AMERICAN WAR MOTHERS, INDIANA CHAPTER
SCRAPBOOKS, PAPERS, AND PHOTOGRAPHS, 1919-1997

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Processed by
Jessica Fischer
February 2018

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org
COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: Manuscript: 23 boxes, 1 oversize manuscript folder, 1 flat file folder
Visual: 3 photograph folders, 3 color photograph folders
Artifacts: 12 artifacts

COLLECTION DATES: 1919-1997

PROVENANCE: Indiana State Chapter of American War Mothers c/o Barbara Letts of Greenwood, IN

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: American War Mothers Records, 1973-2015 (BV5243-5247);
Alice Moore French papers, ca. 1865-1941 (M 0458)


NOTES:
HISTORICAL SKETCH

The American War Mothers is a 501(c)4 non-profit, non-political, and non-partisan organization. The goal of its members is to engage in patriotic work and assist those who served and were wounded. Its members are mothers of children who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces during a time of conflict. Originally, this was limited to mothers of children serving between the dates of April 6, 1917 and November 11, 1918, but this was soon amended due to WWII and the Korean Conflict to include any future wars.

The American War Mothers began as a group of women with children fighting in WWI that came together through their efforts working on the Food Conservation Committee and the State Council of Indiana. In August 1917, Don Herald of the State Food Commission attended a meeting of the Woman's Civic League in Indianapolis in hopes of persuading a woman to push ahead the food conservation program in Indiana. Alice French (1863-1934) of Indiana was chosen and initiated a circulating letter campaign aimed at women with children in the Armed Forces. Her idea of convincing these "War Mothers" to pledge to conserve wheat, meat, fats and sugar was supposedly inspired by her attorney son's enlistment in the army. Indiana Food Commissioner, Dr. Harry C. Barnhard, was so impressed with her letter that he forwarded it to Washington, D.C.; authorities there soon sent back a telegram requesting French to "mobilize" her War Mothers. The American War Mothers was officially founded on September 29, 1917, and French became their first national president. By February 24, 1925, the organization became incorporated through an act of Congress (Public Law 453). The Indiana Chapter was organized first and incorporated on May 18, 1918. The first National Convention of War Mothers took place in Indianapolis on August 15, 1918.

After the war, the group continued its efforts to aid soldiers. One of the group’s most notable accomplishments was the establishment in 1926 of the American War Mothers National Memorial Home to provide food and shelter for families visiting Fitzsimmons Veteran Hospital near Denver, Colorado. The group also had a postage stamp devoted to it in 1934. French was very enthusiastic about forming an International War Mothers modeled after the League of Nations and traveled extensively throughout the United States and Europe to encourage methods of addressing differences other than bloodshed.

Sources:
Taken and adapted from Indiana Historical Society Collection Guides: American War Mothers Records, 1973-2015 (BV5243-5247) and Alice Moore French papers, ca. 1865-1941 (M 0458)
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of items from the American War Mothers, Indiana Chapter between 1919 and 1997.

American War Mothers National Meeting Minutes: The National Meeting Minutes are from the Executive Board Meetings and include news, reports, and resolutions.

Scrapbooks-County and State Chapters: The scrapbooks span the 1950s through 1980s and include a mixture of items such as news and article clippings, programs, photos, cards, meeting minutes, newsletters, postcards, letters, standing rules/bylaws, reports, and member lists. The Henry County and Attica Chapters are represented through multiple scrapbooks. There are a set of Indiana Chapter scrapbooks compiled by past state president Annis L. Jackson. Another set of scrapbooks with primarily Indiana Chapter materials was compiled by Merle Carr from the Dunes Chapter.

Indiana State and Local Chapter Materials: There are several photographs of members from the Bremen Chapter, ca. 1950-1997. The Henry County Chapter includes a records ledger (1919-1923) with meeting minutes, news clippings, and resolutions as well as a guest book (ca. 1964-1986) with signatures and a list of deceased members and a plaque from Mayor Bud Ayers of Newcastle, IN. There is a minute book from the Whiteley Chapter (1975-1988) and the Marion Chapter (1977-1984). The Attica Chapter includes bulletin and meeting notes from 1950-1957, undated photos, a handmade flag, and news clippings from 1954-1967.

General Indiana State Chapter objects include small yearbooks from 1948-1985, a State Chapter History from 1953, various programs including the Indiana Group Chapter Meeting program from 1949-1981. There is also member information, the majority of which are membership/death cards from the 1960s-1980s. There are a number of artifacts including two gavels, an altar cloth, ribbons, and plaques.

National Materials: The National materials include various programs, primarily the National Convention Programs between 1959 and 1973; the 1942 AWM Constitution and By-Laws; histories written in 1967 and 1981; and a group photo taken in St. Louis. There are also two copies of the American War Mothers, Convention News, Newspaper, Nov.-Dec. 1959.

Indiana American Legion Materials: Correspondence and financial papers for the Veterans Rehabilitation Fund Appeal are included for the years 1992-1997.

American War Mothers Magazine: The American War Mothers published a magazine, The American War Mother, which included articles, organization information, and State Chapter news. The majority of the magazines between September 1935 and December 1980 are included in the collection.
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