



Women During the First World War

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Telephonists at the naval exchange, Ipswich.
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WOMEN DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR	
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THEMES	World War I, Women, War Relief, Women's Associations, Suffragettes, Peace Movements
PERIOD	1914 - 1918

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ABSTRACT

This Archival Research Guide is dedicated to different forms of women's participation in the war effort and associationism during the First World War: these two strands include active participation of women in battles; war relief associations, peace movements and women's employment in the war industry. Contemporary historiography has recognized the crucial role that women played in sustaining the war effort by replacing the labour of men who were engaged on the front. On the other hand, the role of women was crucial in those years for a variety of reasons and occupations: in fact, their commitment to organize in soldier's relief and peace associations represents an important part of the historiography of the WW1. Moreover, the First World War was the first major belligerent event in which women could wear a military uniform: while this didn't happen in every country, it was probably a first step toward the inclusion of women in sectors which once were exclusively occupied by men.

INTRODUCTION

The research behind this Archival Research Guide follows four main research paths: first of all it focuses on case studies represented by women's battalions, single women or associations. The second perspective analyzes relief and nursing structures for soldiers on the front; the third section studies the topic of women's employment during the war, while the fourth and last part analyzes examples of pacifist and suffragette movements during the period 1914-1918. For each case study a related archival institution and archival collection is mentioned. The collections and archives represented in the present Archival Research Guide have been selected according to their relevance to the selected topic; moreover most of them can be considered as hidden primary resources as they haven't been incorporated previously in any national or international aggregator. Finally, relevance is also given to the country/ region the case study and the archival resources are connected with. This strategy allowed the creator of the ARG to consider the case studies in a comparative way, by highlighting cultural and political peculiarities and commonalities with other case studies and geographic areas.

Note of the Author

The case studies reported in this Archival Research Guide portray relevant collections for Modern and WW1 historians; they serve as an example of archival and contextual analysis of archival collections that the CENDARI author has worked on in the last year. The selection of the case studies follows the following criteria:

- The case studies should cover an evenly distributed geographic area.
- The case studies highlight collections recommended by archivists (of the consulted archives - both in person and virtually) as being of particular relevance, despite their scarce visibility.
- The case studies aim to represent a variety of characters impersonating different social roles.
- Whenever possible, the archivist of the consulted archive has been interviewed in order to get a better understanding of the collection in the context of the archive's activity and historiographical development.

The author suggests that the researchers contributing to and adding new case studies follow the recommendations stated above.

MAJOR RESEARCH ISSUES

Participation in War Efforts

Women in the Army

The participation of women in the army revolutionized the traditional image of the feminine figure as gentle and caring. Yet, this traditional image was not dismantled completely, as women during the war years were largely committed to relief programs directed to the soldiers on the front. Even though this was not the first time women took part in an armed conflict, their active participation in the army represented nonetheless a crucial symbolic and cultural turn. This phenomenon advanced hand in hand with the suffragette and peace movements, which demonstrated the adequacy of women in "places" which were not considered suitable to women only a few years earlier. If women could participate in war, then they could participate in political discussions. However, even if this represented a huge step forward in recognizing women's rights, their participation in "unusual" social contexts wasn't positively welcomed by many, especially because of the concerns about women's moral misconduct with soldiers.

What motivated women to volunteer to fight during the First World War? This is of course difficult to establish with certainty, as in a way it has to do with psychological traits and personal decisions. However one must recognize that the changed social and cultural context and the new role of women in society, played a crucial role in determining the individual choices.

Yeomanettes and Marinettes

Apart from similarities with other countries - where women gained a special position during the war years and to a certain extent became more active in the social and working life - the United States of America present a unique trait: for the first time in the nation's history, 13.000 women were admitted in the Navy and Marines, while a smaller number was admitted to the Coast Guard. They were called Yeomanettes and Marinettes and more than 230 women traveled to France as part of the U.S. Army Signal Corps, where they worked as telephone operators for the American Expeditionary Forces.

United States: National Archives and Records Administration > National Military Personnel Archives

Three main archival collections:

- Record Group 24, Records of Bureau of Naval Personnel;
- Record Group 38, Records of the Chief of Naval Operations;
- Record Group 45, Records of the Office of Naval Library and Records.

See here [some examples of recruitment posters for women](#).

Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit

This corps, more informally named the "Hello Girls", was founded in 1917 to improve communications on the Western Front. The operators at the switchboard had to be fluent in English and French. Many of the operators relocated to France and the United Kingdom. "Hello Girls" wore a US uniform, they were considered civilians employed by the Army, and only in 1979 they were recognized with the status of war veterans.

United States: National Archives Civilian Personnel Records Center

[The National Personnel Records Center](#). Relevant collections for the research on the Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit:

Record Group Folder 111

- Folder 201: Personnel Folders from the National Archives Civilian Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO.
- Folder 231.3 Telephone Operators (Overseas) (3rd Group); (5th Group); Telephone Operators (Overseas) (6th Group); 231.3 (WW) Overseas Telephone Operators (7th Group); Operators Discharged From Training Folder, 231.3 Telephone Operators; 231.3 Operators in Training At End of War Folder; all found in ; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_16867

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2024904-photography_providedcho_topfoto_co_uk_eu056991

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/08622-iwm_480/resource/8b9232af-899d-4e1c-ad7a-845d017a6738

Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC)

The British military created the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) in 1917 and it was followed shortly afterwards with naval and air force auxiliaries, the WRNS and the WRAF. The plan was for these women to serve as clerks, telephonists, waitresses, cooks, and as instructors in the use of gas masks. By the end of the war about 100,000 women had served in the British paramilitary and military auxiliary corps.

United Kingdom:

[UK National Archives, Kew](#)

Reference: WO 398

Title: [War Office: Women's \(later Queen Mary's\) Army Auxiliary Corps: Service Records, First World War \(Microfilm Copies\)](#)

Description: Contains records of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) later renamed to Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC), comprising service records for women who served in the First World War and the immediate post-war period.

- Related collections in CKAN:

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205196054

- <https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/09003-02290af5331d114031fa6848a94231e-c2ba1e198>

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237844

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237845

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237846

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237847

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237840

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237841

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237842

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237843

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237848

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205237849

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205214343

- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205214347

Russia

During the First World War, six thousand Russian women fought in the Russian Army. Russia wasn't the only country to employ women on the front - indeed US women also participated actively in the conflict. Nonetheless the Russian case differs from the American as by the spring of 1917 the phenomenon of individual women joining male units had given way to separate, all-female military formations.

Maria Bochkareva and the Women's Battalion of Death

The Women's Battalion of Death was founded by Maria Bochkareva in 1917 - after the February Revolution, and after having convinced Alexander Kerensky (the new leader of the Russian Provisional Government) to form a women's battalion. The battalion initially consisted of 2,000 women, but it ended up with only 250 women, due to Bochkareva's strict rules and discipline. The battalion was employed on the border with the Austrian Front. While leading her battalion Maria was promoted to Lieutenant and then Captain. Maria Bochkareva was arrested many times by the Bolsheviks, when she was finally granted a passport and traveled to the United States by steamship in 1918.



Maria Bochkareva, the Battalion of Death. Library of Congress digital ID ggbain 26862 [No known restrictions on publication]

Russia: Russian Military Archive

Information about Maria Bochkareva

- Fond 2277 - file 368 <http://xn--90ag.xn--80adcv1b.xn--p1ai/funds/fund/266>
<https://archives.cendari.dariah.eu/index.php/first-siberian-army-corps-1>

Information about the Women's Battalion of Death

- Fond 2003, Title: Supreme Headquarters (rate), Mogilev; <http://xn--90ag.xn--80adcv1b.xn--p1ai/lists/2>
<https://archives.cendari.dariah.eu/index.php/headquarters-stavka-of-commander-in-chief-of-russian-imperial-army-in-mogilev>

Relief and Nursing

Just a few days after the outbreak of the war, dozens of relief organizations and associations came into existence. In addition to existing volunteer organizations, small, independent forms of women's organizations helped soldiers at the front in different ways. While women of different social classes became somehow part of relief campaigns, it is true that voluntary service was the main way in which middle and upper-class women contributed to the war effort. In particular, upper-class women took a front-line role in the organization of war relief. As an example, in the United Kingdom some aristocratic women turned their social position and wealth toward war service: The Duchesses of Westminster and Sutherland set up hospitals abroad, and Lady Hamilton (wife of General Sir Ian Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean) coordinated specific funds and relief efforts in support of her husbands' troops.

American Fund for French Wounded

The organization was initially established under the auspices of a British organization, the London Committee of the French Emergency Fund, but became independent in December 1915. Committees in eighty United States municipalities raised funds for the organization, which worked closely with several similar organizations, notably the American Committee for Devastated France and the American Red Cross. The Fund's mission was to provide medical assistance for wounded French soldiers and civilians, and other forms of support for refugees.



Faradisation in the Red Cross Hospital in Villach, Image by Europeana 1914-1918 [Public Domain]

See: Report of the American Fund for French Wounded, February 1917. [The Sophia Smith Collection](#)

American Fund for French Wounded. Paris: Herbert Clarke, [ca. 1917]. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

United States

[The New York Public Library](#)

Collection: MssCol 73

The collection consists of correspondence, administrative records, reports, circular letters, pamphlets, bulletins, and a few clippings and photographs. Much of the correspondence is between Mrs. Schuyler van Rensselaer, the New York president of the AFFW, and Anna Vail, the treasurer of the Paris Depot. Description of the collection at: <http://archives.nypl.org/mss/73>

Correspondence

- b. 1 f. 1-1916; b. 1 f. 2 - 1917; b. 1 f. 3 - 1918; b. 1 f. 4 - 1919 (Letters and Reports)
- b. 1 f. 5 - 1915-1919; b. 1 f. 6 - 1916; b. 1 f. 7 (Letters and miscellaneous items)
- b. 1 f. 8 - Bulletins 1918-1919; b. 1 f. 9 - Photographs; b. 1 f. 10 - Printed items (Circular letters and reports from France)
- b. 2 f. 1 - 1915; b. 2 f. 2 - 1916; b. 2 f. 3 - 1917; b. 2 f. 4 - 1918; b. 2 f. 5

Weekly Bulletin 1918-1919 (incomplete)

- b. 2 f. 6 - American Committee for Devastated France. Bulletins 1918-1919;
- b. 2 f. 7 - French Wounded Emergency Fund. Reports 1915-1916;
- b. 2 f. 8 - National Surgical Dressings Committee 1914-1918;
- b. 2 f. 9 - Organizational Papers, Miscellaneous 1916-1918;
- b. 2 f. 10 - Printed items

Related Collections :

- <https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/08627-146888>
- <https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/new-york-public-library/resource/3b7a7e6c-b776-41f8-8844-63b215ffe74d>
- <https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/new-york-public-library/resource/3b7a7e6c-b776-41f8-8844-63b215ffe74d>

YMCA: Young Men’s Christian Association

The role of women in the YMCA during the First World War was mostly in the form of extensive volunteer work. There are a few cases in which professional women, such as doctors and professors, were paid for their time in service to the YMCA. Women served both locally in their communities in the United States and abroad in places such as the United Kingdom and France. Volunteer service was completed in YMCA huts. Because of the varied locations and services, huts took on different forms. Some huts were located in major cities and served a vast population of Allies while others were based on the front lines.

The following project “Women YMCA during the WW1” has been created by the University of Minnesota. It analyses the data referring to 150 American women volunteering during the First World War in the context of the YMCA war relief. The page “data” describes in a table each profile, considering background information such as spoken language, religion, marital status, occupation and station. The data are available in a visualization on a map as well. Unfortunately, it is not stated where the information and the archival records reported in this project are held.

See: [The Map of WWI YMCA Workers](#) shows the point of origin of 280 women who served with the YMCA during the First World War.

Link to related collections :

- <https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/15601-399bff92b2aa5398d723670ae-743d7ad011cd28a>
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/9200309-bibliographicre-source_3000093757123_source
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/9200309-bibliographicre-source_3000093757118_source
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/9200309-bibliographicre-source_3000093757175_source
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/9200312-bibliographicre-source_3000093756423
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/9200309-bibliographicre-source_3000093757193_source
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/9200309-bibliographicre-source_3000093757195_source
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/9200316-bibliographicre-source_3000092751248
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/9200312-bibliographicre-source_3000093756398
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205239624
- https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/2022360-imperial_war_museums_http___www_iwm_org_uk_collections_item_object_205239625

United States: Women’s Historic Archive at Smith College

SOPHIA SMITH COLLECTION

Billings, Florence, 1879-1959: She became a Hospital Aid and Red Cross relief worker in France, 1914-19, and received the Croix de Guerre in 1917 for her work near the front lines. From 1919 to 1923 she worked with the Near East Relief to assist Armenian refugees who had survived the massacres and deportations by the Turkish government during the war.

Bannon, Charlotte, 1874-1961: During the First World War she worked in the personnel office of the American Red Cross Department of Civilian Relief in Paris, assuming responsibility for newly arrived Red Cross workers. She had frequent contact with friends from home, including members of the Smith College Relief Unit stationed at Grécourt and other parts of France. These letters provide a very detailed picture of a three-year period of her life.

Bodman and Dunham Family Papers: The collection contains documents of World War I medical and volunteer work. Theodora Dunham Bodman worked in France for the American Fund for French Wounded, and her mother Mary Dows Dunham did volunteer work on the home front. Detailed correspondence, memorabilia, photographs. There is also interesting correspondence to Mary from a nurse on the front in France.

Cotton, Bessie Boies, 1880-1959: She was a YWCA overseas official. When the war broke out in Russia in 1918, it led to the evacuation of Americans from Bolshevik-controlled Russia and Boies made her way north through Stockholm to northern Russia where she set up box-car canteens for U.S. troops. The collection includes diaries, correspondence and YWCA reports.

Sita Meyer Camperio

Sita Meyer Camperio was born in 1877 in Milan. She was a pioneer of the volunteer nurses group and she attended the First Congress of Italian Women, which took place in Rome in 1908. In the same year she founded the first ambulance-school for nurses for the Italian Red Cross. In 1912 she founded a hospital-school named "Principessa Jolanda". During the First World War she volunteered at the front and received many rewards, amongst them the medal for gallantry and the Florence Nightingale medal by the Italian Red Cross.

Italy - Biblioteca Civica of the Municipality of Villasanta (province of Monza and Brianza)

The "Complesso Archivistico Sita Camperio" is divided in four parts:

--> <http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/archivi/complessi-archivistici/MIBA007931/>

- "Writings": a small school notebook and two manuscripts related to her biography and the foundation of the first ambulance-schools for nurses of the Italian Red Cross.
- "Letters": The 22 letters are addressed to Sita Camperio between 1910 and 1957 from, amongst others, Guglielmo Marconi, Ada Negri, Umberto II, the bishop of Chiavari Francesco Marchesani and some State and Military officials.
- "Album and Publications": paper clips and a series of publications related to the activities and the life of Sita Camperio, especially in the context of the Italian Red Cross.
- "Personal Documents": personal documents of Sita Camperio, divided into "Baptism", "Authorizations and permits", "Degree Certificates", "Decorations and medals" and "Personal cards".

- Biblioteca Civica "Aldo Moro" - Comune di Villasanta

- Collection - Sita Camperio (1877 - 1967)

Elsa Brändström

Elsa Brändström was a Swedish nurse, whose father worked at the Swedish embassy in Tsarist Russia. When the war broke out, Brändström applied for a position as a nurse in the Russian Army. Brändström's activities focussed in the Siberian region, helping German and Austrian POWs, which were living in very poor conditions. Elsa was known among the soldiers as the "Angel of Siberia", because of her angelic look and the support she could bring in such desperate living conditions.

Germany

Bundesarchiv

Collection - Elsa-Brändström Memorial Archives: prisoners of war from 1867 to present

Elsa Brändström handed the documents of the prisoners of war to the Army Archives in Potsdam but the archive was destroyed during a bombing raid in April 1945. In honor of Elsa Brändström, a collection on the history of prisoners of war from 1867 was set up on the occasion of her 85th birthday on March 26, 1973: the collections is entitled "Elsa Brändström memorial archives. - See more at: <https://invenio.bundesarchiv.de/basys2-invenio/direktlink/0a291825-2d26-40e6-9146-f451ce961bf9/> - https://repository.cendari.dariah.eu/dataset/bundesarchiv-de-1958_n_878

Ottoman Empire

In 1914 a new law redefined the rules about men's conscription: according to the new legislation, even men who were the only economic resource of the family were obliged to sustain the Empire's war effort. This meant that the situation for families with women, old people and children got much worse than in previous wars. However, families in such conditions were given a "separation allowance", which was suspended in case the soldier deserted the troops. The separation allowance became a tool for the Government to gain major control on the recipient's behavior. Women's allowances were indeed cut off in case they behaved immorally and improperly. On the other hand, women became quite used to dealing with the management of resources and often were the first contact points with governmental agencies.

See: [Ladies' Aid Society for Soldiers' Families. Servet-i Fünun, 10 June 1915](#)

Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti - Ladies' Aid Society for Soldiers' Families

This women's association was founded by the wives and daughters of prominent German and Ottoman men on the initiative of the daughter of Field Marshal Liman von Sanders in 1914. Their duty was to support the soldier's families in any way. They organized concerts and theatre pieces in order to raise money for the families; they conducted campaigns to collect clothes, dry food and sanitary materials.

Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi - Women's Branch of the Ottoman Red Crescent

- the women's branch of the Red Crescent began to train Turkish nurses
- It was calling on women to actually join the ranks.

Turkey: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA)

--> Collections:

- The Ministry of Internal Affairs - Dâhiliye Nezâreti, Kalem-i Mahsûs Müdüriyeti (DH.KMS)
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs - Dâhiliye Nezâreti - Muhaberat-i Umûmiye İdâresi (DH.MUI)
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs - Dâhiliye Nezâreti – İdâre-i Umûmiye (DH.İUM)
- Dosya Usûlü İrâdeler Tasnîfi (DUİT)
- Foreign Ministry - Hâriciye Nezâreti, Siyâsî Kısım (HR.SYS)
- Nişân Defterleri
- Şurâ-yı Devlet / Selânik

Türk Kızılayı Arşivi - Turkish Red Crescent Society Archives and Library

The Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay, formerly Hilâl-i Ahmer)

Women's Employment during the First World War

Germany

A common myth says that women's employment during the First World War rose to unprecedented heights, and that the war thus caused profound consequence for female employment. As the German and the French examples show, this myth cannot be substantiated in its generalization, since it overdraws the development in the war industry. As can be seen from the German case, it is true that the number of women employed in German enterprises rose from 1,592,138 in 1913 to 2,319,674 in 1918. It is also true that the number of women participating in the German social insurance showed an increase by 17 percent between 1914 and 1918. But this increase simply lies within the main trend of a slightly flattening growth rate of female participation in social insurance within the 20th century. One could formulate it the other way round: It is astonishing that the First World War did not show considerable effects on the quantitative development of female employment in Germany. A structural change and a significant impact beyond the First World War cannot be observed.

The myth of the rise of women's employment obviously came into being because the examples taken from the war industry have been generalized. For example, the number of German women employed in the metal industry rose from 63,570 before the war to 266,530 in September 1916 – an increase of 319%! But female workers simply changed from textile, leather and rubber industry to the sectors of war industry, and all the efforts of the German government and administration to mobilize female workers in order to diminish the labor shortage and to raise female employment during the First World War failed to live up to expectations. At the beginning of the war, nothing had been undertaken from the side of German government and administration, since everybody expected a short war. It was only in 1916 when the structure of the administration changed, a Kriegsamt was established and a Hilfsdienstgesetz (law for the promotion of emergency services) was passed. Two women who were already well known within the German women's movement – Marie-Elisabeth Lüders and Agnes von Harnack became responsible for the establishment of the Frauenarbeitszentrale (head office for women's work) within the Kriegsamt, with the provisioning of women's labor as their most important task. Nevertheless, a massive disproportion between effort and results has to be noted. Entrepreneurs preferred, wherever possible, to employ war prisoners and foreigners coming from the occupied territories, and women preferred not to work in the war industry if they had to take care of children or other relatives, or if other possibilities for income were available, as home-work, domestic servicing or financial support by the state if the husbands served at the front. The shift from textile and other industries to war industry can be explained by the higher wages paid over there. Generally, the women at which the mobilization efforts were targeted, could not easily fluctuate, since they already had their workplace in the family.

Employment of women within the military was also discussed in Germany, but it did not come into operation. In June 1918, a female communications corps was established, which was conceived of as a military service. It was only the armistice in November 1918 which prevented the mission. Thus the female communications remained a draft of the first organized deployment of women within the German armed forces.

Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Abteilung IV Kriegsarchiv München

- [Fonds Kriegsministerium 14197 bis 14202 - Arbeiterbeschaffung Bund I bis VI](#)
- [Fonds Kriegsministerium 17309 bis 17312 - Vaterländischer Hilfsdienst](#)
- [Fonds Stellvertretendes Generalkommando I. Armeekorps \(WK\) 882 - Vaterländischer Hilfsdienst](#)

Bundesarchiv – Militärarchiv

- [Fonds N 46 - Groener, Wilhelm](#)
- [Fonds N 432 - Selasen-Selasinsky, Eberhard von](#)
- [Item R 1501/112432 - Weibliches Nachrichtenkorps](#)

Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz

- [Fonds I. HA Rep. 89, Nr. 15613 - Vaterländischer Frauenverein und seine Zweigvereine, Bd. 5](#)
- [Fonds I. HA Rep. 89, Nr. 15608 - Preußischer Frauen- und Jungfrauen-Verein, Bd. 2](#)

Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart

Collection M 1/9 - Kriegsministerium: Abteilung für Waffen und Feldgerät

- [Item M 1/4 Bü 1487 - Weibliches Nachrichtenkorps](#)
- [Item M 1/4 Bü 1272 und 1273 - Kriegsamt](#)

France

Comparable to the German case is the French example. According to the population census, the number of employed women fell slightly from 7,217,000 in 1911 to 7,213,000 in 1921. In the French case, one has to take into account that numbers for the social insurance are not available (as with the Germans), and that studies on the extent and percentage of female work force in French factories are rare. Though sources are rare, the same shift of female workers as in Germany from textile industry or domestic staff to metallurgy, metal and chemical industry can be noted. Female manual labor was the last resource in the factories, after the employment of male workers or workforce imported from abroad or the colonies. In the Ministère de l'Armement under the aegis of Albert Thomas, a "Comité du travail féminin" was established in 1916 in order to recruit women for work and to improve the working conditions for female workers. The First World War did thus not provide in France for a beginning or a major transformation for women employment. Though the figure of the "Munitionnette" became emblematic for the patriotic commitment of women, the gain was only of symbolic nature. Even women's suffrage was introduced only in 1945, with the beginning of the French Fourth Republic, whereas women received the right to vote in Germany in 1918.

It is remarkable that an auxiliary military service was pursued by French women themselves. In 1916, an "Office central de l'activité féminine" and an "Association pour l'enrôlement volontaire des Françaises au service de la patrie" came into being as private organisations under the auspices of the Ministère de Guerre, both of which formed the "Entente nationale des œuvres de recrutement féminin". Famous individuals like Marguerite Durand, writer Mme Jack de Bussy, Mme Léon Rosenthal, Mme Boutroux and Mme Borel took the initiative for or committed themselves for these associations. Though 70,000 women enrolled with these organisations, a female armed force never came into being in France; the main task of these bodies was to provide personnel for hospitals or the administration.

Archives nationales

- [94 AP Fonds Albert Thomas](#)
- [F7 Police générale](#)
- [F22 Travail et sécurité sociale](#)

Archives de la préfecture de police

- [Cabinet du préfet de police](#)

Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine (BDIC)

- [Fonds Gabrielle Duchêne](#)
- [Association pour l'enrôlement volontaire des Françaises au service de la patrie](#)

Pacifist and Suffragette Movements

On the one hand, suffrage movements started before the First World War and in some countries (such as Finland, Norway, New Zealand and Australia) women could vote from the beginning on the twentieth century. In other countries (The Netherlands, Sweden, Iceland and Denmark) the actions of the suffragettes was combined with a new vision of women in society. This facilitated the passing of the legislation that allowed women to participate actively in political life during or just after the First World War. Pacifists and Suffragettes were to be found in all classes, even though working-class women would often combine feminism and trade-unionism. Suffragettes recognized the opportunity to claim their full citizenship and to emphasize women's aid to the nation during war. They claimed their citizenship by casting themselves as active and not passive members of the nation and their relief activities as proof of their "patriotism and their fitness for citizenship".

Mary Ankeny Hunter

Upon her marriage, Hunter joined the Polk County Woman Suffrage Society in the American state of Iowa, later the Political Equality Club, and remained a member until the organization disbanded in 1919. Hunter was also a member of the Des Moines Women's Club, the Des Moines Federation of Women's Clubs, the PEO, the Iowa League of Women Voters, the Votes for Women League and the Polk County League of Women Voters. Beginning in 1922, Hunter served as the secretary of the Iowa Suffrage Memorial Commission for six years, followed by a year as vice president, and then six years as president. In addition to working for the enfranchisement of women for many years, Hunter was a prohibitionist, worked for the Red Cross during World War I, and was an activist for world peace.

Unites States: Iowa Women's Archives

Collection Number: IWA0097

Collection Description: The Mary Ankeny Hunter autobiographical sketch dates from 1940 and is three pages in length. In it, Hunter describes her life and activities up to 1940. The paper, entitled "The Iowa Suffrage Memorial Commission," was originally written to be included in the memorial cabinet donated to the State of Iowa by the Iowa Suffrage Memorial Commission in 1937.

- <https://archives.cendari.dariah.eu/index.php/mary-ankeny-hunter-memoir>

Carrie Chapman Catt and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)

Throughout her life, Catt worked tirelessly for pacifism, disarmament, and the peaceful settlement of international disputes, most notably by attempting to create a common international program of peace.

Unites States: Women's History Archives at Smith College

- Series 1 = Biographical Material
- Clippings - Peace Activism 1918 - 1945 (Box 1 - Folder 4)
- Women's suffrage 1915 - 1934 (Box 1 - Folder 5)
- Series 2 = Correspondence (1892 - 1947)
- Series 3 = Writings
- Speeches "The Cause and Cure of War" 1921-39 (Box 3 - Folder 5, 6)
- Speeches - NAWSA 1902 - 1959 (Box 3 - Folder 9)
- Speeches - International Woman Suffrage Alliance 1908 - 23 (Box 3 - Folder 10)
- Series 4 = Subject Files
- Notes: Women's Land Army: photographs 1917 -1918 (Box 4 - Folder 8-9)
- Notes: 1914-1920 (Box 4, Folder 3)

Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College

- [Collection - Carrie Chapman Catt Papers](#)

Netherlands Women's Peace Association (ANVV)

It was founded on December 27, 1914 by Elisabeth M. van Wijngaarden and was open to women of all religions and backgrounds. The aim was to promote peace between people through publications, meetings and demonstrations. The ANVV worked from 1925 onwards closely with the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom (ICFTU).

The Netherlands

[Atria. Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History](#) (Atria. Kennisinstituut voor emancipatie en vrouwengeschiedenis)

- [Fonds - Archief Algemeene Nederlandsche Vrouwen Vredesbond \(ANVV\)](#)

Archive n. 1 to 16 entitled: "Boek A vanaf September 1914 tot October 1917. Geschenk aan het Vredespaleis. Archief van de Alg. Ned. Vrouwen Vredesbond door de Oprichtster mej. E.M. van Wijngaarden".

Documents concerning the establishment of the Association, documents and minutes of outgoing documents E.M. van Wijngaarden, statutes and regulations, list of the department, documents relating to propaganda, report of the first general meeting April 5, 1916; clippings. 1914-1917. 16 folders

- hdl.handle.net/11653/arch4

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) developed from the International Women's Congress against World War I that took place in The Hague, Netherlands in 1915. 1,200 women from 12 countries gathered in The Hague in 1915. They drew up 20 proposals for stopping the war by a negotiated peace - and took these personally to world leaders.

The Women's League for Peace and Freedom still exists and continues its activities. In 2015 the League celebrates its 100 years of activities and on the occasion of its Centenary's celebrations an interactive timeline reporting the main activities and achievements has been realized: <http://www.womenstopwar.org/anniversary-atlas/>.

In the history of WILPF, two activists were honored with a Nobel Prize. In 1931, Jane Addams, WILPF's International President was awarded the prestigious prize for her peace-keeping efforts. Shortly after, in 1946, WILPF's first International Secretary, Emily Greene Balch, was also presented with the award - an obvious acknowledgement of WILPF's success in its endeavours.

United States

Swarthmore College Peace Collection

- Collection ID: DG 043
- 258 linear feet (approx.) of manuscript material
- Repository: The Swarthmore College Peace Collection is the official repository for these records.
- Box 2 (not on microfilm) - available on site

MISCELLANEOUS MATERIAL

- Memos from women at the International Congress of Women (The Hague, April 28 - May 01, 1915) re: proposed conference of neutral nations
- "The Prayer of the Nations" by Julia Grace Wales (in 4 languages)
- Maison Internationale, Geneva, Switzerland: 1919-1939 guest-book (photocopy); 3 postcards with images of building
- Pamphlet "A new peace: report of the International Conference of Women at the Hague, 7 to 9 December 1922" [catalogued]
- "Economic Aspects of a New International Order," addresses by Marguerite Dumont and Emily Greene Balch at the 1924 International Congress
- Visit to Philadelphia by 25 foreign delegates (to 1924 International Congress); list of U.S. delegates (to 1924 International Congress?)
- Jane Addams' note to Walter Page (04/25/1915), and hand-written note (1925)
- Alice Thatcher Post passports (1925, 1929); ship passenger lists (1915, 1919); writings [see also 1915 International Congress of Women at the Hague for Post's working copies of documents]
- Delegate tickets of Mildred Scott Olmsted to 1929 and 1937 International Congresses; invitation received during 1970-1971 International Congress
- Delegate ticket of Hannah Clothier Hull to 1932 International Congress
- Constitution/Bylaws/Rules of Order for WILPF, as amended at 1934 International Congress
- Delegate ticket of Ellen Starr Brinton to 1937 International Congress

Catherine Marshall (United Kingdom)

Catherine Marshall was born in 1880 as the daughter of Frank Marshall, housemaster at Harrow, and Caroline Colbeck, the sister of a colleague. Catherine played an important part in building up the suffrage movement in the Lake District between 1907 and 1909 and was then active at a national level as Parliamentary Secretary of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). As secretary of the Election Fighting Fund she played a key role in helping to sustain the alliance between the Labour Party and the NUWSS after 1912. During the First World War she resigned from the executive of the NUWSS because of her support for the peace movement. After 1917 she suffered from periods of ill health but remained active in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). She died in 1961.

United Kingdom: The National Archives. Carlisle Archive Centre

Collection Title: Miss Catherine E. Marshall, suffragist and pacifist of Hawse End, Keswick

Collection ID: D/Mar

Description: This collection includes records of the Marshall and Colbeck families together with records relating to the women's suffrage; pacifist, internationalist and political activities of Catherine Marshall.

Collection Timespan: 1868-1956

D MAR 3. WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ACTIVITIES

- D MAR 3/1 - 8 Records relating to women's suffrage in Cumberland, Westmorland and North-West England 1908 - 1917
- D MAR 3/9 - 52 Records relating to work for the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (N.U.W.S.S.) as a member of the Executive Committee and Parliamentary Secretary 1909 - 1918
- D MAR 3/53 - 58 Records relating to work for the N.U.W.S.S. as chairman of the Election Fighting Fund (E.F.F.) Committee 1912 - 1916
- D MAR 3/59 - 65 Records relating to work for the N.U.W.S.S. on other Committees 1912 - 1917
- D MAR 3/66 - 67 N.U.W.S.S. publications 1905 - 1917
- D MAR 3/68 - 74 Records relating to other suffrage organisations 1911 - 1919

D MAR 4. PACIFIST AND INTERNATIONALIST ACTIVITIES

- D MAR 4/1 - 33 Records mainly relating to the activities of the No Conscription Fellowship (N.C.F.) 1915 - 1921, Not dated
- D MAR 4/34 - 40 Subject files mainly relating to the N.C.F. 1914 - 1919, Not dated
- D MAR 4/41 - 75 Personal and case files of N.C.F. figures (including Bertrand Russell and Clifford Allen) and other conscientious objectors 1916 - 1920, Not dated
- D MAR 4/4 76 - 88 The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) 1915 - 1941
- D MAR 4/89 - 91 The International Information Bureau 1916 - 1917
- D MAR 4/92 - 95 The National Council Against Conscription (N.C.A.C.) which became the National Council for Civil Liberties (N.C.C.L.) 1916 - 1918
- D MAR 4/96 - 102 Others 1915 - 1956

D MAR 5. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

- D MAR 5/1 - 5 The Labour Party 1918 - 1942
- D MAR 5/6 The Independent Labour Party 1912 - 1926
- D MAR 9/1 - 12 MAGAZINES, JOURNALS AND NEWSPAPERS 1910 - 1942, n.d.

Women under the harsh circumstances of the Great War

Despite the growing public image of women as heroic, somehow masculine but at the same time bringing relief to the wounded soldiers, we can not forget that they were nonetheless victims of the Great War: sexual abuses, prostitution, pogroms, problem of widows and personal trauma can therefore not be absent from the historiography of the First World War.

This theme will not be examined here, but we highly welcome interested historians to research and expand on this topic in this Archival Research Guide.

See also: Archival Research Guide on “[Prisoners of War and their return home](#)”

After the War

Polish Grey Samaritans

The Polish Grey Samaritans was a group of young American volunteers of Polish descent founded by Laura Blackwell and Godzawa Turzynowicz, who organized relief actions for Poland's recovery on an economic and social level after the disastrous effects of the First World War. Their relief actions took place in the years just following the First World War, from 1919 and 1922.

Before leaving to Poland, probation courses were organized in order to train the volunteers; these courses were open to all Polish-Americans over the age of 16. Some of the grey samaritans went to help Polish wounded in refugee camps, while others dedicated themselves to children's hospitals.

For distribution purposes, Poland was divided into 15 districts in which the samaritans were assigned. The grey samaritans with American passports were assigned to the eastern part of Poland, while the ones without American passports were assigned to the western districts.

United States - Hoover Institution Archives

Collection Title: Polish Grey Samaritans records

Dates: 1918-1965

Creator: Polish Grey Samaritans.

Collection Size: 3 manuscript boxes (1.2 linear feet)

Repository: Hoover Institution Archives

Stanford, California 94305-6010

Abstract: Memoirs, reports, correspondence, printed matter, photographs, and memorabilia, relating to relief activities carried out in Poland at the end of World War I, and to conditions in Poland at that time. Includes memoirs by Martha Gedgowd and Amy Pryor Tapping, members of the Polish Grey Samaritans. Physical Location: Hoover Institution Archives

--> Detailed description of the collection available at <http://pdf.oac.cdlib.org/pdf/hoover/57026.pdf>

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- Jean Ebbert and Marie-Beth Hall, *The First, The Few, The Forgotten: Navy and Marine Corps Women in World War I*, Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2002.
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- [Bette, Peggy "Women's Mobilization for War \(France\)"](#)
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- 14 - 18 Online Encyclopedia: Jensen, Kimberly, "Women's Mobilization for War (USA)" - http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/womens_mobilization_for_war_usa
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Extra material

- [The US National Archives on the Yeomanettes](#)
- [On the "Hello Girls"](#)
- [On the "Hello Girls" \(II\)](#)
- [Cooperation between the American Fund for French Wounded and the American Red Cross](#)
- [Women's Voices From Around the World, Swarthmore College Peace Collection](#)
- [On the Ottoman Red Crescent](#)
- [On Carrie Lane Chapman Catt](#)