

# National Women's Trade Union League of America Records

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the  
Library of Congress

Prepared by Mary M. Wolfskill



Manuscript Division, Library of  
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2009

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# Collection Summary

Title: National Women's Trade Union League of America Records

Span Dates: 1903-1950

ID No.: MSS34363

Creator: National Women's Trade Union League of America

Extent: 7,400 items; 28 containers plus 2 oversize; 11 linear feet; 25 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Correspondence, reports, speeches, notes, and printed matter, including minutes of meetings, proceedings of national conventions and international congresses of working women, biographical material on the league's officers, and correspondence between local and national leagues.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### People

Addams, Jane, 1860-1935.

Anderson, Mary, 1859-1940.

Breckinridge, Sophonisba Preston, 1866-1948.

Christman, Elisabeth.

Dreier, Mary E. (Mary Elisabeth), 1875-1963.

Duffy, Frank, 1861-1965.

Gompers, Samuel, 1850-1924.

Henry, Alice, 1857-1943.

Kehew, Mary Morton Kimball, 1859-1918.

Morrison, Frank, 1859-1949.

Nestor, Agnes, 1880-1948.

O'Sullivan, Mary Kenney, 1864-1943.

Perkins, Frances, 1880-1965.

Robins, Margaret Dreier, 1868-1945.

Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962.

Schneiderman, Rose, 1882-

Scott, Melinda.

Smith, Ethel Marion, 1877-

Thorne, Florence Calvert.

### Organizations

American Federation of Labor.

National Women's Trade Union League of America.

### Subjects

Clothing workers.

Labor and laboring classes--Law and legislation.

Women labor union members.

# Administrative Information

## Provenance

The records of the National Women's Trade Union League of America were given to the Library of Congress in 1950.

## Processing History

The records of National Women's Trade Union League of America were arranged and described in 1976. The finding aid revised in 2009.

## Transfers

Photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photograph Division where they are identified as part of the National Women's Trade Union League of America Records.

## Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of National Women's Trade Union League of America is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

## Access and Restrictions

The records of the National Women's Trade Union League of America are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

## Microfilm

A microfilm edition of these papers is available on twenty-five reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, National Women's Trade Union League of America Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

# Organizational History

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1903	Founded, Boston, Mass. Mary Morton Kehew elected president
1904	Women's trade union leagues founded in Chicago, Ill., New York, N.Y., and Boston, Mass.
1907	National convention, Norfolk, Va.
1907-1922	Margaret Dreier Robins served as president
1909	National convention, Chicago, Ill.

1911	Founding of <i>Life and Labor</i> , official organ of the National Women's Trade Union League of America National convention, Boston, Mass.
1913	National convention, St. Louis, Mo.
1914-1926	Conducted a training school for women labor leaders
1915	National convention, New York, N.Y.
1917	National convention, Kansas City, Mo.
1919	National convention, Philadelphia, Pa. International Congress of Working Women, Washington, D.C.
1921	International Congress of Working Women, Geneva, Switzerland
1922	National convention, Waukegan, Ill. Maud O' Farrell Swartz elected president
1923	International Federation of Working Women, Vienna, Austria
1924	National convention, New York, N.Y.
1926	National convention, Kansas City, Mo. Rose Schneiderman elected president
1929	National convention, Washington, D.C.
1936	National convention, Washington, D.C.
1947	National convention, Washington, D.C.
1950	League dissolved

## Scope and Content Note

The records of the National Women's Trade Union League of America (NWTUL) span the lifetime of the organization from its first meeting in Boston in 1903 to the last bulletin of its official organ, *Life and Labor*, announcing the termination of the league's national character in 1950. The records consist of correspondence, minutes of meetings, convention proceedings, reports, memoranda, speeches, clippings, notes, printed matter, and miscellaneous other items. The collection is organized in [Headquarters](#), [Subject File](#), [National Conventions](#), [International Congress of Working Women](#), and [Oversize](#) series.

The NWTUL's administrative operations are well documented in the [Headquarters](#) series. Its policies and activities are recorded in the minutes of the executive board meetings and in the correspondence. Most of the letters and memoranda are from national league secretaries, particularly Elisabeth Christman, who held the position from 1920 to 1950. There is also correspondence from members of both the national and local leagues, especially from the New York, Boston, and Chicago branches. Many of the local league members also served as officers or executive board members of the national league and are represented in the headquarters records.

Included in this group are Margaret Dreier Robins, Mary Morton Kimball Kehew, Jane Addams, Rose Schneiderman, Mary Kenney O' Sullivan, Melinda Scott, Agnes Nestor, and Mary E. Dreier. Interspersed with the materials documenting the activities of the league are financial statements enumerating sources of income and costs of operation.

The [Subject File](#) as well as the [Headquarters](#) records concern the league's goal of organizing women wage workers into trade unions. There is considerable material on the early history of the league in the historical data file. Many of the files on individual members contain biographical information, and the file on the American Federation of Labor sheds light on the league's relationship to that organization. In this file and in the headquarters records is correspondence with Samuel Gompers, Frank Morrison, Frank Duffy, and Florence Calvert Thorne.

Both the [Headquarters](#) records and [Subject File](#) document the league's efforts to improve women's working conditions through supporting strikes, particularly in the garment industry, through the use of a training school to develop leadership among women of the working class, and through lobbying for the enactment of protective labor legislation. Issues such as the eight-hour day, a minimum wage, and the establishment of sanitary work areas were the focus of the league's early days. However, its interests broadened in later years to include federal aid to education, civil rights, price control, and social security. Correspondents include Ethel Marion Smith, Eleanor Roosevelt, Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge, Mary Anderson, Alice Henry, and Frances Perkins.

The records of the NWTUL also contain proceedings for ten of the thirteen national conventions and mimeographed corrected copies of the proceedings of the three international congresses that the league sponsored.

## Arrangement of the Records

This collection is arranged in five series:

- [Headquarters, 1903-1950](#)
- [Subject File, circa 1903-1950](#)
- [National Conventions, 1909-1947](#)
- [International Congress of Working Women, 1919-1923](#)
- [Oversize, 1919-1942](#)

## Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-11 REEL 1-10	<u>Headquarters, 1903-1950</u>  Correspondence, minutes of national and executive board meetings, reports, clippings, printed matter, speeches, and other material. Arranged chronologically. A subject index in Container 1 lists only selected items, for the most part, in two-year intervals.
BOX 12-21 REEL 10-11	<u>Subject File, circa 1903-1950</u>  Correspondence, reports, memoranda, clippings, printed matter, notes, and other items. Arranged alphabetically by subject and therein chronologically.
BOX 22-26 REEL 19-25	<u>National Conventions, 1909-1947</u>  Verbatim reports of proceedings of national conventions. Arranged chronologically
BOX 27-28 REEL 25	<u>International Congress of Working Women, 1919-1923</u>  Principally corrected mimeographed and printed copies of reports of proceedings. Arranged chronologically.
BOX OV 1-OV 2	<u>Oversize, 1919-1942</u>  Oversize certificate and seal. Arranged and described according to the series, container, and folder from which the items were removed. Filmed in original location before removal.

# Container List

Available on microfilm. Shelf no. 16,737

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Subject File, circa 1903-1950

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## Oversize, 1919-1942

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Arranged and described according to the series, container, and folder from which the items were removed. Filmed in original location before removal.

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Subject File

BOX OV 1-OV 2

Historical data, 1919, 1942, undated (Container 19; reel 17) (filmed in original location before removal to Oversize)