

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

A Guide to the Junior League of Albany Records, 1917-2017

Summary Information

Repository

Albany Institute of History & Art Library

Creator

Junior League of Albany, Inc.

Title

Junior League of Albany Records

Identifier

MG263

Date

1917-2017

Physical Description

23 cubic ft.

Physical Location

The materials are located in offsite storage. Please provide a minimum of 2 weeks' notice prior to visit when requesting research to these materials

Language of the Material

English

Abstract

This collection documents the history and activities of the Albany Chapter of the Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc., a women's organization devoted to voluntary charity work. The Junior League of Albany was founded in 1917 and has played an active role in the community since then. The collection consists of historical information, correspondence, newsletters, subject files, audiovisual materials and scrapbooks.

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

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Conditions Governing Access and Use

Restrictions on Access

None.

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Accession: #

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Biographical/Historical

The first chapter of the Junior League was founded in New York in 1901 by Mary Harriman Rumsey, sister of future New York governor W. Averell Harriman. The Junior League as a whole developed as a voluntary organization, with an emphasis on improving the communities of its members. The Albany chapter of the Junior League, founded in 1917 under the Leadership of Laura Spencer Townsend and Grace Stevens Carter, was one of the earliest chapters in the nation. The Junior League of Albany (JLA), which counted among its earliest members relations of the Cornings, Huns, Elmendorfs and Carnells, acted in its early years as a volunteer organization for women in the upper

echelons of Albany society. The JLA was an outgrowth of the Red Cross Lenten Sewing Circle, a project for knitting clothing for soldiers fighting in World War I.

After the end of the war, the JLA began to settle into its niche as a charitable voluntary organization. Most of its energy was focused around organizing community service projects that could eventually operate independently of the JLA. The organization's earliest projects revolved around knitting clothing and fundraising for World War I. After the war, the JLA began to focus more on fundraising and volunteer projects meant to improve life for Albany residents, include the formation of the West End Health Center. During this period, the first Follies Revue was held in 1921 to raise money for the Albany Hospital for Incurables. The League also supported the Community Chest Drive, the Volunteer Placement Bureau, and was the first Junior League in the nation to establish a child care program for working mothers during the Second World War.

In the years following World War II, the JLA and the volunteer projects it supported continued to evolve. to reflect what the League saw as the most pressing needs of the community. In the 1950s, the Junior League began a series of radio programs that culminated in *The Price of Liberty*, a series on New York State history. The League's Next-to-New Shop opened for the first time in 1957 and was a mainstay of the league for almost fifty years until its closure. In 1961, the JLA provided \$8,000 for the creation of the Dutch Room at the Albany Institute of History & Art.

The JLA also evolved as women entered the workforce in greater numbers, placing further emphasis on the professional development of its members, particularly from the 1970s onwards. The Equinox Domestic Violence Shelter and the Stenciled Strawberry Cookbook were among the JLA's most significant efforts in this period.

As the JLA lost its place as a center for local high society and other women's group came into existence from the 1960s onward, JLA membership waned. Active membership decreased from 123 in 1957 to an active membership in the fifties by the mid-2000s, leading to the sale of their Madison Avenue headquarters building in 2003. Even as a smaller organization, the JLA has continued to serve as a venue for volunteer and charity work in the Capital Region.

Scope and Contents

The Junior League of Albany Records consist primarily of materials related to the administration and activities of the League. The collection's strongest eras cover approximately 1920 through 1945 and 1990 through about 2011. This collection includes scrapbooks, financial records, subject files, meeting minutes, audiovisual materials and historical information on the Albany Chapter of the Junior League. As the JLA had already arranged materials on their own, original order has been retained where ever it was deemed sensible to do so.

Series

Administrative Records, 1917-2016, documents the organization, administration and management of the JLA.

- **Administrative Files, 1929-2013**: This sub-series includes Annual Reports, documentation of the purchase of the former headquarters at 419 Madison Avenue, training manuals, subject files on the JLA's Patricia McGuinness Yates Awards, annual member questionnaires.

- **Corporate Files, 1917-2011**: This sub-series includes materials related to the incorporation of the JLA and copyrights that it holds.

- **Financial Files, 1970-2016**: This subseries consists of materials related to the financial management of the JLA. Includes correspondence, prepared financial statements, prepared tax returns, budget files, tax records for the Next to New Shop, commercial business insurance files, and addendums and quarterly payroll reports.

Meeting Minutes, 1927-2011, consists of several subseries of meeting minutes created by various groups, councils and committees of the JLA.

- **Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, 1927-1937, 1975-2011, 1927-1937** are in a bound volume. 1975-2011 are unbound. Subseries also includes Corresponding Secretary's Reports.

- **Councils/Committees, 1975-2009**, includes the meeting minutes of both short-term and long-term committees within the JLA, as well as handbooks for provisional members. Materials in this subseries are arranged by committee and chronologically.

Directories and Membership Lists, 1917-2015, consists of membership lists and directories, along with annual reports that were often included in the JLA's membership directories.

Newsletters, 1928-2010, consists of the JLA's newsletter, named at various times News Sheet and Newsheet. Under its various names, the JLA newsletter primarily documented league meetings, events sponsored by the League, membership changes, and sponsors.

Sustainers, 1957-2009, consists of materials sent to Sustainers, senior members of the JLA who no longer hold active statues within the organization. This series consists of surveys sent to members, sustainer committee handbooks, membership lists, correspondence, activity reports, and a file on the committee's annual Sustainer Bowl award.

Projects, 1923-2016, documents the various projects, events and fundraisers that the JLA organized or took part in. Materials in both the short-term and long-term subseries are arranged as subject files and folder organization has been maintained as the JLA kept their records. Subject files in each subseries have been maintained in their original order.

- **Long-Term Projects, 1976-2016**: This subseries includes materials documenting fundraising and volunteer projects that the JLA was involved in for extended periods of time. Events in this sub-series include the American Girl Doll Fashion Show, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, the Capital Wrap wrapping paper, the Stenciled Strawberry cookbook

- **Short-Term Projects, 1923-2015:** This subseries consists of subject files the League maintained on volunteer projects that were active for a relatively short period of time, such as galas, anniversary events, and one-off fundraisers. Materials in this series include correspondence, purchase orders, memoranda, reports, press clippings, meeting minutes.

Publications, 1921-2006, consists of materials that the JLA produced for the general public or for communicating with the general public. Series includes letterhead, business cards, programs from the JLA's annual revue, brochures, and several publications produced by or with the assistance of the JLA, including *Wooden Shoes and Moccasins*, *The Stenciled Strawberry Cookbook*, and *Going Places: A Family Guide to the Capital Region and Beyond*.

Audio/Visual Materials, 1952-2011, includes audio and visual materials, primarily documenting events held by the JLA. Materials include audio and video recordings on audio and VHS cassettes, compact discs and DVDs, photographic slides, stage directions for an 8mm film produced by the JLA along with Series also includes 6 33 1/3 Vinyl records of the Price of Liberty, a series of recordings on New York state history for a seventh-grade audience.

Scrapbooks, 1917-2007, contains 30 oversized scrapbooks. The scrapbooks include newspaper articles and photographs documenting events held by the Junior League of Albany, engagements and weddings of members.

Framed and Mounted Materials 1947-2017, consists of materials that the JLA framed, mounted or otherwise modified to display. Series includes citations, governmental proclamations, and mounted press coverage of the JLA's activities.

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