

Guide to the **Women's Community Building Organizations Collection**

The History Center in Tompkins County

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COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The City Federation of Women's Organizations was born in 1910, when the Ithaca Woman's Club, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Ithaca, and the Political Study Club (later, the League of Women Voters of Tompkins County) called a meeting of 15 women representing these and other local clubs. At first the Federation occupied rented or borrowed space but soon began considering whether to adapt or build its own downtown headquarters. In 1920 the Winton-Brooks residence, a handsome 1874 mansard-roofed brick dwelling designed by Ithaca architect William H. Miller, was bought for \$17,000.

The Federation Center was in a prime center-city location, the northwest corner of Cayuga and Seneca Streets, and served women and the community at large in many ways for nearly 40 years, but was finally outgrown. Federation members set about raising enough money (more than \$285,000 by some accounts) to rebuild on the same site. Opening in 1960, the new Women's Community Building, again serving both women and the community, included a large auditorium for meetings and events, an adjacent kitchen, many rooms for small meetings, storage space for clubs, living quarters for single working women, and public restrooms.

Overtaken by social changes and financial problems, the Women's Community Building closed its doors in 2012, to be razed and replaced by the six-story Breckenridge Place Apartments for low and moderate-income tenants. At this writing the City Federation still exists, with its future roles in the community yet to be determined.

Other records of the Federation and the WCB exist in the Cornell University Archives.

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

City Federation of Women's Organizations – CFWO	<i>Folders</i>
Constitution & By-Laws, & sample budget	1
Founding Clubs (1910)	
Ithaca Woman's Club	2
Women's Christian Temperance Union of Ithaca NY	
Ida Horton Estate's Fund Transfer to WCB Fund	3
Correspondence Regarding Transfer	4
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Member Clubs: A sampling of 40 (Annual totals ranged from 17 to 60)	
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Federation Directories, 1936-1994	9
Federation Newsletters: The Cornerstone (1999-2002) and Women Building Community (2005-2012)	10
Federation Annual Reports, 1980-1991	11

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Women's Community Building - WCB	<i>Folders</i>
WCB Mission Documents	12
Fundraising brochure for "Proposed" WCB	
New Millennium handout for 2000	
1999 Study of financial problems	
WCB Newsletters with Programs, Classes and Services	
1975-1989	13
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WCB Happenings, including Women Making History, Enterprising Women, Information Network, Antique Shows, Fashion Shows, Flares for the Fourth fundraisers	15
Women's Directories, in business, crafts, self-employed, etc.	16