coleman invited twelve faculty women to her home for a social hour. These thirteen women continued to meet informally at each other's homes for the next two years. The club had no officers, no real name, no fixed meeting dates or times, and no constitution, but it did have a feeling of unity, which was attributed as being the spirit of Butler. In 1910 the faculty women decided that a formal organization would allow them to better serve Butler. Fourteen women are named among the charter members of the club, including at least one professor, Miss Katharine Merrill Graydon. As the school grew, so did opportunities of service for the women. A formal constitution was drawn up and accepted on May 27, 1921, by the thirty-four members of the group. Since this time the Butler Women's Faculty Club has served Butler by presenting a number of teas to welcome incoming freshman and new faculty members and say good-bye to graduating seniors; it has also held dinners and dances and invited guest speakers for the faculty and their families. The club has been involved in raising money for various charities through bake sales and dinners. All in all, this largely social group was extremely active at a time when there were not many clubs for women, and while there were attempts to reorganize the club in the mid-1990s, nothing came from those attempts. The membership of the club itself has changed over time, from the initial membership emphasizing wives of faculty members, administrative staff, and professional library staff, to, in 1982, the women faculty members being emphasized. Throughout the years of this club's existence, the majority of members were not faculty, but rather wives of faculty, with several exceptions, including Katharine Merrill Graydon and Dr. Allegra Stewart.

Scope and Content

This collection contains a number of interesting articles from 1923 to 1991. The most interesting pieces include program guides, constitutions, and correspondence between both members of the club and those people that they assisted, including mothers of Butler students who fought in WW II, USOs that received assistance from the women's group, and other campus organizations that were either entertained by or entertained the Butler Faculty Women's Club. There were no formal written organizational records kept prior to the end of WW I, and in fact there are few minutes of meetings included in this collection. The most useful information comes from looking at what the women had to say to each other, what they did as a club, and how they governed themselves. The scrapbook is a collection of newspaper articles from the society pages of the *Indianapolis Times*; most of the articles detail meeting times and places. The

artifacts include a silver tray from William Rogers and a pewter coffee and tea service from Reed and Barton, complete with an inscribed pewter tray and a large coffee urn. There are also sandwich trays and more than 100 silver teaspoons from Holmes and Edwards, as well as Reed and Barton. These artifacts are especially important to this collection due to the nature of the organization, a social group for the wives of faculty members as well as female faculty who primarily gave teas as a way of getting to know each other, new members, and new or graduating students.