

This statement of intent was prepared by the members of the Wooster Branch who prepared these documents for inclusion in the Special Collections of the College of Wooster Library.

In 2023 the Wooster Branch celebrated its centennial. As part of the celebration Nicholette Rogers and Mary Hetrick, along with anniversary committee and board members, collected the group's records which were stored around town in the garages, basements, and closets of members. An amazing mass of materials had been saved over the years, and it was obvious that culling and organization would need to be done immediately to save items from further deterioration.

Earlier effort to explore women's history in Wayne County had proven difficult. In 2020 Nicholette and Mary had worked on the committee to mark the centennial of the passage of the nineteenth amendment. This amendment to the United States Constitution granted women the right to vote. They found that information about women's suffrage in the early twentieth century in Wayne County was nearly nonexistent. Adding to the problem of identifying women who had worked in the community and the College of Wooster to advance women's suffrage was the practice of identifying a married woman by her husband's last name. Thus a married woman would be referred to as Mrs. John Smith instead of as Jane Smith. Finding the complete name of a married woman including her maiden name was a time-consuming process. After considerable work, the nineteenth amendment committee assembled a display for the Wayne County Historical Society that detailed local, state, and national efforts to pass the amendment only to have its work delayed for display because of the Covid pandemic.

As a result of difficulties studying local women's suffrage efforts, AAUW centennial celebration committee members made sharing the history of the group a primary objective of their 2023 activities. Mary Hetrick, the group's historian, was asked to prepare a program giving an overview of the organization's founders and the group's activities over a hundred-year period. This oral presentation kicked off the 2023 celebration and, as members became acquainted with the women who were its founders and the importance of the group in community and College of Wooster history, the idea of preparing an archive of the records gained strength.

Nicholette and Mary were personally very moved by the careers of Freda Detmars and Lura Kean, the first president and vice president of the Wooster Branch. Detmars was a nationally known entomologist at The Ohio State University. She was employed for a while at the Ohio State Experiment Station in Wooster, and Lura Kean was a local

educator who was principal at Wooster High School. They recruited other women who had ties to Wooster High School and the College of Wooster and the membership of the local AAUW Branch grew rather quickly.

Over the years the Wooster Branch became one of the largest AAUW groups in the state and hosted state level conventions and equity conferences. The group was very active in community and College of Wooster activities. Members encouraged local high school students to complete their secondary education and go on to enroll in college. College faculty presented many programs to the membership and branch members sponsored events to celebrate the achievements of local high school graduates and College of Wooster students.

Although many records of the earliest years were lost, the group had celebrated milestones in its history and personal memories of early members had survived. The collection of records detailed the full names, educational achievements, and addresses of the members as well as the programs they presented, the study groups they started, the books they read and discussed, and the events they supported to raise money for educational causes including a scholarship program for women who were hoping to complete college degrees.

After many hours of work the records were culled and organized in archive quality boxes along with additional digital record. Researchers could use the collection to study women's history in a small Ohio town over a one hundred year period. Nicholette Rogers approached the College of Wooster about adding the material to their Special Collections for students and others to use and the library agreed to accept the archive. The Wooster Branch Board and membership approved of the plan to donate the records.

What can the records tell a researcher? What topics did educated women study in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and other decades up to 2023? Who were the women whose education was funded in part by Wooster AAUW? What homes were on the house tours sponsored by the group? How and why did the local book sale now held annually at the Wayne County Fairgrounds get started? How did the AAUW forge relationships with the Wooster Kiwanis which have allowed the book sale, a huge promotion of literacy and recycling in Wayne County, to continue? What are some of the playground projects supported by the book sale?

These and many other topics can be investigated by exploring the AAUW records in the Special Collections of the College of Wooster library. May this repository of women's history be used to further knowledge about the many accomplishments of local women in Wooster, Ohio.