

History
of the
University Women's Club
of
St. Thomas
1951-1964

(a summary of this included in history from 1951-1976)

History of the University Women's Club of St. Thomas

University Women's Clubs are organized in fifty countries of the world under the International Federation of University Women. In Canada the Canadian Federation of University Women's Clubs, now numbering one hundred, was organized at a meeting in Winnipeg in August 1919. The avowed purpose was two-fold: to facilitate access of women to higher education, and to promote friendship and understanding among university women throughout the world without regard to race, religion or political opinions. These purposes envisaged by our founders are equally valid today.

In 1951 the London University Women's Club, wishing to further extend the work, made enquiries about interested persons in St. Thomas, through an advertisement in the St. Thomas Times Journal. They received a number of answers and it was felt there was sufficient interest to proceed. A meeting called by Mrs. Clark MacDougall met at the Y.W.C.A. June 15, 1951. The London Club, represented by Mrs. Howard Hayman, President, Miss Gertrude Bodkin, Dr. Dorothy Turville, Mrs. I. H. Lewis and Mrs. Hartley K. Thomas explained the aims of University Women's Clubs, and outlined procedure of organization. From this meeting an organizational meeting was arranged and took place on September 27, 1951 at the home of Mrs. Clark MacDougall, when the University Women's Club of St. Thomas was formed.

The Charter members of the club were:

Mrs. Jean Bates	Mrs. Catherine Mathers
Mrs. Betty Clark	Mrs. Mariel McDougall
Miss Gertrude Cole	Miss Marion McIntyre
Miss Doris Coverdale	Miss Doris Paddon
Miss Mary Belle Edmonds	Miss Verna Ponsford
Mrs. Mary Hare	Miss Margaret Price
Dr. Lillian Hunter	Miss Ola Reith
Mrs. Mamie Littlejohn	Mrs. Mary Sanders
Mrs. Eileen MacArthur	Mrs. Flora Sifton
Mrs. Noreen MacDonald	Mrs. Mabel Stillwell

Mrs. Inez MacCubbon

Mrs. Verna Walker

Mrs. Alberta MacKay

Miss Eileen Wallace

Miss Edith MacKay

Dr. Mary Webster

Mrs. Florence Martin

The first president of the club, Mrs. G. B. Stillwell, had for her executive: Vice-president - Miss Verna Ponsford, Secretary - Mrs. Clark MacDougall, Treasurer - Miss Eileen Wallace, Federation Secretary - Dr. Lillian Hunter, Membership Convener - Miss Mary Belle Edmonds, and Social Convener - Miss Doris Paddon. The club meets on the second Thursday of each month at Alma College. Any woman who holds an approved degree from a college or university recognized by the committee on standards of the International Federation of University Women is eligible for membership in the University Women's Club of St. Thomas.

The purpose of the club is:

1. To provide an opportunity for fellowship and social activity among university women graduates in the community.
2. To assist in developing a sound concept of educational and cultural values, and in maintaining a high standard of education in our community.
3. (a) To promote higher education of women by the establishing of local prizes and scholarships.
(b) Through affiliation with the Canadian Federation of University Women, to encourage research by the establishing of graduate scholarships for women.
4. To afford an opportunity for the expression of considered and united opinion on questions of local and national importance.
5. To stimulate interest and participation in political, social and cultural activities.

In accordance with this purpose the St. Thomas University Women's Club contributes to the Federation graduate scholarships for women.

Locally an annual scholarship is awarded to the girl of the St. Thomas Collegiate Institute and Central Elgin Collegiate Institute having highest academic

standing. Book prizes are awarded annually to students excelling in English literature at the Arthur Voaden Secondary School. The funds for these scholarships and prizes are obtained by personal donation, fees, and through a fund established by the sale of magazine subscriptions.

The club for a number of years assumed responsibility for helping a refugee University Woman graduate in Europe. Two such persons have been assisted in this way.

Since our founding the club has been visited by a number of national presidents - In October 1954 - Dr. Martha Law

December 1959 - Mrs. A. S. Horton

October 1962 - Miss Margaret MacLellan,

and also by our National Vice-President Mrs. Laura Sabia in April 1962. Our club was entertained by the Norfolk County University Women's Club at a meeting held in Simcoe May 8, 1958 when National President Dr. Doris Saunders was guest speaker.

Since its beginning the club has studied a number of economic and legal questions which were of particular interest, e.g. - Status of Women, Equal Pay for Equal Work, Laws for Women and Children, Succession Duties and the Estate Act.

In connection with these, letters were sent by the individual members to our Members of Parliament, both Provincial and Federal, urging needed reforms. In each case favorable replies were received.

Letters were also sent to Parliamentary members regarding the preservation of Byrons' Bog, and the development of White's Pond as a park area.

An active interest has been taken in Penal Reform and study was given to "Reform of Women's Prisons, Probation, and Juvenile Courts.

After considerable study on the latter subject it was felt that definite action should be taken. An open meeting at the Y.M.C.A. was arranged with Daniel Coughlin, Director of Probation Services for Ontario on November 2, 1953. This was attended by representatives of various interested clubs, by city officials and members of the judiciary.

Resultant from the impetus given at this meeting the Juvenile Court was subsequently established in County Court.

In the realm of the "Cultural Relations" the club has taken a keen interest, and the studies and talks have included such topics as Music and Medicine, Early Theatre, Study of Plays at Stratford, the Stratford Theatre and Work Shop, Modern Art, Modern Poetry, Book Reviews, Work of Libraries, Textiles, Interior Decoration, Maritime Crafts and Eskimo Art. We have also had a number of excellent travellogues given by members who have travelled abroad. Talks have been heard about historic spots such as Sparta and the Bruce Peninsula.

Topics of Educational Interest have held a major role in the programmes of the club. Included in those studied were the "New Secondary School Program", "Speech Therapy", "Crisis in To-day's Education", Panel Discussions, Consumer Education, the "Work of the Credit Bureau", "Investments" and recently a most interesting report on the World Conference of Organizations of the Teaching Professions held at Rio de Janiero in the summer of 1963. This was given by one of our members Miss Ola Reath, Past president of the Women Teachers' Association of Ontario, who attended the conference.

International affairs have offered many interesting meetings when countries studied have included Iran, Peru, Africa, Alaska, China and Formosa, Indian Affairs, the United Nations and the Colombo Plan.

Believing that there were many interesting historic and cultural spots within easy travelling distance a group was formed within the club, known as the "Jaunters' Club". Trips were made to museums in St. Thomas, Simcoe, and London, to the Wallaceburg glassworks, the salt mine in Windsor, the Tulip Festival in Holland, Michigan, and to the Niagara Peninsula where the group toured the Hydro Development and tunnels, the theatre at Vineland, Fort George and the canals at Welland. Places nearer home which were visited were the Pinecroft Potteries, Ceramic Industry in London, Port Falbot, the Indian Mounds at Southwold, Turkey Point, the Sand Dunes and the Oshwegan Fair at Muncey.

In lighter vein the club has had evenings of social entertainment when the themes have included a revival of Twelfth Night customs and plays, a Japanese party, a Mediaeval party, Dinners, Pot Luck suppers and bridges.

Annual Council Meetings and Regional Conferences are held yearly on the Provincial level. These are usually attended by representatives of our Club. Every third year a National Conference the "Triennial Conference" is held.

This latter is to be held in Winnipeg in August 1964 when the theme will be "Canadian Mosaic -- Changing Patterns in Canadian Culture" with three seminars covering the areas of Education, the Creative Arts and the International Sphere.

Through a Newsletter and the Yearly Reports in the Chronicle the clubs of the Federation are kept informed of club activities locally, nationally and internationally and one finds that many members of the Federation are contributing liberally to the serious investigation of community problems and are using their talents and specialized training to pull their weight in matters of public concern. As our Federation president, Margaret MacLellan, has said -- "As we enter the final year of the Sixteenth Triennium, it is well to pause--to look backward in critical appraisal of our achievements and to look forward with confidence and hope".

Present Officers and Conveners:

President - Mrs. J. N. Douglas

Vice-President - Miss Mary Belle Edmonds

Programme Secretary - Miss Mary Belle Edmonds

Secretary - Miss Norma Sharpe

Treasurer - Mrs. James Brawley

Federation Representative - Miss Margaret Durst

Membership Convener - Mrs. Cecil Lindsay

Social Convener - Miss Joanne Saunders.

Compiled by: Mabel Stillwell

Verna Walker

First Meeting Oct 1951

1st regular meeting

University Women Elect Officers

Mrs. G. B. Stillwell is Named as
President of New Club

The first meeting of the University Women's Club was held on Thursday at the home of Mrs. W. B. Mathers, 138 Wellington street. Mrs. G. Walker took the chair and read the report of the nominating committee. The report was carried and the following people were elected as officers: President, Mrs. G. B. Stillwell; vice-president, Miss Vera Ponsford; secretary, Mrs. C. McDougall; treasurer, Miss Eileen Wallace. Mrs. Stillwell then took the chair as president. Miss Mary Belle Edmonds was put in charge of the membership committee, and Mrs. Mathers became the social convener.

Miss Ponsford introduced the speaker of the evening, Mrs. Donald Ferguson, formerly Miss Edra Sanders, of St. Thomas. Mrs. Ferguson's talk, "Between Us," was a very stimulating one, which exemplified the purpose of the club. She pointed out that in totalitarian countries, where people aren't allowed to think, there were no University Women's Clubs. Everyone in the club has a common denominator, that of a trained mind, and it can be used to promote intellectual freedom. Such a person can contribute inspiration, rather than domination, can give guidance in the community, and encouragement to people in public life. The club can give leadership in understanding.

The meeting was adjourned by Mrs. Stillwell. The next meeting will be at the home of Mrs. G. Stillwell, 16 Pearl street, on Thursday, Nov. 1. The membership convener, Miss Mary Belle Edmonds, 37 Queen street, would be pleased to be contacted by any woman graduate holding a degree.

University Women's Club of St. Thomas, Ontario.

In May 1951 Mrs. Howard Hayman, President of the W.W.C. of London, phoned Mrs. W.B. Masters, offering assistance in forming a group in St. Thomas. At her suggestions, notices were twice inserted in the Times-Journal asking all interested graduates to phone Mrs. Masters, who was Secy. of the U.W.O. Alumni. Five or six responded. An additional press notice called a meeting for the evening of June 10, 1951 to be held in the Board Room of the Y.W.C.A.

Mrs. Howard Hayman, Dr. Dorothy Turville, Mrs. Dorothy Thomas, Mrs. Tho. Lewis and Miss Gubins Bodkin, motored over and met the twelve local women in attendance. They said their club would help us and provide a programme. Questions were asked and answered informally, and it was decided to hold a meeting early in September to discuss the matter further.

All expenses up to this point, were taken care of by the London Club, and we here register our sincere thanks for their personal interest and material help.

Mrs. Clark McDougall, and Mrs. Masters sent out notices, in September for a Pat. Luck Supper meeting, to be held September 27, 1951 at 51 Bodwin St. Eighteen guests came to enjoy the excellent report so ably convened by Mrs. McDougall and Mrs. A nominating committee was chosen and it was decided to organize a club in October, the meeting to be at Mrs. Masters. Not all who attended either or both of the gatherings have become members. I hope they will for 1952-53.

May 9, 1952.

Photography
of letter in
archives

Frank Stillwell.