

Finding aid for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union records Collection 283

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Table of Contents

<u>Summary Information</u>	3
<u>Biographical/Historical note</u>	4
<u>Scope and Contents note</u>	5
<u>Administrative Information</u>	5
<u>Related Materials</u>	6
<u>Controlled Access Headings</u>	6
<u>Collection Inventory</u>	7
<u>Series. I. Benjamin Union W.C.T.U.</u>	7
<u>Series II. Central Women's Christian Temperance Union</u>	9
<u>Series III. Federation of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union</u>	11
<u>Series IV. Michigan Woman's Christian Temperance Union</u>	12
<u>Series V. Woman's Christian Temperance Union. 5th Congressional District [5th District]</u>	17
<u>Series VI. Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Kent County</u>	18
<u>Series VII. Woman's National Christian Temperance Union</u>	19
<u>Series VIII. Related Organizations</u>	19
<u>Series IX. Related Items</u>	22

Summary Information

Repository	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Title	Woman's Christian Temperance Union records
Date [inclusive]	1878-1962
Extent	3.3 Linear feet Six boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Michigan Woman's Christian Temperance Union was part of a national social reform organization. The primary focus of the MWCTU was to discourage consumption of alcohol, although the group was also active in the suffrage movement and with educational reform. This devised collection includes material primarily associated with chapters in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area, although state and national items are also found. Included are minutes, convention reports, some treasurer's documents, programs, limited correspondence, news clippings and tracts. The collection also contains a few items from other anti-liquor organizations, such as the Anti-Saloon League of America, Michigan Dry Campaign Committee and Local Option.</p>

Biographical/Historical note

In 1872 a Grand Rapids woman recruited her friends to work with her to help save her husband from alcohol. This group of friends started the Women's Prohibition Society. Members of the society would gather in front of city saloons and hotels and pray for the salvation of the owners and customers, hoping they would give up the sin of selling and consuming alcohol. One year later, there was a push to start similar grassroots organizations in other counties. Meanwhile, Abigail Hastings in Lansing received the inspiration while in prayer to start a crusade against alcohol. Thus, the idea of the Michigan Woman's Christian Temperance Union was born. Inspired by the temperance movement in Ohio, Michigan women gathered in Lansing for a convention in 1874. At a second convention that same year they officially took the name of the Michigan WCTU. The women felt this name stressed the importance of Christian ethics.

By 1881 there were seven unions in Kent County, with four located in Grand Rapids. These first unions were Central, East St., Sixth Ward, West Bridge St., Ada, Lowell and Rockford. By 1885, Grand Rapids alone had eight WCTU unions: General Union, Central Union, Fifth Ward, Sixth Ward, South Union, East Street, Eighth Ward and Bridge Street. Another area union, the Benjamin WCTU, was actively fighting saloons and giving testimony in trials of saloon owners by 1895. A Young Woman's Christian Temperance Union was established, where young women members from Grand Rapids would reach out to others their age who did not attend church. In the early 1900s, a Pink Ribbon Society was created and unmarried women signed a pledge that they would die old maids before marrying a man who used alcohol. The WCTU campaigned to outlaw liquor sales in Michigan. They did this through petitioning local governments, boycotting grocery stores that sold alcohol, praying with reformed men and teaching the public the dangers of alcohol, among other tactics.

Frances Willard, the National WCTU president from 1879 to 1898, expanded the organization to include the issues of woman's suffrage and protection for women and children. Grand Rapids WCTU members also took on issues apart from prohibition. They opened a "Women's Home and Hospital" to help female prostitutes find a new path in life and they selected the books and operated the library of the city-county jail. They believed that if women were given the right to vote, prohibition would finally happen. Many women knew first-hand the results of an alcoholic husband or father on the physical and mental state of family members, which is one reason they fought strongly for prohibition.

The WCTU was strongest during the fight leading up to the 1919 addition of the 18th amendment, which established prohibition in the United States. They took up the slogan "For God, Home, and Native land" which later changed to "For God, Home, and Every Land," and this slogan can be found on many programs throughout the collection. Throughout the state of Michigan, WCTU members continued the crusade, even causing some saloons in Detroit to quit business. In the late 1800s, the WCTU proposed legislation that would mandate public schools to teach the effects of drugs and alcohol on the body and in 1887 Michigan was one of the first states to make these classes a law.

Though they had the legislation, temperance movements had a hard time enforcing it and bootleg liquor sales thrived. Michigan waterways and connections to Canada made the illegal sale of alcohol in the state even easier.

After the amendment was repealed in 1933, the WCTU lost direction and people began to leave the organization. By 1992, the National WCTU had 50,000 members. Today, the National WCTU, under the presidency of Rita Kay Wert, focuses on the issues of abstinence from alcohol, educating youth about drugs and alcohol and making illegal same-sex marriage, stem-cell research, and abortion. Though the Michigan WCTU contributed funds to a 2004 Health Expo, there is no evidence of an active Michigan chapter of the WCTU and there is no link to a Michigan chapter from the National WCTU website.

Scope and Contents note

Most of this collection is convention programs and reports and the majority of these programs and reports are for the Michigan WCTU. Financial information was well reported and most of the reports and minutes include detailed lists of dues. Apart from a brief history covering 1874 to 1912, there is no historical information about the state or local chapters. Information about the later years of the WCTU is also limited. The collection has just a few items for the National WCTU and the Kent County WCTU. The collection also includes a variety of publications in the early 1900s from similar organizations, such as the Michigan Anti-Saloon League and the Michigan Dry Campaign Committee.

The bulk of this collection is formed from accession 1995.018. Items not marked with a different accession number should be presumed to come from that 2 cubic foot accession. Several additional items were transferred from the book collections. These are indicated by specific numbers for unknown accessions. Other miscellaneous accessions have been added where the content is appropriate to the subject matter of this collection.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department February 21, 2007

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Accession numbers: C14:BB12.1-5; 1995.018; 00.[1105].1- ; 00.[1106].1; 00.[1107].; 00.[1182].1; 00.[1183].1; 00.[1184].1; 00.[1185].1 ; P2009.040.2

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

See also the following sources: women's history clipping files, Bajema clipping files for police and fire (for articles on incidences of drunkenness).

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Michigan Woman's Christian Temperance Union.
- Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

Subject(s)

- Prohibition -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Temperance -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Women -- Michigan -- Societies and clubs

Series. I. Benjamin Union W.C.T.U.

Collection Inventory

Series. I. Benjamin Union W.C.T.U.

Scope and Contents note

This series includes three handwritten minute books, covering dates ranging from 1921 to 1936. There are also financial records for the Benjamin Union WCTU, including a treasury book from 1936 to 1960, and checkbooks, bank statements, and receipts from the 1950s and 1960s. Miscellaneous items include newspaper clippings, publications and programs.

Minutes

	Box	Folder
Minutes. Mar. 23, 1921 to Mar. 31, 1926 + Obituaries and other scrapbook material at front.	1	1
Minutes. Apr. 28, 1926 to Jan. 7, 1931. + Obits and other scrapbook material at front. List of new members and deaths at back.	1	2
Minutes. Jan. 21, 1931 to July 1936. + dues data.	1	3

Treasurers Records

	Box	Folder
Treas. Book. 1937. Oct. 14, 1936 to 1960, including lists of members and dues.	1	4

Publications

Check book. Mid-1950s	1	5
Bank Statements. Peoples National Bank of Grand Rapids. Mrs. Andrew Oosta, Treas., Benjamin Union W.C.T.U., 1649 College Ave., S.E. 1950s.	1	6
Receipts. Late 1950s, early 1960s.	1	7

Publications

	Box	Folder
From Glory to gutter : the story of Ira Hayes. N.d., ca. 1954. Tract. From National WCTU Publishing House, Evanston, Il.	1	8
The Menace of Marihuana, Tract. Evanston, Il. : Signal Press, n.d.	1	9

Correspondence

	Box	Folder
Form letter from City of G.R., July 25, 1960, in envelop addressed to Willard Clinton, 2114 Frances SE., Jul 25, 1960, RE: Civic Center construction ... Vote "Yes" campaign.	1	10

Clippings

	Box	Folder
Lenten Breakfast sponsored by GR-Kent WCTU, Apr. 5, 1960	1	11

Miscellaneous

Liquor Chief is teetotaler. N.d.	1	11
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Miscellaneous

	Box	Folder
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Flyers from Old Kent Bank (2). Regulations apply to Thrifti Check Accounts; Expressway, traffic guide for routes 131, 196, 96, 296.	1	12
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Programs

	Box	Folder
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Annual program, 1928/1929. 00.[1186]	1	13
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Series II. Central Women's Christian Temperance Union**Scope and Contents note**

This series is composed of four handwritten books and one typed book that have meeting minutes, secretary reports, a list of dues collected, a list of members and officers, and various letters of correspondence loose in the pages. These books cover the Central WCTU from 1914 to 1938. There are also a set of programs for each year, from 1928 to 1934, that list the members, officers, dates of meetings, and topics covered at each meeting.

Minutes

	Box
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Secretaries book, minutes, 1914-20. C14:BB12.1	2
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Programs

Minutes Book, 1920-1925. C14:BB12.2 2

Minutes Book, 1925-1928. C14:BB12.3 2

Secretary's reports, 1928-1933. C14:BB12.4 2

Record Book, 1933-1938. C14:BB12.5 2

Programs

	Box	Folder
Annual program, 1930-1931. 00.[1182]	3	1

Annual program, Mar-Sept. 1931. 00.[1186]	3	2
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Annual program, Sept. 1931-Oct. 1932. 00.[1186]	3	2
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Annual program, Sept. 1931-Oct. 1932. 00.[1183]	3	3
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Annual program, Sept. 1932-Oct. 1933. 00.[1184]	3	4
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Annual program, 1933-1934. 00.[1185]	3	5
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Mother & Daughter Banquet, 1936, 1939 00.[1186]	3	6
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Souvenir

	Box	Folder
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Series III. Federation of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union

1897, formerly M178.M581. 00.[1106].

3

7

Series III. Federation of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union**Scope and Contents note**

This series is small and does not give much information about the federation. There are two small pamphlets that list officers and meeting dates in the 1930s, a 1927-1928 list of Grand Rapids chapter leaders, and a tract that describes the evils of temperance and divorce.

Program**Box****Folder**

Annual program, 1931-1932. 00.[1186]

3

8

Annual program, 1938-1939. 00.[1186]

3

8

Miscellaneous**Box****Folder**

1927/1928 list of Chapter leaders. 00.[1186]

3

9

Tracts**Box****Folder**

“Two Evils : intemperance and divorce” / S. Camp, care Mrs. Mary Yerex
... 00.[1186]

3

10

Series IV. Michigan Woman's Christian Temperance Union**Series IV. Michigan Woman's Christian Temperance Union****Scope and Contents note**

This is the largest series of the collection, spanning the dates 1874 to 1962. This collection includes the book Brief history containing important official action of Michigan's Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1874-1912 which includes the history of accomplishments for each state president up to 1912. Most of the series is annual state convention programs, from the fifth convention in 1878 until the 88th convention in 1962. There is a convention program available for almost every year between those dates, except the years between 1894 and 1919. The series also includes a wet/dry map of Michigan, and The Union Signal 1940 report.

Convention**General note**

Minutes and Annual Reports, also called Official Reports and Directory. Formerly M178.W84, 00. [1105]. Unless otherwise specified, items from 1878-1894 are a gift from the Grand Rapids Historical Society; items from 1919-1930 are edited and gifted by Miss Norma F. Mudge, St. Corresponding Secretary; items from 1931-1962 are a gift from the Central WCTU.

	Box	Folder
5th, May 1878	4	1
7th, Howell, May 1880	4	2
8th, East Saginaw, June 1881	4	3
9th, Kalamazoo, 1882	4	4

Convention

10th, Adrian, May 1883. Gift of Miss Laura E. McKee	4	5
11th, Flint, June 1884	4	6
12th, Albion, May 1885	4	7
13th, Manistee, June 1886	4	8
14th, Port Huron, May/June 1887	4	9
15th, Coldwater, May 1888	4	10
16th, Bay City, May 1889	4	11
17th, Jackson, May, 1890	5	1
19th, Detroit, May 1892.	5	2
21st, Ann Arbor, May 1894.	5	3
45th, Battle Creek, June 1919	5	4
48th, Muskegon, June, 1922. Gift of Mrs. Martha H. Crandell.	5	5
49th, Adrian, Oct. 1923.	5	6
50th, Detroit, Oct. 1924.	5	7

Convention

51st, Detroit, Nov. 1925.	5	8
52nd, Owosso, Nov. 1926.	5	9
53rd, Battle Creek, Nov. 1927.	5	10
54th, Lansing, Sept. 1928.	5	11
55th, Holland, Oct. 1929. Gift of Mich. WCTU	5	12
56th, Grand Rapids, Oct. 1930, Gift of Mich. WCTU	5	13
57th, Jackson, Nov. 1931.	5	14
58th, Flint, Oct. 1932	5	15
60th, Battle Creek, Oct. 1934,	5	16
61st, Pontiac, Oct. 1935,	5	17
62nd, Muskegon, Oct. 1936,	5	18
63rd, Saginaw, Oct. 1937,	5	19
64th, Grand Rapids, Oct. 1938	5	20
65th, Detroit, 1939.	5	21

Convention

66th, Sault Ste. Marie, Sept. 1940. Gift of Central WCTU.	5	22
68th, Lansing, Oct. 1942	5	23
70th, Grand Rapids, Oct. 1944	5	24
72nd, Grand Rapids, Oct. 1946.	5	25
73rd, Port Huron, Sept. 1947	5	26
74th, Petoskey, Oct. 1948. Gift Of Lilian Crandell	5	27
75th, Lansing, Oct. 1949.	5	28
76th, Saginaw, Oct. 1950.	5	29
77th, Ann Arbor, Oct. 1951.	5	30
78th, Battle Creek, Oct. 1952.	5	31
79th, Alpena, Oct. 1953.	5	32
80th, Holland, Oct. 1954.	5	33
82nd, Muskegon, Oct. 1956.	5	34
84th, Boyne City, Oct. 1958.	5	35

Program

86th, Owosso, Oct. 1960.	5	36
87th, Ludington, Oct. 1961.	5	37
88th, Ypsilanti, Oct. 1962	5	38
Program		
	Box	Folder
60th, 1934. 00.[1186]	3	11
Publications		
	Box	Folder
Brief History of Michigan's Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1874-1912 / compiled by Mrs. J.P. Howard and Mrs. Julia R. Parish. 00. [1107]	3	12
Report		
	Box	Folder
"Michigan's 65th Annual Convention" / by O.K. Marshall. In the Union Signal, Feb. 17, 1940, p. 102. 00.[1241].1	3	13
Map/Schedule		
	Box	Folder

Series V. Woman's Christian Temperance Union. 5th Congressional District [...]

Wet and Dry Map of Michigan, May 1, 1916, with 1907 cameo. 00.[1186]	3	14
“Make it State-Wide in 1916!” [Flyer]. 00.[1186]	3	14

Series V. Woman's Christian Temperance Union. 5th Congressional District [5th District]

Scope and Contents note

The series includes convention reports which has detailed minutes, addresses given by various members, the constitution, by-laws, financial reports, and reports on the activities of the various counties. The reports are from 1883, 1886 to 1894, 1904, and 1934.

Convention Programs

	Box	Folder
61st, May 1934 00.[1186]	6	1

Convention Reports**General note**

[Formerly M178W84f]. 1883 pam bound report was a gift from Miss Laura E. McKee, 00.[1186]; reports from 1886-1894 were a gift from the Grand Rapids Historical Society; 1904 report is a gift of Mrs. Martha Crandall (formerly M178.W84fv29, 00.[1105])

	Box	Folder
8th, Muskegon, Apr. 1883 (3)	6	2

Series VI. Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Kent County

11th, Lowell, Apr. 1886	6	3
12th, Ionia, Apr. 1887	6	4
13th, Grand Rapids, Apr. 1888	6	5
14th, Plainwell, Apr. 1889	6	6
15th, Holland, Apr. 1890	6	7
16th, Lowell, 1891	6	8
17th, Sparta, 1892	6	9
18th, Grand Haven, 1893	6	10
19th, Grand Rapids, 1894	6	11
29th Annual, Holland, Apr. 1904	6	12

Series VI. Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Kent County**Scope and Contents note**

The amount of information in this series is limited to two convention programs, one in 1934 and the other year is unknown.

Box **Folder**

Series VII. Woman's National Christian Temperance Union

Convention Flyer, Fri./Sat., Dec. 6 & 7, [?]. 00.[1186]	3	15
Convention program, 57th, Oct. 1934. 00.[1186]	3	16

Series VII. Woman's National Christian Temperance Union**Scope and Contents note**

This series is just one folder that has a guide for the Department for the Introduction of Scientific Temperance Instruction in Schools and Colleges.

Publications

	Box	Folder
Dept. for the Intro. Of Scientific Temperance Instruction in Schools & Colleges [ca.1881]. 00.1186	3	17

Series VIII. Related Organizations**Scope and Contents note**

This series is publications from the Anti-Saloon League of America, Michigan Anti-Saloon League, Local Option (which allowed individual counties to vote themselves dry), Michigan Dry Campaign Committee, National Model License League, and Manufacturers and Merchants Association. These publications are from the early 1900s.

Anti-Saloon League of America & Michigan Anti-Saloon League

	Box	Folder
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Michigan Dry Campaign Committee (Lansing, Mi.)

The American Issue : three message to ministers and one to sincere Christians of Michigan. Detroit : Michigan Publicity Bureau, [1909?]	6	13
Col. Dan Morgan Smith "The Battalion of Death" WWI, Presented by No Return of the Saloon" Powers Opera House, Apr. 6, [1918 or later]	6	13
Results : if the so-called Beer and Wine Amendment is adopted, Apr. 7, 1919 ... [flyer]	6	13
Correspondence. Generic. From Dan Morgan Smith? Speaking on "The World's War and the Fields of France" for the National Anti-Saloon League.	6	13
Correspondence. Michigan Anti-Saloon League, Grand Rapids, Mich. Letterhead. Feb. 12, 1910. To Samuel H. Ranck. From R.M. Holsaple, Campaign Manager. Mimeographed.	6	13
Michigan Dry Campaign Committee (Lansing, Mi.)		
	Box	Folder
What Bonfort's Wine and Spirit Circular (Official Liquor Organ) Sept. 10, 1909, says about the saloons. [flyer]	6	15
The Devil Twins. Beer & Old Rye. [postcard]	6	15
Vote Yes for Statewide Prohibition, n.d. [Shows 2 guys sitting on a fence] [Postcard]	6	15

Local Option

Local Option		
	Box	Folder
Nuts to Crack, ca. 1910 [flyer]	6	14
Prohibition and Divorce, ca. 1910. [postcard]	6	14
National Model License League		
	Box	Folder
Solution of the Liquor Problem. [ca. 1909]	6	16
Correspondence. Generic. Jan. 9, 1909. To Samuel Ranck. Signed T.M. Gilmore, President. Carboned?	6	16
Manufacturers and Merchants Assoc., Grand Rapids.		
	Box	Folder
[flyer] Declaration of Principles of the ... Association, n.d. Includes a list of committee members.	1	14
British Temperance Advocate.		
	Box	Folder
Postcard. Shaw publishing Co., Grand Rapids. "The Old Old Story" poem, with barroom sketch by SSR. P2001.121. Added 3/5/2007	6	17

Series IX. Related Items

Series IX. Related Items**Scope and Contents note**

Note: This series added 6/2009, for archival materials related to Grand Rapids area temperance which are not the official records of one of the local groups, but are general items used by the associations or about the associations.

	Box	Folder
Gospel and Temperance Songster, for public and private song service. To the W.C.T.U. With compliments of the advertisers. n.d. [ca. 1890s?]	3	18