

The Dallas Woman's Forum
First One-hundred Years

On May 6, 2006, The Dallas Woman's Forum held a party celebrating 100 years of the club and the club house. This event was video-taped by Royal Nichols. A collection of available year books were on display. After looking through many of these books, I decided that it would be interesting to take notes and the following is the result of those notes from the yearbooks, two pamphlets and a cookbook found in the President's Office.

The Charter Members of the Dallas Woman's Club:

Mrs. E. P. Turner
Mrs. W. A. Callaway
Mrs. A. B. Craighead
Mrs. F. D. Cosby
Mrs. E. B. Reppert
Mrs. Kate M. Bryan
Mrs. J. F. Edwards
Mrs. J. A. Hunter

1906-1907

- March 20, 22 women held the first committee meeting which with Mrs. W. A. Callaway acting as chairman Elections were held at this meeting and Mrs. E. P. Turner was elected our first President. She was the State President of Texas Federation and for a number of years felt that Dallas, with a population of 10,000 people should have a departmental club. The name of Dallas Woman's Forum was selected. At this meeting 9 departments were established: Art, Bible and Sacred History, Congress of Mothers, Current Events, Household Economics and Pure Food, Music, Civics and Philanthropy, Philosophy and Science, and Literature. Mrs. Turner envisioned that Dallas have a club similar to the Sorosis of New York city, The Woman's Club of Chicago, and the Kansas City Athenaesum.
- One story has it that when this first meeting occurred, the husbands wanted to know what the women were up to and sent maids to listen in and report on their activities.
 - That summer, San Francisco was destroyed by an earthquake and the Dallas Woman's Forum began their first philanthropic work.
 - During their first year, on August 28, a group of ladies appeared before the City Council requesting appointment of a city chemist in relation to pure food law, etc. The grocers fought this, but the Forum won out.
 - The membership was **300** the first year.
 - The Forum held the first flower show in Dallas in the basement of the Southland Hotel and the total gross receipts were \$2,050.
 - The Forum supported building the YWCA.
- **1907-1908**

- The Forum sponsored the 2nd Flower Show at the State Fair.

1909-1910

- The Forum accepted an offer to meet at the Methodist Publishing House, South, Building rooms on 4th floor.
 - 1 called and 10 regular meetings were held.
 - 84 members paid dues.
- The Forum sponsored the 3rd annual Flower Show at Fair Park.
- Mother's Congress withdrew to join a similar club Council of Mothers which met the same goals. It was the forerunner of PTA.
- In May the Forum presented a Water Carnival at Lake Cliff. Mrs. E. P. Turner got the idea for the 2 evening event. The first night the lighting was bad, but the second night was a great success. 150 people attended.
 - 37 articles were in the daily newspapers concerning Forum activities.
 - The Forum planted 2 shrubs on each School yard in Dallas.
 - The Forum endorsed a petition asking for a censorship board governing moving picture shows.
 - The Forum drew up a petition asking stores to close Saturday afternoons during July and August.
 - Two receptions were held at Mrs. E.P. Turner's Oak Cliff home. One was a Christmas theme and the other was a St. Patrick's Day theme.

1911-1912

- 161 members paid dues.
- A class in French was offered. A class in Spanish had to be cancelled due to illness in the leader's family.
- The Forum was seeking interest in establishing a Science Center at Fair Park.
- The Forum sent circulars for establishing Kindergarten to legislators.
- The forum supported Juvenile Court.
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1913-1914

- They sent 4,500 magazines to the Court House.
- They held teas to raise money to purchase a meeting place.

1914-1915

- 200 members are paid up.
- The US was at war. The President's message in the yearbook, spoke about the terrible number of deaths this war was causing throughout the world and how the war should be addressed by women.
 - The Forum sent 2 delegates to Chicago to attend the General Federation of Woman's Clubs.
 - The Forum worked to inspect, grocery stores, dairies, bakeries etc to encourage better health standards and to prevent child labor.
 - The Current Events Group engaged in quizzes at their meetings.

- The Music Dept studied Operas, Orchestras and Composers.
- The Literature Dept studied Shakespeare and Poets.
- The Forum erected 2 cottages on their Haskell property for investment.
- The Endowment fund began at the death of Mrs. Calloway.

1915-1916

- Four members entered their paintings in an Art show of 65 entries.
- Spanish and Physical Culture were added to the Study groups.
- The by-laws were changed to allow men to join the Forum.

1917-1918

- The Forum helped put through bills for Mother's Pensions and Kindergarten.
 - The Home Economics Dept put on a practical demonstration at an open meeting at the Adolphus Hotel Jan 12.
 - The Home Economics Dept gave prizes to State Fair participants in canning contests.

1918-1919

- The Forum entered into many War Efforts: Selling Liberty Bonds, Learning about War Gardens, Working for the Red Cross efforts.
- The Forum changed the name of the Humane Education Committee to Girls' Welfare Committee and worked with Judges concerning the Girls' Industrial School in Gainesville.
- The Dallas Woman's Forum was the largest woman's club in the Southwest. By 1920 the membership had reached **500** and the first clubhouse was purchased at 806 South Akard in Dallas. The house was paid for in full by 1925.
- The lots on Haskell were traded for lots on Live Oak.

1920-1921

- 178 new members making the club 403.
- The Forum met twice a month.

1922-1923

- The office of Parliamentarian was added, making the board 22 members.

1924-1925

- **225** new members made the Dallas Woman's Forum the largest departmental club in the southwest with over **700** members.
- Dues went up from \$5 to \$7.

1927-1928

- The dues were raised to \$10, \$5 of this was the initiation fee.

1931-1932

- The Dallas Woman's Forum moved into their new club house, the Alexander Mansion, which they purchased for \$60,000.
- A Junior Forum was formed. It was composed of three groups, the Senior Forum, Junior-Senior Forum and Junior Forum. The Junior Department was composed of three departments: Fine Arts, Home and Garden and Travel. The departmental meetings were held in their homes and the regular meetings of all three departments were held on the 4th Monday at the Clubhouse.
- The building was rented 200 times in addition to the regular meetings.
- Tea was served to 1000 during an afternoon and evening tea.
- 2 Antique Silver Tea and Coffee services were gifts of the Library Committee. Money for these was raised by 2 style shows, a musical and 2 Bridge Parties. (These silver services are stored in the tall buffet in the dining room and are used regularly in 2006. They were used at our 100th Birthday party)
- 176 new members.
- 250 books were in the Forum Library.
- The Literature Dept published a cookbook. (We have just received a copy from Elizabeth Baker. We have one copy which is in very poor condition also.)
- The Resident Hostess had 103 parties which included 2,069 persons as well as luncheons every 2nd Wednesday.

1934-1935

- There were 9 Departments and 2 classes.

1935-1936

- Bridge Teas were held to bring in money for the Building Fund.
- A grounds committee was created.

1936-1937

- The New Resident Hostess had 48 private parties and 80 Forum affairs.

1939-1940

- There was a new Hostess who served 7,733 persons.
- 2 silver goblets and some other silver items were donated to the Forum.
- Picnic furniture for both the inside and outdoors were painted.
- A floor lamp for the Writing Room was donated.
- The exterior and much of the inside was painted.
- The note on the Alexander Mansion, was paid in full.

1941-1942

- 7 departments: Fine Arts, Gardening, Literature, Modern Language, Psychology, Physical Education, and Young Woman's Study.

1942-1943

- A desk lamp for the Auditorium was presented.

- Syracuse china and International-Mayfair pattern silverware were purchased.
- The Forum became active supporters of the Red Cross due to the WW

II.

- New Departments: World Affairs, Allied Arts and Friday Morning.

1943-1944

- Members sewed clothes for the Red Cross, collected magazines for the Army and contributed in many ways to the WWII effort.

1946-1947

- **525** members in 11 Departments.

1947-1948

- The Grounds Committee planted St. Augustine sod in the yard.

1950-1951

- The Forum changed to serving Brunches instead of seated luncheons to accommodate more. They served 5,076.
- 67 new members and 6 reinstatements.
- 12 departments.

1952-1953

- 24 new members.

1953-1954

- The Writing Room was redecorated and most of the furniture in that room was reupholstered.
- Several rooms were repapered and painted in the house.
- 31 new members and 14 reinstated.
- A massive 19th century Czechoslovakian Crystal Chandelier was placed on the Dining Room Ceiling. The former fixture was moved to the Butler's Pantry.

1954-1955

- The Forum was declared TAX FREE status. The President stressed that we must continue to do community charitable and beneficent activities to insure we keep this status.

1955-1956

- 50th Anniversary was celebrated with a large party.
- **Honorary Charter Members** were listed in the yearbook as follows:

Mrs. J.A. Dunlap
 Margaret Wright Edwards
 Mrs. W. P. Jackson

Mrs. M. I. La Moreau
Mrs. A. P. McCormick
Mrs. Helen M Moore
Mrs. E. W. Morten
Mrs. C. M. Rosser
Mrs. W. A. Shaw
Mrs. J. I. Toney
Mrs. P.P. Tucker
Mrs. E. P. Turner
Mrs. J. B. Wilson

1956-1957

- The Forum Property appraised @ \$125,000 and the furnishings @ \$24,000.

1957-1958

- A Pair of Pheasants and a pair of Knights on Horseback (Italian Art pieces) were purchased. The Pheasants are on the mantle in the Library and the Knights are in the President's Office.
- The first mention of Willie Wilson, the Forum Maid was made this year. She worked in the Forum until her death.
- A freezer and water cooler were purchased.

1958-1959

- The 28 dining room chairs and the 2 arm chairs were reupholstered.
- Two Silver Candelabras were presented by the Home and Garden Dept. (These are still in use on the Dining Room Table and for all events in 2006 including our 100th birthday party.
- 192 attended the Reassembly Tea.
- The Forum members contributed \$16,000 to charities.
- A new Boiler was purchased for \$1,455.
- A new roof was put on for \$1,871.
- There were 11 departments.

1959-1960

- The Dallas Woman's Forum won the Federation's 1st award for overall. Benevolent contributions of over \$26,000 and 6,000 hours.

1960-1961

- An engraved coffee urn in honor of the 1960-1962 President, Mrs. Stathakos Condos, was presented to the Forum (This is used at all Forum functions and the 100th party in 2006).

1961-1962

- 2 Matching table pedestals were purchased, sanded and painted white with gold trim. Marble from our bathroom walls, was cut and fitted on top of these tables. The 8 chairs were painted to match and upholstered.

1962-1963

- Glass table pads were put on the Dining Room Table.
- A new washing machine, dryer and an electric ironer were purchased.
- Wrought iron furniture and a planter were placed on the porch of the back entry.

1964-1965

- The Forum again won an award from the Federation of Woman's Clubs for clubs of over 101 members for their Benevolent Work.
- The 1880 square piano was a gift in 1965.

1965-1966

- 24 new members.
- A Pre-Owned Stove and refrigerator were purchased. This is the stove we still have.
- The Forum underwent a restoration.
- The Forum held a big party to celebrate the designation of Texas Historical building and presentation of the Texas Historical Marker on our front porch.
- The Forum sponsored a showing of The Bible at the Tower Theater. The proceeds of \$1,507 were designated for the Benevolence fund.
- The Benevolent chairman reported members donated 8,000 hours and \$1,289.

1967-1968

- Two lovely lamps, one Czechoslovakian crystal with Bristol glass which is hand painted and set with 18 karat gold base; the other is a genuine Rembrandt original design #LS3288 of German cut crystal, were given to the Forum. (They are in the writing room.)

1968-1969

- 9 departments: Arts and Gardens, Contemporary, Current Affairs, Friday Home and Garden, Literature, Modern Homemakers, Travel, Junior Auxiliary and Tuesday Study.
- Created the Auxiliary for the Wadley Institutes of Molecular Medicine.

1970-1972

- The Silver Punch Bowl was presented honoring Past President Mrs. O.M. Eaves. (It is used at all Forum functions and was used at the 100th Birthday Party.)

1974-1975

- The members reupholstered the twenty-five side chairs and two host chairs with needlepoint seats made by the members.

1975-1976

Lunches were \$2.50, teas \$1.25 and evening dinners were \$3.00 and a little more if beef was served.

Weddings for Members of the Forum were \$75.

Smoking was not allowed during programs.

The Forum was open M-F 9:30-4:30.

\$250 is annually put into the Rug fund for the rugs that were purchased in 1969.

1981-1982

- The Dallas Woman's Forum sold the Dallas Woman's Cook Book II. (There are still a few copies available for \$10).
- The Forum had only 3 Departments. Contemporary, Friday Study and Literature.

1997-1998

- The Office of 1st Vice President was expanded to be the Event Coordinator. Frankie Milner accepted this position which was created to earn money by showing and renting the building for weddings and other events.
- The Saturday Group was formed with Victoria Russo was their first chairman.

2000-2001

- There are 119 paid members in the Forum.
- The Saturday Group had a successful money making project in the spring at the Forum, which has become an annual event. They have a luncheon, style show and a silent auction. It has proved to be a lovely event and they split the proceeds between the Dallas Woman's Forum and another charity. They have donated funds to Alley's House the last several years, which is a service to teen aged unwed mothers who choose to keep their babies. They have also given funds to Equus for Children with disabilities. It is a very large undertaking and is appreciated by the members of the Dallas Woman's Forum.
- The dining room ceiling fell and the antique Czechoslovakian Crystal Chandelier had to be replaced with a new one.

2001-2002

- A new fence was installed with a gate which reads Dallas Woman's Forum overhead. It was paid for in part by the fence fund donations and the Hillcrest Foundation grant.

- **2002-2004**

- The three Departments combined into the General Forum and the Saturday Dept is the only department.

- **2004-2006**

- The Forum finished spending Grant Money, \$175,000, from Hillcrest Foundation. The projects completed were replacing wooden window frames, paint outside, in the kitchen, the atrium area off of the dining room and the powder room. New drapes had been completed with Kennedy funds for the Writing Room. The last couple of years the drapes had been replaced in the Library and French Room.

- The money to reupholster the loveseat in the Writing room was donated in memory of Pat Deere by her husband, Don Deere.

- Carolyn Carson contributed the funds to paint the downstairs halls and had a new carpet installed in the carriage entrance hallway, located additional pieces of our silverware pattern to complete 50 places, had our silver punch bowl re-silvered and had a mirror installed over the sink in the Butler's Pantry.

- A new commercial dishwasher was purchased.

- Linda Turner was appointed to replace the Event Coordinator. The

office of 4th Vice President was created to be the Event Coordinator and she was elected to fill that office for the year 2006-2007.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD

The members of the Dallas Woman's Forum held an Open House Reception May 6th, 2006 to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Dallas Woman's Forum and the 100th birthday of the Alexander Mansion. 75 people attended.

The Dallas Woman's forum was the first departmental woman's club to be established in Dallas, in 1906. The forum has always been an active, community-related organization, and some of its many accomplishments are:

- Presented the first Pure Food Law to the Dallas City Council.
- Held the first city-wise flower show.
- Began the first Parliamentary Law Class.
- Organized a group to suppress obscene literature and movies.
- The Congress of Mothers Department established the Council of

Mothers, the forerunner of PTA.

- Established a restroom and lounge in the downtown area for farm women.

- During WWI and II sold bonds, rolled bandages, supported the USO, Red Cross and other war causes.

- Supported the Hutchins Home for the Aged and Main by furnishing cosmetic and health needs, draperies and bedspreads for patients' rooms, gave birthday parties for patients, etc.

- Two members served on Committee to bring Southwestern Medical School to Dallas.

- Since 1969 served as Auxiliary for the Wadley Institutes of Molecular Medicine.

- Before 1969 served in Canteen of Wadley Blood Bank and gave several machines to the Blood Bank.
- Made many loans of money for young women to gain a higher education.
- Through the Arts and Music Departments provided money for promising young students for art and music lessons.

Some notes about the ALEXANDER MANSION

- Mr. Charles H Alexander built the Alexander Mansion in 1906 for \$125,000. Mr Alexander was the president of Dallas Consolidated Electric Street Railway when trolley cars replaced mule drawn cars, in the late 1890's.
- The second owner was A. L. Clarks.
- The third owner was Wiley Blair, (1917-1930) President of a bank and a Furral Oil Administrator who sold it to the Dallas Woman's forum in 1930. (The pictures in the carriage entry hall depict the Blair family period.)
- The 3 acre tract of land was originally granted by the republic of Texas to John Grigsby and also reportedly was owned by John and Walter Caruth and J. B. Wilson. It is still in tact and was reported in the Dallas Times Herald (Feb 3, 1963) as the largest acreage of land with one owner in that part of Dallas.
- Two story high authentic Greek Ionic Italian marble columns which support the portal roof cost \$4,000.
- The columns were hauled by teams of horses from the railroad and were imported from Italy. They came by boat to Jefferson TX and by train to Dallas.
- In 1972 the protective Iron was put in to protect the front entrance.
- Carpet covers the intricate multi-colored Italian inlaid marble floor in the Carriage Entrance hallway, similar to the floor on the front porch.
- The closets are all original and were the way the city taxed the building. Each door was counted as a closet.
- The hardware is gold plated.
- 1970 the stained glass window in the powder room was donated.
- The only original pieces of furniture are the two matching settees and the chair at the desk in the reception area as well as the 2 marble columns by the front door. We also received a music cupboard, which belonged to Mrs. Alexander, in recent years, which is in the Bride's room now.
- The ceilings in the French Room and the Library were originally fresco of Italian influence. You can see this in the pictures taken in the 1920's in the Blair family pictures. Two Italian artists were brought to do the painting.
- The dining room has six foot mahogany paneling all around the room. The 1920's pictures show the original light fixture in the dining room. It was moved to the ceiling of the Butler's Pantry when a massive Czechoslovakian crystal chandelier was installed in 1967-68. That crystal chandelier was damaged when the ceiling fell in.

It had to be replaced in the 2000's.

- The light fixtures on the Library, French Room, the two reception rooms and the dining room walls and ceilings are all original.

- Of particular interest is all of the beveled glass windows both upstairs and downstairs and the bookcases and cupboard doors with the use of Mother of Pearl as seen in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy, throughout the house.

- The rugs on the lower floors are Karastan Orientals in the Kirman and Sarouk patterns

- The Grape Arbor window on the landing of the staircase is thought to be Tiffany although there is no proof of that.

- In 1930, several bedrooms were remodeled into the large auditorium for the Forum meetings.

- The Third floor, which was originally a ballroom, was made into a meeting room for the Junior Forum.

- The unusual shower which was the first shower in Dallas and the man sized bathtub are on the second floor master wing of the mansion.

- The icebox in the Butler's Pantry was capable of being filled from outside with hundreds of pounds of ice.

- The basement has many lockable areas where food, wine and so forth could be stored for the lavish lifestyle enjoyed by the owners in 1906-1930.

- There are 7 fireplaces in the mansion, each entirely different.

- The house had its own generator so the house always had it's own power.

- Just a few years ago, a plumber discovered that we have a secret room. It is in the basement, below the porch just off of the kitchen. The only way to get into it is to climb a ladder up to a window-like opening and climb down a ladder on the other side. In the middle of the room is an empty chest.

- The room which we call the President's room or office was the Master Bedroom.

- There was an inter-communications system to the kitchen.

- There is a dumb-waiter in the hall which allowed food and drink to be sent to the upstairs.

- There was a carriage house and servant quarters behind the house. At one time there was talk of building a Jr. club house at that location. This never was done.

**Additional notes on
Mrs. E. P. (ADELLA KELSEY) TURNER**

**Dallas Woman's 1st President
1865-1938**

- Born in Marshall Texas, Jan 13, 1856- To William and Sarah Kelsey.

- Died June 6, 1938.
- Parents died when she was 4, she lived with Gustave Frank family in Jefferson.
- Married Edward P. Turner of Fort Worth June 5, 1879 He was manager of three ticket offices of Texas and Pacific Railway.
- Had 4 sons, only 2 grew to adulthood.
- ☒☒ President of Oak Cliff Improvement Association 1903.
- President of City Federation of Women's Clubs 1903-04
- President of Texas Federation of Women's clubs 1904-06.
- President of Dallas Woman's Forum 1906-08.
- 1908 became one of the first women to serve on the school board in Dallas County. She was appointed to this position. Lenora Kirk Hall was the first elected woman to the school board. (The Forum supported this candidate.)
- 1910 became President again of Dallas Woman's Forum when her term on the school board expired.
- Between 1910-1919 she led the Forum into the reform of sanitary conditions and welfare work for delinquent and underprivileged children.
- 1919 she served another 2 year term as President of Dallas Federation of Women's clubs.
- 1921 Her interest in the legal rights of women led to the formation of the Women's Good Citizenship Association, which later became the Dallas League of Women Voters.

Note from Georgia Nichols

This paper was prepared by Georgia Nichols, a past president (2002-2005).

It is a compilation of notes taken from the President's messages and the Secretary's end of year reports which were in the yearbook collection through 1906 to the present time, an 1981 Cook Book and from two documents, the Program of the dedication of the Texas Historic Landmark, 1968 and a pamphlet created in 1984-85 by Mrs. Alfred Cook, Mrs. J. A. Holman and Mrs. Edwin L Sharpe, all past presidents. There are only 3 of the 100 yearbooks missing in the collection I have put together and placed in the Forum Office. It is my hope that this will give the young members a little more understanding of the Dallas Woman's Forum.

In the days this club was formed, very few girls were educated past upper grade school. This club provided a way for woman to explore the world through education in an acceptable manner for those days. In one yearbook, it was noted the club rooms were open daily, with a maid, so that the members could seek quiet to write notes, read, have tea and socialize with other women in a serene atmosphere.

My mother, Thelma Johnson Hamilton, was president more than once and active in the Geneva Woman's Club, Geneva, Nebraska, most of her married life. Her mother, Grace Purdum Johnson, was a member of the No Lo Woman's Club in North Loup, Nebraska, which

organized June 10, 1903. These organizations are part of the Federation of Woman's Clubs. Both of these clubs are still in existence. I have the printed yearbooks of 1906, 1907, 1927, 1928 and some hand written ones from around the 20's which have no year written on them, from my grandmother's club. In these books I learned that my grandmother and a great aunt were officers and served as lesson leaders . I have one of the papers my grandmother presented to her club.

A quote in a yearbook 1907 book is the way I will close this presentation:
"When you educate a man, you educate an individual; when you educate a woman, you educate a whole family."

Georgia Nichols, (Mrs. Royal H. Nichols) 2006-2007