

EVANSTON COLLEGE FOR LADIES, RECORDS OF THE, 1869-1933

Series 39/1

Box 1

History

In 1869 the Women's Educational Aid Association, formed of Mary F. Haskins and several other "prominent and public-spirited" Evanston women, founded the Evanston College for Ladies in order to provide female students with a respectable boarding house and supplemental or preparatory studies as they began or contemplated coursework at Northwestern University, which had adopted coeducation in 1869 at the insistence of president E. O. Haven. The Evanston College for Ladies took pride in an all-female administration and board of trustees that included Frances E. Willard as College President, Elizabeth M. Greenleaf as President of the Board, Mary F. Haven as Treasurer, and Anna S. Marcy as Recording Secretary. Reportedly the College's first graduating class of six students (1872) was "the first which ever received diplomas from the hands of women," as well as the first to hear a woman deliver the baccalaureate sermon.

Absorbing the Northwestern Female College, the Evanston College for Ladies opened in fall of 1871 to 236 students (including Sarah Rebecca Roland, later Northwestern University's first female graduate) in facilities rented from William P. Jones, former president of the Female College. Construction immediately began on a new building (the present-day Willard Hall), located on property donated to Northwestern University in 1869 by the town of Evanston and funded through \$30,000 in subscriptions gathered at the popular "Ladies' Fourth of July" event (1871). However, the Chicago fire of 1871 rendered many financial donors unable to honor their pledges, leading the College for Ladies to make a desperate appeal for funding in 1872. Stephen P. Lunt responded by donating proceeds from the sale of 50 acres of Rogers Park property. Still unfinished, the new College building opened in spring of 1873.

While the Evanston College for Ladies provided mainly room, board, and supervision to female college students enrolled in Northwestern University's classical or scientific courses of study, it also offered supplemental instruction in fine arts, deportment, housewifery, and modern languages. Students also could opt for the College's "Historical and Aesthetic Course of Study," a combination of Northwestern and College coursework, emphasizing history and modern languages, that concluded in a Baccalaureate of Arts degree from the Evanston College for Ladies. In addition, the College operated a college preparatory department open to both girls and boys and a training department for kindergarten teachers. Students' conduct was regulated through an innovative honor system that allowed select "self-governed" students unusual freedom to "do as they please—so long as they please to do right." Although social rules were less rigid than those of the former Northwestern Female College, the College for Ladies still instructed students in etiquette; required church and Sunday school attendance (at individual students' denomination of choice); and aimed to provide the "safeguards of a Christian home" to vulnerable females.

Under pressure from Northwestern University's new president, Dr. Fowler, as well as from financial embarrassments, in June 1873 the Evanston College for Ladies ceded its property and management to Northwestern University in exchange for the University's assumption of College

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debts and the promised inclusion of at least five women in the University's Board of Trustees. The Evanston College for Ladies became the Woman's College of Northwestern University, with Willard serving as Dean of Women.

Description of the Series

The records of the Evanston College for Ladies consist of one box of historical materials, minutes, legal and financial documents, and catalogs and programs dating from 1869 to 1933.

Dating from 1871 to 1933, the historical materials consist of circulars, newspaper and catalog extracts, and a 1933 historical article by Lydia Jones Trowbridge. The "Ladies' Fourth of July" folder (1871) contains circulars and newspaper articles that document the fundraising event and, in doing so, offer a witty commentary on Evanston social life.

Executive Committee minutes and Board of Trustees minutes together document the College's operation from its opening in 1871 through the end of first academic year of its absorption by Northwestern (1874).

Spanning the years 1869 to 1925, the legal documents include the town ordinance granting land to Northwestern University for use by the Evanston College for Ladies; the lease by which the College rented facilities from William Jones; and the terms of the College's 1873 cession to Northwestern. Faculty contracts date from 1871 until 1872.

Financial documents comprise a published financial statement from 1873 and one letter (1874) pertaining to tuition payments.

Catalogs date from 1871 until 1873 and document the College's mission, curricula, and expectations of its students. Dating from 1872 to 1873, the event programs include commencement leaflets (which unfortunately do not list the graduates) and programs from alumni reunions.

The duplicates are extra copies of the College catalogs.

Cross References

Records of the Northwestern Female College, 1855-1976 (Series 36/2)

Records of the Women's Educational Aid Association, 1871-2000 (Series 55/38)

Records of the Woman's College of Northwestern University, 1872-1893 (Series 40/1)

[particularly, "History of the Evanston College for Ladies" bound in the history and biography scrapbook of the records of the Woman's College of Northwestern University]

Frances E. Willard Papers (Series 40/2)

Provenance: Unknown.

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Restrictions: None.

Separations: None.

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Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Historical Materials	1871-1933
	2	"Ladies' Fourth of July"	1871
	3	Executive Committee Minutes	1871-1873
	4	Board of Trustees' Minutes	1873-1874
	5	Legal Documents	1869-1925
	6	Faculty Contracts	1871-1872
	7	Financial Documents	1873-1874
	8	Catalogs	1871-1873
	9	Event Programs	1872-1873
	10	Duplicates	1871-1873