Women in Cleveland

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Cleveland women of all ages and all ethnic and class backgrounds have founded and joined clubs, which have served their members and the community.

Formal portraits of the Girls’ Literary Club of Central High School, the Association of Polish Women, the National Association of Colored Women, and the Business and Professional Women’s Club of Cleveland reflect the wide range of interests which have brought women together. In these clubs women have shared intellectual aspirations, expertise and information, and their cultural heritage.

Photographs of club activities also record their civic usefulness. Women’s clubs such as the Hungarian Ladies Charity Club have provided aid to the needy. The Women’s City Club, the Junior League, and other organizations have supported many civic efforts, and groups such as Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice have continued to call attention to national and local economic and political issues.
Some of the traditional performances by the Association of Polish Women’s Halka Singing Society required male roles to be filled by women in the troupe. Western Reserve Historical Society

Opposite top: Cultural clubs, such as the Girls Literary Club of Central High School, class of 1895, made up an important part of a young woman’s education in the late nineteenth century. Cleveland State University Archives

Opposite bottom: A working lunch for members of the Cleveland League of Women Voters, ca. 1925. Western Reserve Historical Society
The Hungarian Ladies Charity Club gathers relief materials for the needy during the Great Depression. Western Reserve Historical Society

The Sophisticated Bridgetts pose for African American photographer Allen Cole in 1936. Western Reserve Historical Society
The Ukrainian Girls Youth Club in 1936. For young women from first- or second-generation immigrant families, participation in ethnic clubs and organizations served as an important link to the traditions of their ethnic homelands. Courtesy of the Ukrainian Museum Archives

A rehearsal for the Junior League of Cleveland annual Junior League Follies in 1937. Cleveland Public Library
Members of the Women's Photographic Society of Cleveland vie for the best angle to photograph a fellow shutterbug, ca. 1940. Western Reserve Historical Society

The Women's City Club of Cleveland gathers for an October 1941 meeting. Cleveland State University Archives
The Business and Professional Woman's Club of Cleveland hosts a forum on Women and the Law featuring female lawyers from around Ohio, ca. 1945. Western Reserve Historical Society

The Colored Women's Federation Committee poses for a group photo following an afternoon meeting, ca. 1940s. Western Reserve Historical Society
African American beauticians establish social and vocational contacts at the monthly meeting of the Alpha Phi Omega Beautician's Sorority, May 1947. Western Reserve Historical Society

Officers of "Vlasta," the First Independent Ladies Lodge, celebrate the club's 100th anniversary at Bohemian Hall in 1970. Western Reserve Historical Society

*Opposite top:* Founding members Pearl Simon (*left*) and Ione Biggs hold a banner commemorating the 25th anniversary of Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice, December 1993. The Plain Dealer

*Opposite bottom:* A local trade show provides an opportunity for the Women Business Owners Association of Cleveland to expand their membership, 1993. Courtesy of the Women Business Owners Association of Cleveland