

Guide to the Frances P. Taft Papers, 1942-2008

Biographical Note

Frances Taft (1921-2017), VC '42, was President of Vassar College's Alumnae Association (AAVC) from 1965-1971. Taft graduated from Vassar with a major in biology and a minor in art history, and went on to establish a career in art education, teaching at the Cleveland Institute of Art (1950 - 2012) after earning a master's degree in art history from Yale in 1948. She served as President of Alumnae and Alumni Association of Vassar College (AAVC) when the College initiated debate over shifting to co-education. Taft was the first recipient of the AAVC Award for Outstanding Service to Vassar College in 2001. She received the award once more in 2011, along with other former presidents of the alumnae/i association.

Frances Taft's commitment to Vassar College extends to her time as an undergraduate student, when she served as president of the Vassar College Athletic Association. After graduating in 1942, Taft joined the first officer class of the U.S. Naval Reserve's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). She and her husband Seth Taft, grandson of President William Howard Taft, moved to Cleveland where she joined the faculty at the Cleveland Institute of Art and served as chair of the department of art history and liberal arts. She served as a Vassar College Trustee, president of the AAVC Board of Directors, as well as various committees and Vassar clubs.

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