

History

The Women's Peace Union (WPU) was founded in 1921 at a meeting of American and Canadian women in Niagara Falls. The WPU for the Western Hemisphere that resulted from this conference had branches in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and several other Latin American countries. Each group worked for complete disarmament and for the abolition of legal sanction for war.

The WPU advocated noncooperation with any war effort. To this end, in 1926 the members of its U.S. section drafted an amendment that would make the waging of war unconstitutional. The WPU gained the support of Senator Lynn J. Frazier of North Dakota who introduced the amendment in every session of Congress from 1927 to 1940. Of the many women who worked in the WPU, Caroline Lexow Babcock was especially active in the early congressional lobbying campaigns. Tracy D. Mygatt, another absolute pacifist, worked with the WPU from its inception and was instrumental in representing the organization's work against conscription from 1939 to 1940.

Scope and Content

The records of the WPU in the Swarthmore College Peace Collection are those of the U.S. branch. Correspondence makes up a large part of the collection. There are also minutes of meetings, reports, form letters, WPU literature, information on the history of the WPU, petitions, and materials relating to the Frazier amendment.

Correspondents and others in the collection include Jane Addams, Caroline Lexow Babcock, Elisabeth Black, Katherine Devereux Blake, Elinor Byrns, Lynn J. Frazier, Yella Hertzka, Lida Gustava Heymann, Jessie Wallace Hughan, Frieda L. Lazarus, Lola Maverick Lloyd, Tracy D. Mygatt, Rosika Schwimmer, Lydia G. Wentworth, Mary E. Winsor, and Frances M. Witherspoon.

Acquisition

The first acquisition of records from the WPU came from Tracy D. Mygatt in 1942. The records had been stored at the War Resisters League (WRL) office on Stone Street in New York City. When the WRL moved to its Beekman Street address in 1942, WPU records were sent to the Peace Collection. Five years later, Frances M. Witherspoon sent another carton of records to the Peace Collection. This second acquisition consisted of minutes and other documents. Further details concerning the acquisition of the WPU's records are available in Peace Collection archives for 1947 and 1950.