



BHC-MSS 0057

## Guide to the Papers of Josephine and Lloyd Willard

By Lisa Furchtgott, September 2019

### **Descriptive Summary:**

**Creator:** Josephine and Lloyd Willard

**Title:** Papers of Josephine and Lloyd Willard

**Dates:** 1940-1960

**Quantity:** 2 manuscript boxes

**Abstract:** The papers outline the Willards' experiences as leaders of union locals, primarily those of the United Electrical Workers of America (UE). Workplaces represented concentrate for the most part manufacturing plants in Bridgeport, predominantly General Electric and Columbia Records. The materials contain practical union documents, such as minute meetings, newsletters, contract agreements, and financial records, along with local and national texts reflecting the conflicts between the UE and the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE). Also included are publications from nationally-based pro-union journals as well as papers distributed by GE and the National Labor Relations Board.

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Bridgeport History Center

### **Biographical History:**

Born in Naples, Italy, in 1915, Josephine "Jo" Willard (née Senese) immigrated with her family to Bridgeport in 1916. At the start of the 1930s, she worked at companies across the city: her father's hardware and bicycle shop; the Levine Coat Factory; Casco Products, where she helped manufacture cigarette lighters; Raybestos, a producer of brake linings; and the Electric Blanket Division of General Electric. She joined the Communist Party of the USA during her first decade of work, where she would play a critical role in organizing the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) at Levine. After transferring to GE after US entry into World War II, she served on the executive board of the plant local representing Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE). In 1946, she ran – without success – for a position as a Connecticut state representative on behalf of the Communist Party of the USA. From the mid-1950s onward, she managed the office at Bridgeport Automatics and Compact Tools. She married Lloyd Willard, also a UE member, who over the 1950s and early 1960s served as president of the UE local representing workers at the city's Columbia Records plant.

Josephine Willard later took up the study of naturopathy, calling her own version of the practice "Natural Hygiene," and ran a call-in radio show bearing that title. In 1986 she collaborated in publishing a weight-loss book centered on its ideas, followed by a 1995 guidebook named *Blueprint for Health*. She died in 1999. Her husband, Lloyd, had passed 12 years earlier in 1987.

### **Scope and Content note:**

The collection opens a window into mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Bridgeport industrial work and helps to illuminate leftist labor politics on a national level, as well as a local one. Communism in Bridgeport,

which was a manufacturing-based city, was a huge force – and one of the reasons that Mayor Jasper McLevy was the longest serving communist mayor in the country.

Many of the papers reflect battles between the UE and its more conservative rival, the International Union of Electric Workers (IUE). While there are few personal papers related to the Willards, records of their activities reflect discussions, theories, and strategies informing local and national unions' efforts to control labor power in the US. The broader entrenchment of anti-Communism and corporate anti-unionism underwrites many of collection's parent-union flyers and government-issued paperwork. Also relevant to these papers is gender's role within such divisions.

### **Arrangement note**

Materials are divided into 4 series. Series I houses papers reflecting Josephine's life outside of her work for the UE local at GE. Its four documents range from around 1940 through 1960, comprised by a flyer urging rank-and-file participation in the upcoming national ILGWU conference, signed by Josephine, then secretary for Levine's local; a leaflet for her state representative campaign; Lloyd's draft account of a 1947 street attack aimed at Josephine, carried out by a veterans' council; and Josephine's 1960 script for a show analyzing US civil-rights struggles.

Series II shifts to an examination of UE activities at both GE and Columbia Records. Its newsletters explore the Columbia local's conflict with IUE efforts to oust it from the plant, while other UE-generated media focus on locals and districts outside of Bridgeport.

The third and fourth series cover national-level materials distributed by EU and IUE, and miscellaneous labor documents produced by companies, unions, federal boards, and pro-labor media.

### **Administrative information**

#### **Provenance:**

Josephine and Lloyd Willard donated the materials on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1978.

#### **See also**

Papers of Amy Heller for her thesis "*The Perennial Nightmare*": *anti-communism Inside and Outside the U.E. Local 203, Bridgeport, 1944-1950* (BHC-MSS 0066) Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

#### **Preferred Citation:**

Papers of Josephine and Lloyd Willard (BHC-MSS 0057), Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

### **Names and Subject Tracings**

#### *Personal names*

Willard, Lloyd

Willard, Josephine

#### *Corporate names*

Columbia Records

General Electric

International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union

International Union of Electric Workers

United Electrical Workers of America

*Subject tracings*

Labor union members--United States

Labor unions--Organizing--United States

Women labor union members--United States

**Detailed box and folder listing**

Series I, Josephine Willard papers

Box 1

1. ILGWU Rank and File Committee, undated
2. Josephine Willard campaign leaflet, Communist Party of Bridgeport, 1946
3. Lloyd Willard's letter to newspaper, draft, c. 1947
4. Josephine Willard's script of taped show, 1960

Series II, Local union materials

5. UE Local 203, Electric Blanket Div. grievances, c. 1946
6. UE Local 203, constitution and by-laws, 1947
7. UE Local 203, Electric Blanket Div., petition for Josephine Willard as steward, undated
8. UE Local 203, Electric Blanket Div. minutes, Josephine Willard, chair, undated
9. GE Company, "Rates and Classifications, General Company, Bridgeport Works," 1948
10. UE Local 203, Electric Blanket Div., Welfare Committee Report, 1949
11. Labor agreement, GE-UE, 1945
12. Labor agreements, GE-UE, 1950-1952
13. General Electric Co. list of workers in Electric Blanket Div., undated
14. UE Local 237 constitution and by-laws, undated
15. Labor agreements, Columbia Records Corp. and UE 237, 1947, 1952, 1956, 1958
16. UE Local 237 membership meetings, 1948 - 1948
17. UE Local 237 membership meetings, 1950-1952
18. UE Local 237 non-communist union leadership affidavit, 1950-1951
19. UE Local 237 financial information, 1950-1953
20. UE Local 237 financial secretary's report, 1953 (incomplete)
21. UE Local 237 Columbia Records election committee report, 1950
22. UE Local 237 election leaflets 1950 - 1958
23. UE Local 237 "Union Record," 1952 - 1958 (incomplete)
24. UE Local 237 letter announcing Mr. Michael Tyrawsky, April 8, 1952
25. UE Local 237 leaflet to membership, 1957
26. UE Local 237 statement of changes, 1958
27. Columbia IUE-CIO Organizing Committee leaflets, 1952
28. Union Rights Committee (re: UE Local 237 Columbia), 1958
29. Fair Practice Committee (re: UE Local 237 Columbia), 11/120/1958
30. IUE-AFL-CIO Organizing Committee, leaflets supporting replacement of UE Local 237, 1958
31. UE Local 205 (Ashland, Massachusetts) constitution and by-laws, 1943
32. Labor agreements, Singer MFG. Co., UE Local 227, 1945
33. UE District Council Two, "About the Workman's Compensation Laws of Connecticut," 1949

34. UE District Council Two, "New England UE District Bulletin," vol. 1, no. 2 (March 1954)
35. UE Local 209, "UE Local 209 News," c. 1950s
36. UE District Two, leaflets opposing McCarran-Walter Act, 1952-1953

Series III, National union documents

Box 2

1. UE national membership application, undated
2. UE national pro-UE and anti-IUE leaflets, c. 1950s
3. IUE national flyers, 1950s

Series IV, Miscellaneous union and company materials

4. Workmen's Benefit Fund, New York State, constitution and by-laws, 1944
5. "March of Labor," vol. 5, no. 7 (August 1953)
6. "Report on the CIO Delegation to the Soviet Union," undated
7. General Electric Co. Employee Security System, 1950
8. General Electric Co., "What to Do About Communism in Unions," pamphlet, 1952
9. American Arbitration Association Pamphlet, 1952
10. NLRB Statement Forms, 1957