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HISTORY  
of the  
UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CLUB  
of  
ST. THOMAS  
1951 - 1976



## HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CLUB OF ST. THOMAS

1951 - 1964

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 with out 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 Mac Dougall 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. T. H. Lewis and Mrs. Hartley M. 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. Noreen MacDonald	Dr. Flora Sifton
Mrs. Betty Clark	Mrs. Catherine Mathers	Mrs. Mabel Stillwell
Miss Gertrude Cole	Mrs. Muriel McDougall	Mrs. Inez MacGibbon
Miss Doris Coverdale	Miss Marion McIntyre	Miss Edith MacKay
Miss Mary Belle Edmonds	Miss Doris Paddon	Mrs. Florence Martin
Mrs. Mary Hare	Miss Verna Ponsford	Mrs. Verna Walker
Dr. Lillian Hunter	Miss Margaret Price	Miss Eileen Wallace
Mrs. Mamie Littlejohn	Miss Ola Reith	Dr. Mary Webster
Mrs. Eileen MacArthur	Mrs. Mary Sanders	Miss Edith MacKay

The first president of the club, Mrs. W. 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. Morton  
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 travel ogues given by members who have travelled abroad. Talks have been heard about historic spots such as Sparta and the Bruce Peninsula.

Topics of Educational Interests have held a major role in the programmes of the club. Included in those studied were the "New Secondary School Programme", "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 Reed, 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, 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 Talbot, the Indian Mounds at Southwold, Turkey Point, the Sand Dunes and the Ohswegan 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 letter 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, Margret 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. M. 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

THE ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CLUB 1964-1976

(Credit for this account must go to the Archives Committee who prepared the outline, to the Executive and to Cela Sloan, Beth Porter and Helen Haight who provided background material.)

Since 1964, the number of countries in which National Federations, in the International Federation of University Women, are organized has increased from 50 to 53. The numbers of University Women's Clubs in Canada is now 115. While the wording of the Purpose as outlined in the constitution has been revised, the meaning remains the same. We are still dedicated to improvement in the Status of Women, and the maintenance of high standards in public education. In compiling the following Chronicle of the University Women's Club of St. Thomas, it became evident that this club has adhered to the National Purpose and in addition has been active in community projects.

By 1964 the club membership had increased by only one. During the rest of the sixties there was a gradual growth and in 1971 we had 56 members. Today we number 76, of whom 11 are charter members.

1964-65 President: Mary Belle Edmonds

In this year programmes were largely cultural. There were talks on Books for Children, Back Stage at Stratford, Travels in Russia—a new area for tourists, Local History along the Talbot Road, and Life in Malaya under the Colombo Plan.

A renewed interest in local problems was stimulated by a talk given by Earl Moore on the need for reform in dealing with Juvenile problems.

At the annual meeting, a \$50 scholarship was authorized for the top St. Thomas woman student who was going on to University. By now, the proceeds from Magazine subscriptions plus the annual membership contribution of \$1 per member had reached \$1,000. This was invested in a bond with the stipulation that the yearly interest would be used for the scholarship.

1965-66 President: Barbara Fisher

The club was becoming increasingly aware of the inadequacy of the Public Library. In October two speakers addressed the Club of the topic: "The Library of the Future": namely, Mr. D. E. Gerrard, Chairman of the Public Library Board, and Mr. C. D. Kent, Director of the London Library and Museum. As a result of this programme a motion was passed at the November meeting empowering the Executive to send a resolution to the City Council urging the need for a new library. In April a letter was received from the Council informing us that \$500,000.00 had been voted for the purchase of a site and the building of a new library.

During this year the club's interest in new developments was stimulated by the following programmes: a talk by Mr. Gordon Walls on his year as a member of "Crossroads Africa"; Dr. Hagerman spoke on: "The Concept of the Community College"; Dr. G. H. Ettinger addressed the members on "Nicotine, Drug and Alcoholic Addiction."

1966-1967 President: Jean Foster

The first programme this year took the form of a panel discussion on the need for a Family Service Bureau in St. Thomas. The panel members were, Earl Moore; Probation Officer, Magistrate Barnum, the Rev. Mr. Grob and Dr. Kaufman, all of whom spoke from personal experience in dealing with local problems.

In February further information on this subject was given by Miss Freda Manson of the Ontario Welfare Council and Family Welfare Council. It was determined to prepare a brief on this need and in April it was circulated among the appropriate organizations to promote the setting up of a Family Service Bureau.

Cultural and educational interests were fed by talks on Art by Mrs. Cryderman of London; on music by Sybil Hagerman, who gave a most interesting musical programme on German Composers from 1750-1850; in April Ola Reith, a member of the Hall-Dennis Commission reported on their visit to schools in Russia, Holland and Sweden.

1967-68 President: Cella Sloan

The opening programme this year was an address by Mr. Julian Porter on the Canadian Political Scene. At this meeting Beth Porter reported that our brief had had a good reception and it was hoped that a Family Counselling Service under the Children's Aid would start in January 1968. The Community was to provide 25% of the case worker's salary. The Club voted \$200.00 towards this project.

Other programmes were a book review and book display by Miss Judy Ettinger, the St. Thomas Librarian; a talk on Urban Renewal problems by Mr. Fred Green, and an account of a visit to Russia by Dr. Betty Bandeen.

The April speaker was the C.F.U.W. President, Mrs. Robert Orange. Her topic was "A Special Role in a Specialized Society." The London Club were our guests on this occasion.

In July we held our first book sale and realized \$399.50.

In addition to the usual scholarship the club presented to each of the seven secondary schools in Elgin County a copy of the book "The Clear Spirit." This book was a Centennial project of the C.F.U.W. and contained biographies of 20 representative Canadian women.

#### 1968-69 President: Beth Porter

This was a year of great activity. The Canadian Mental Health Association and the Junior League of Toronto were making a province-wide survey to determine the needs of the Troubled Child. Our club was asked to do the survey of Elgin County. This survey showed clearly the need for Group Homes and Municipal Day Care Centres. In November Lucille Panabaker, Day Nursery Supervisor, Ontario Department of Social and Family Services spoke to the club. Subsequently a Community Involvement Group under the joint chairmanship of Cela Sloan and Beth Porter plus interested members of the Community, having asked permission from the City Council, did the necessary Survey. After a thorough investigation of existing Municipal Day Care Centres and possible sites within the city, a brief had to be given to Council for study a week before the actual presentation. In March 1970, full of hope and conscious of a job well done, we appeared before council at the appointed time. Here to our astonishment we were confronted by an aroused Mrs. Ostrander, operator of a private Day Nursery School, who was allowed to contravene the rules by reading her brief without previously having sent it to Council. Not only was it evident that she had been shown our brief, but also that no member of council had read it! We left the meeting sadder but wiser. We had been politically naive in believing that the facts would speak for themselves. Not quite all was lost however. Since then,—the town has subsidized some children enabling them to attend private Day Nursery Schools.

In December, The Arts and Library Interest Group under the Chairmanship of Lois Farley with Sybil Hagerman as treasurer and Bert McKay as corresponding secretary was formed. Their purpose was to spearhead an Art Gallery Foundation, in St. Thomas and Elgin County. They added interested members of the community to their committee and planned a "fun-filled swinging auction", to quote the chairman, which took place on April 29th, in the Memorial Arena. Over 1,000 persons attended, and over 300 individual artists contributed original works. The proceeds exceeded all expectations. The group purchased the Clarke McDougall documentary painting of Talbot St. for \$425.00 as the nucleus of a permanent collection for a future Art Gallery. Later, when the Art Gallery Foundation was established they gave a cheque for \$3800.00 to Mr. B.T. Stephenson, stipulating that \$1000.00 of this be used to purchase, in the name of the University Women's Club, the first Foundation membership. The balance was to be invested and the interest used to purchase the works of local artists.

The work of the Royal Commission on the status of women was creating great interest. In January, a panel discussion on this topic took place. The chairman was Mr. David Holmes, and the members were Dr. R. O. Farley, Mr. W. K. A. McKay, Mrs. Susan Wells and Miss. Ola Reith. The results were lamentable. The chairman proved to be a male chauvinist, who insisted that since his dear mother had felt no need to assert her status, women had nothing to complain about. Mrs. Wells and Miss. Reith were too polite to point out the fallacy of his pejorative assumptions.

The club's continued interest in local and current developments was indicated by inviting Mr. W. W. Allan, Director of Education for Elgin County to explain the organization and work of the new Elgin County Board. In April, Mr. Robert Knighton, Secretary of Canada Trust Company, spoke on changes in tax suscession Duty Laws as they affect women.

At the annual meeting in May, our scholarship policy was revised. It was decided to award a \$25 scholarship to the girl going on to university with the highest marks in English in grade XIII in each of the Seven Secondary schools in Elgin County, including Alma College and St. Joseph's High School. A spring book sale netted the sum of \$651.02.

1969-70 President: Dorothy Frost

The need for a new library was becoming more and more evident. In October, Mr. C. D. Kent, Director of the London Library spoke on "Cultural Community Centres" pointing out that St. Thomas could become one of four such centres for the Lake Erie Region. In November, we had a return visit from Mr. Robert Knighton who explained changes in estate taxation.

In February, we were guests of the London Club to hear Mme. Chaput-Rolland speak on "The Changing Scene in Quebec." In March, Elsi McKillop reported that seven club members were doing volunteer conselling in Southwold with troubled children on a one to one basis.

Mrs. R. E. Pemberton, Mrs. John Askew and Mrs. J. F. McMillan spoke on Consumers Association Laws, Regulations, Guarantees, etc.

In April, the Rev. Mr. Harold Kay, for whose appointment we could take credit, spoke on his work as Family Counsellor and Youth Counselling. We had funded this service from October to December 1968. A spring book sale at the Y.M.C.A. made \$352.16. The proceeds were allotted to the Community Involvement Group.

1970-71 President: Mary Ann Neely

In October, we had a joint meeting with the Women's Committee of the Art Gallery. The speaker was Nancy Poole, a director of the London Art Gallery and Museum and owner of their own Art Studio.

The following month there was a panel discussion on "Women's Liberation Groups." The panellists were Jane Bigelow, at that time from the London Board of trade, Mary Duncan and Pat Dewdney.

At a party in Decmeber, at Helen Haight's we entertained (?) our Husbands and male friends with the skit "The Year 2000 A. D. "

In January, we were again guests of the London Club to hear Jean Palandy talk about the restoration of Louisburg.

The following month we had a panel discussion on abortion. The panellists were Rev. Father P.G. Costello, Dr. Donald Lawrence, gynecologist and obstetrician, and Mr. David Little, lawyer. In March, Mr. George Thorman and Mr. Erwin Chrisjohn spoke on the role and problems of Indians in this community.

In April, nothing daunted by the fiasco of our panel on the "Status of Women," we held a review of the Commission's recently published report.

At the annual meeting we authorized the purchase of a \$40 plate to be presented to Mrs. J. F. Fatcher, as Woman of the Year in connection with the Talbot Shivaree.

1971-72 President: Sharon Little

At this time the following interest groups were recognized, Viz.—

"Library and Creative Arts"	"Status of Women"
"Gourmet Cooking"	"Bridge"
"Municipal Affairs"	"Pollution"
"Community Involvement"	

In November, we had a visit from Janet Steele—appointee of the Liberal Government—who was travelling across Canada to discover the attitude of Women to the "Status of Women" report.

The first of our Wine and Cheese Parties was held in lieu of a December meeting. These have since become a regular feature.

The other programmes this year dealt with topics of general interest and importance—hearing the candidates for political office, Recycling and Pollution, Food and Food Fallacies and Fads.

In April, Mrs. G. Black, C.F.U.W. President of Sackville, N.B. visited the club.

A Spring Book Sale brought in \$338.60.

1972-73 President: Mary Ann Marshall

The club had now reached its majority, and tribute was paid to the many founders who were still members.

In November we had a panel on Municipal Government. The participants were Elsie McKillop, Mary Ann Marshall, Sybil Hagerman, Sharon Little and our two candidates for Municipal Office, Lois Farley and Helen LeFrank. Chairman: Nancy Douglas.

Since a number of our members were still doing volunteer work with troubled children, in January we had a talk by Mr. Keith Steven on the Philosophy of Special Education and the progress being made in Elgin Country.

In February, we sponsored a public meeting to hear Mr. Albert Bowron, head of Information Media and Library Planners of Toronto.

At other meetings this year we had talks by Mr. Bill Haight and Mrs. Frances McHale.

1973-74 President: Jean Foster

The topics during the autumn covered a variety of cultural subjects for example: "Elgin County Architecture", "Development of St. Thomas", "Handwriting Analysis" and Czecho-Slovakian Sculpture.

In the New Year we were treated to fascinating glimpses of the Antipodes, Fiji and East Africa by Dorothy and Jack Frost; a most interesting talk by Mr. Geo. Bullied on his school for "drop-out" boys at Twin Valley, Rodney, and a talk on films by Flip Cranston.

In April we held an open meeting to hear Robin Jeffery, Mayor of Belleville on "The Role of Women Today."

1974-75 President: Jean Vedova

The most noteworthy meeting this Fall took the form of a panel discussion under the Chairmanship of Mary Ann Marshall on "Women in Politics". The panellists were three of our members, all of whom spoke from practical experience, Marietta Roberts, Helen LeFrank, and Lois Farley.

In January, Marietta Roberts showed a film on "Women and the Law" and answered questions from members.

The February meeting was held in the new library. We were delighted to be shown the results of our efforts by Susan Wells and Betty Main.

In March, William Stewart gave an illustrated talk on "Wild Plants of South-western Ontario".

The April speaker was Paul Eck, executive director of Theatre London, who spoke on "Theatre in Canada".

At the annual meeting arrangements were made for a Country Day Auction to be held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. S. McKay. This was organized by the Library and Creative Arts Group under the chairmanship of Sharon Little, to raise funds towards the purchase of the Mother and Child statue for the library. It was a highly successful venture, and the sum of \$4,519.20 was turned over to the Library Mother and Child statue Committee.

1975-76 President: Pat Lepischak

On September 11th, 1975, we had to inform the Board of Education that our resources no longer enabled us to continue the programme started in October 1969, with the troubled child. During the period 1969-1975, approximately two hundred children were assisted by seventy-five volunteers.

The Autumn meetings were of particular interest. In October, Shirley Taylor of C.F.P.L. T.V. London, spoke on consumerism. In November, Judith McEriel, T. Eaton Co. Archivist traced history through the Catalogue.

A panel, in January, discussed the question, "Are Teenagers Apathetic?" The panel members were Dr. B. Goldberg of London, the Rev. Harold Kay of Huron College, David Donahue, Guidance Counsellor, and the student council Presidents from Parkside and Central Elgin Collegiates. The chairman was Lois Farley.

In February, the members formed into small groups to discuss the topic, "Does the individual still count?"

Miss Phyliss Haslam, Executive Director of the Elizabeth Fry Society gave a thought-provoking and challenging address on the subject "Who is the Offender?"

The April program was a talk by Jack Burghardt, newscaster of C.F.P.L. T.V. on the need for greater understanding in communicating.

To mark the 25th Anniversary of the club's founding, the scholarships were raised from \$25 to \$50.

The big project for the year was the Seminar "Concern '76". This was sponsored jointly by the Y.W.C.A., and the St. Thomas Women's Centre and the University Women's club. The organizing was done by our club under the chairmanship of Sybil Hagerman. An excellent roster of resource people volunteered their services. The Seminar was divided into six groups namely: "Stress in the Family", "Adolescent Problems", "Consumer Pitfalls", "Communications with Schools", "Housing for Single Parents", and "Entertain the Work World". There were two sessions—1:00 - 2:30—Coffee Break—3:00 - 4:30. This allowed everyone to attend two groups. Concern '76 was highly successful. Approximately 150 people—there were a few men—listened with interest to the resource panellists and asked pertinent questions. In fact, the discussions usually had to be terminated because they had run overtime. Great credit goes to Sybil Hagerman and the Community Involvement Committee for their excellent organization. Thanks are also due to the Y.W.C.A. and the St. Thomas Women's Centre for their cooperation.

On May 13th, 1976, the 25th Annual Meeting took the form of a dinner at the St. Thomas Golf and Country Club. Ruth M. Bell of Ottawa, C.F.U.W. President was the guest speaker. Her topic was "Women in the Economy". Among the invited guests were members of the London Club who had organized the St. Thomas club in 1951.

In addition to the community projects already mentioned, the club has made regular contributions to the Y.W.C.A. swimming programme and to the subsidized "after-four" programme for "latch-key" children. Quite apart from the money raised for scholarships, the club, since 1964 has contributed between \$10,000 and \$11,000 to community projects. Our motto might well be non nobis solum.

Compiled by  
Agnes W. Douglas