

HISTORY OF THE HENRY COUNTY FEDERATION OF CLUBS

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Early in the 1890's an urgent need was felt for an organization of clubs in Henry County. In answer to a call of the Woman's Club of New Castle in the autumn of 1897, representatives from the Woman's, Altruistic, and Sorosis Clubs responded and held a meeting to formulate plans for a permanent organization. Martha J. Burr presided at this meeting. Josephine Mellette was chosen Corresponding Secretary and she accepted the task of writing to every club in the county to determine what interest each would lend to the movement.

1897

On November 5, 1897, a convention of delegates met in the Masonic Hall in New Castle and entered into a permanent organization. Delegates representing six clubs attended: Martha J. Burr, President pro-tem of the Woman's Club; Josephine W. Mellette, President of the Altruistic Club, Emma Hedges, President of the Sorosis Club, Blanche Hunt, President of the Matinee Musicale; Cynthia Paullin, President of the Athena Circle of Middletown; and Emma Bell, President of the Tuesday Club of Spiceland. A motion made by Mrs. D. W. Chambers was carried, empowering the presidents of the clubs represented to draft articles of association. At the afternoon session, the Constitution was ratified and signed by the six presidents of the clubs represented, who became Charter members of the Henry County Federation of Clubs. Mrs. Benjamin S. Parker was chosen by unanimous vote as the First President, and she is known as "Mother of the Federation." Mrs. Parker outlined the purposes and aims of the organization and expressed hope that good would come as a result of the effort to cooperate. Miss Lucy C. Wilson of Spiceland was elected Secretary and Mrs. Barnard of Middletown, Treasurer. The First Annual Convention was to be held in the spring.

1898

The First Henry County meeting was held April 15, 1898. Delegates from seven clubs met in New Castle in the Presbyterian Church with Mrs. Benjamin Parker, presiding. It was an enthusiastic meeting with music, addresses, and papers. Grace Julian Clark was on the program.

Quoting from those early minutes, "The meeting adjourned with a feeling of satisfaction over the day's accomplishments and a general hope that the Federation would grow to mean some good to each club and community in the county."

1899

April 27, 1899, the Second Annual Meeting was held with eight clubs represented; Sesame, Tuesday (Spiceland), Altruistic, Athena, Fortnightly, Sorosis, Woman's and Shakespear. Mrs. Rose Pickering, Middletown, presided. At this meeting a constitutional change was voted, making the Secretary-Treasurer office just one instead of two, "for the sake of convenience in business." The main discussion concerned "Advantages and disadvantages of roll call."

The program consisted mainly of papers which had been prepared and read before individual clubs. These were rounded out by musical talent from the club ladies themselves. The treasurer's report showed \$6.20 expenses; balance on hand \$5.79. "Quote: "Deficit covered by contribution.""

New Clubs federated in 1900 were Avon, Knightstown; Chautauqua, Knightstown; American Literature, Knightstown; Saturday, New Castle; Art, Middletown; Wimodana, New Lisbon.

1899-1900

The Third Annual Meeting was held in New Castle, May 1, 1900 with Mrs. A. O. Morris, President, in charge. (The Secretary book uses many adjectives such as: propitiously opened; spirited rendition; spicy talk; spring's lovely season; serene, dewy, warm, green face of the earth, etc). Mrs. Edwin Hall, Tuesday Club, Spiceland, was elected President, Miss Ida Mullen, Secretary-Treasurer.

In a paper, Mrs. Lynn Boyd wrote, "Whatever the line of Club work, woman's true place in the home must not be neglected." There was usually a discussion of these themes after they were read. Eva Gough of Fortnightly Club, pled for study of fiction; - "We cannot overestimate the value of the pure love story."

1900 - 1901

The Fourth annual meeting of the Federation was held May 4th, 1901, in the Presbyterian Church in New Castle. Twelve Clubs now form the Federation. Elected to office were: President, Miss Margaret Cunningham, Sorosis; Mrs. Louis A. Bell, of Knightstown, Secretary-Treasurer.

The morning program was "Open Parliament on the Possible Influence of Clubs on the Community". Mrs. Mary Litzenberger of Middletown led the discussion.

A Constitution change read: "Five members, representing five constituent clubs, shall constitute a quorum of this committee." Newly federated in 1902 were Woman's Club, Knightstown; Art Club, New Castle.

1901 - 1902

The Fifth Annual meeting was held May 3, 1902, at Knightstown. Officers elected were President, Mrs. Mary Stewart, Lewisville. and Miss Olla Davis, Middletown, Secretary - Treasurer. The treasurer's report showed that yearly dues to the Federation were \$1. per club.

The morning program centered around the topic, "The Symposium; Household Economics," under the direction of Mary J. Barnard. The afternoon topic was "How Shall the Country People Be Educated in Art?" The consensus of opinion was that it could be done largely through women's clubs.

1902 - 1903

The Sixth Convention was held May 9, 1903 in New Castle. Officers elected were Mrs. Rosa Mikels, New Castle, President; and Miss Alice Stewart of Spiceland, Secretary - Treasurer. At an executive meeting, the first such recorded, in February prior to the May meeting, it was decided to ask each club for \$1. additional so they might "procure the service of some good lecturer for the May meeting."

Sub-topics were, "Trees, Flowers; Nature's Builders; Birds and Colors." The afternoon feature was an address "Club and the Book," by Mrs. Emma MontMcRea of Purdue University. This first paid speaker to come to a Federation meeting received \$25. Fifteen clubs were represented and sixteen members attended.

1903 - 1904

The Seventh Annual meeting was held May 7, 1904 in New Castle. Officers elected were Mrs. Mary Litzenberger of Middletown, President; and Mrs. L. C. Wink of Knightstown, Secretary - Treasurer. The morning symposium was "What Higher Education has done for Women in Homemaking."

The afternoon speaker was Mrs. M. F. Johnson, President of the Richmond Art Association. She spoke on "Democratic Art," and explained how the interest in art had been stimulated in Richmond. The topic for discussion was "Women in the Wage-earning World." On the panel were Mrs. Allegra Bufkin, Middletown; Miss Marcia Wagoner, Knightstown. At the beginning of each county meeting a Resolutions Committee was appointed and usually the vases of "carnations" or "beautiful flowers" were presented to the presiding officers. Thus far, all New Castle meetings had been held in the Presbyterian Church.

1904 - 1905

The Eighth Annual meeting was held May 13, 1905 in the Friends Church at Spiceland. It seems this is the first convention when "threatening clouds overcast the sky. All other meetings had fallen on sunny days. The meeting was called to order at 9:30, an hour earlier than previously. As before, members responded to roll call with "favorite poetical selections." A Constitution change to the effect that there be a vice-president was voted. Officers elected were Mrs. Carrie Steele, President; Miss Maggie Stuart, Vice-President; Miss Mary Meek, Secretary-Treasurer. Mrs. Anna L. Saylor, (Mrs. Frank) was brought to the platform and presented to the ladies." Interesting talks were given by members on various topics. The afternoon speaker was Miss Annette Edmunds of Richmond, who spoke on "A Day With Scott."

Mrs. Saylor spoke saying that "Grover Cleveland might change his views in regard to women's clubs if he could visit the Henry County Federation."

One of the resolutions passed read: "Resolved that the Henry County Federation of Women's Clubs make some expression of their indebtedness to Robert Dale Owen by contributing an unnamed amount toward the memorial to be placed in the State House in Indianapolis by the women of Indiana. The roll call for 1906-'07 and '08 included New Castle, Altruistic, Sorosis, Woman's and Saturday Clubs; Knightstown, Avon, Shakespeare, American Literary, Woman's Country Wimosis, Wednesday, Fortnightly, Historical; Spiceland, Ingleside, Tuesday; Middletown, Athena Circle and Woman's; Lewisville, Sesame Circle and Hocsier Bard; New Lisbon, Wimodausis.

1905 - 1906

The Ninth Annual meeting was held May 5, 1906, in the Spiceland Methodist Church. Roll call responses were quotations from Indiana authors by officers and delegates. It was voted that the Federation of 1907 should decide the amount to be contributed to the monument in memory of Robert Dale Owen.

Officers elected were Mrs. Agnes Kirk, Spiceland, President; Mrs. Lovina Luellen, New Lisbon, Vice President; Miss Lora E. Butler, Lewisville, Secretary-Treasurer. Mrs. Etta Collins gave what seems to be the first address of welcome; a piano solo was 'rendered' by Miss Myrl Sherburne and a reading was 'well given' by Miss Lora E. Butler. The morning paper on "Jean Val Jean" was 'treated in a masterly manner,' by Mrs. E. S. Conner. The Ladies Aid served the dinner.

A fifteen-minute drill on parliamentary law was 'brisk and interesting'. Mrs. Emma MontMcRae was the afternoon speaker. A change in the Constitution read, "The officers of this Federation shall be a president, a general vice president, and a secondary vice president, consisting of the presidents of the associated clubs, and a secretary - treasurer. The treasurer reported collections \$34.65, and disbursements, \$34.65.

1906 - 1907

The Tenth Convention was held May 4, 1907 in the IOOF Hall in Knightstown with sixteen clubs represented. Responses were on "Women". Officers elected were Mrs. J. C. Wier, President; Mrs. Elmer E. Smith of Knightstown Vice President, and Mrs. Charles Winterbotham, Secretary-Treasurer.

The morning program included a symposium on "The Ideal Club" which brought out many phases of club activities and concluded that women's clubs, as a whole, exert a good and wholesome influence. The entire program was given by the clubs including several musical numbers; an original story by Mrs. Noah Wagoner; some original poetry by Louise Witchersham; a paper on "Poetry of the Bible" prepared by Mrs. John Thornburg, and a discussion of the evolution of the public school.

Mrs. J. C. Weir gave a reading and a Query Box held many questions pertaining to club work, which caused "spirited replies." The collection was \$17. which covered all expenses and a \$5. contribution to the Robert Dale Owen fund.

1907 - 1908

The Eleventh Annual Meeting was held in the Methodist Church at Lewisville, May 16, 1908 with 200 ladies present, representing fifteen clubs. Officers elected were President, Mrs. Elmer Smith, Knightstown; Vice President, Mrs. Tom Pierce, Spiceland; Secretary Treasurer, Mrs. Emory C. White, Knightstown. The morning program on "Object of the Federation," showed this to be intellectual benefits; help gained from cooperation and association with others; a source of refreshment which developed a spirit of good sense and saneness, but always insisted that God, Home and the Church should come first.

Mrs. Emma Barnard of the County Wimosis spoke on the high calling of the farmer. Mrs. Will Bond of the New Castle Woman's Club gave an original story composed of 72 titles of Longfellow's poems, joined together.

Mrs. Virginia S. Patterson of Kokomo gave the afternoon address on "Greatness of Words." Mrs. Patterson has been a club organizer and asked only for her expenses. She organized her last club 14 years ago. Original poems were given by

Mrs. Guy Wagoner of the Avon Club. An Interlude consisting of studies of birds was given by Mary F. Stewart and "Poetry of Today" by Lora E. Butler. The day's program was interspersed with music from several clubs including members from the Hoosier Bard Quartet. Financial report showed a balance of \$5.05.

1908 - 1909

The Twelfth Annual meeting was held in the Presbyterian Church in New Castle May 15, 1909. Eighteen clubs responded to roll call on "Tributes to America."

The Culture Club of New Castle and the Magazine Club of Knightstown were welcomed as new members. Elected to office were: President, Miss Clara Pray, Knightstown; Vice-President, Miss Louise Wickersham, Lewisville; Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. C. D. Morgan, Knightstown.

Mrs. Julia Krider spoke on "growth of American Literature" and Mrs. Olive Cox gave a reading, "Greatness of Little Things." Mrs. R. W. Wagoner gave an interesting paper on "Photography as a Fine Art," and after a social hour with dinner at the Hotel Bundy, Mrs. J. C. Weir spoke on "Effects of Journalism on the Reading Public."

The principal address of the afternoon was presented by Mrs. Rose Pickering, who having visited Cuba, spoke on "The Beauties of Cuba." She spoke from the standpoint of a nature lover and gave her interesting personal impressions. A parliamentary drill was directed by Miss Lenora Ayres of Dunreith and Mrs. Leona Pierson gave an original story. Twenty clubs brought \$20. into the treasury, and made a balance of \$15.85.

1909 - 1910

The Thirteenth Annual Convention was held at the Methodist Church in Middletown, May 7, 1910 with seventeen clubs represented on roll call on "Nature." Officers elected were President, Mrs. G. C. Bartlett, Lewisville; Vice-President, Mrs. A. F. Wisehart, New Lisbon; Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. R. F. Smith, Lewisville.

Mrs. Harriett Gordon gave a reading, "On The Porch", wearing an old Quaker costume with an open Bible in her hands. Her theme was, "I will lift up mine