

## DeKalb History Center

### Decatur Woman's Club Records (1908-1990)

**Scope and Content:** The Decatur Woman's Club Records document this local women's organization from its founding in 1924 until 1990. The Decatur Woman's Club, affiliated with the Georgia State Federation of Women's Clubs, provides support for benevolent and civic activities.

**Provenance:** Records donated in 1996 by Mildred S. McHenry for the Decatur Woman's Club (Accession #1996-16).

**Access:** Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish materials from this collection must be requested from the archivist, DeKalb History Center. Citation should be as follows:

Description of specific item; Decatur Woman's Club Records, DeKalb History Center Archives

Processed by Susan J. Illis, DHS Archivist, 1997.

**Size:** 3.0 linear feet (three document cases, two flat boxes)

**Organizational History of the Decatur Woman's Club:** The Decatur Woman's Club was organized in 1924 following the guidelines of the Georgia State Federation of Woman's Clubs. Mrs. Frank Pondas served as the first president of the organization, the membership of which grew from 31 in 1924 to over 200 in 1925, when it was chartered by DeKalb County. Initially, the Club met in the Sunday School of the First Presbyterian Church of Decatur, but as membership grew the Club sought to build a clubhouse. Scott Candler, mayor of Decatur at that time, arranged for a donation of land and the Club purchased adjoining property, enabling the construction of a clubhouse on Ponce de Leon Avenue. The clubhouse opened in March 1926.

From its founding, the Club, with its theme of "A Better Decatur," was dedicated to civic activities, particularly addressing the needs for improved public schools, public libraries, public parks, and the public spirit. Early projects included the establishment of a health clinic, sponsoring a flower show, and maintaining the Courthouse gardens. On June 10, 1925, the Club entertained DeKalb County native and first woman senator Rebecca Latimer Felton on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Late in the 1920s, the Club began its sponsorship of the Tallulah Falls School, and cooperated with the Decatur Chamber of Commerce to provide a public swimming pool. Highlights of the 1930s activities included supporting the Decatur Library, holding a servants' training school, and planning municipal gardens. During the early 1940s, the Club's activities were primarily war-related. From 1941-1943, the Club reported 80,000 hours of service in war work. The clubhouse was used for classes in Civilian Defense and First Aid. The Secretary of the Treasury presented an award to the Club in recognition of its 90% participation in War Bonds purchasing. After the war's end, the Club focused their efforts on welfare work in Decatur and DeKalb County. They sold their clubhouse in 1949 and began meeting in the United Daughters of the Confederacy headquarters while they looked for a building to purchase.

In 1950, to raise funds for a new clubhouse, the Club opened the Opportunity Shop, a thrift store located at 103 East Court Square. The success of the shop enabled the Club to purchase a house located at 2139 East Lake Road. The Club continued their support of the Tallulah Falls School and local civic activities, concentrating their efforts on education. Late in the 1960s, the Club became involved in the controversy that arose when the old DeKalb County Courthouse was threatened with demolition. The Woman's Club cooperated with other local organizations to save the Courthouse. In fact, a senior member of the Club, "Grandma Hudson," threatened to "sit down on the Courthouse steps and stay there if they had to cover me up with it." These preservation efforts were ultimately successful.

In the 1970's and 1980's, the Club continued supporting the preservation and improvement of the old Courthouse, where they met after selling their second clubhouse in 1970. As a project for the Community Improvement Program, the Club participated in efforts to restore the Courthouse, making it a cultural center for Decatur and the county, and to have it placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The success of the Club's efforts is evident today. The Club remains active in the 1990's.

**Description:** The Decatur Woman's Club Records document the Club's activities from its founding in 1924 until 1990. Although not comprehensive, the Club records include meeting minutes, scrapbooks, yearbooks, publicity notebooks, and materials placed in the time capsule when the first clubhouse was dedicated in January 1926. The meeting minutes include officer's reports, committee reports, and records of the Club's activities. The meeting minutes also record speakers, entertainment, and hostesses of meetings, as well as illnesses and hospitalizations of Club members and their families. The meeting minutes are not comprehensive, covering only the years 1924-1933 and 1962-1983. Also, included are executive meeting minutes for the years 1939-1942, 1959-1970, and 1976-1979.

The scrapbooks are comprehensive for the dates of the collection. Dismantled for preservation reasons, the scrapbooks include newsclippings, photographs, yearbooks, memorabilia, lists of officers, and a small amount of correspondence. Each scrapbook embraces a period of seven years. Most of the scrapbooks also document the Club's participation in regional and statewide meetings of the Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs. Over the years, the Club enjoyed generous publicity from local papers, so their activities and achievements are well-documented in the newsclippings. The yearbooks contain dates and topics of monthly activities, names of officers, and names and addresses of Club members.

Items from the time capsule include the Club's by-laws, lists of charter members and officers, and a January 14, 1926 issue of the *DeKalb New Era*. Letters of greeting from other local organizations, including the First Presbyterian Church of Decatur, Agnes Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, League of Women Voters, Decatur Fine Arts Club, Decatur City Schools, Baron DeKalb Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the DeKalb County Sunday School Association, are included, as is a letter from Scott Candler, who was instrumental in securing the donation of the land on which the clubhouse was built. Yearbooks from 1908-1909 and 1911-1912 from a predecessor organization, also called the

Decatur Women's Club, were also included. Unfortunately, the time capsule was not sealed properly and many of these items are in poor condition.

**Subject Headings:** Where possible, Library of Congress Subject Headings have been used.

Main Entry: Decatur Woman's Club (Decatur, Ga.)

Subject/Added Entries: Candler, Scott, Sr. (1887-1973).  
 Community organizations—Georgia—Decatur.  
 Furse, Sarah.  
 Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs.  
 Hastings, Gladys.  
 Lee, Marguerite.  
 Lyle, Ora.  
 Old Courthouse on the Square (Decatur, Ga.).  
 Tallulah Falls School (Tallulah Falls, Ga.).  
 Women—Societies and clubs—Georgia—Decatur.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>
1	1	Time Capsule Material	1908-1926
	2	Meeting Minutes	1924-1933
	3-5	Meeting Minutes	1962-1983
	6	Meeting Minutes-Executive Board	1939-1942
	7	Meeting Minutes-Executive Board	1959-1970
2	1	Meeting Minutes-Executive Board	1976-1979
	2	Scrapbook-Yearbooks	1925-1952
	3	Scrapbook	1924-1952
	4	Scrapbook	1952-1969
	5	Scrapbook	1970-1974
	6	Scrapbook	1974-1980
	7	Scrapbook	1982-1986
	8-9	Scrapbook	1982-1986
3	1	Scrapbook	1986-1988
	2	Scrapbook	1988-1990
	3	Scrapbook	1931