

The Woman's Club | Nutley Yesterday · Today - 1961

THE WOMAN'S CLUB OF NUTLEY

ANN A. TROY

"WANTED - a new owner! One who will keep me in good repair and who will preserve me as a pre-Revolutionary landmark for the Town of Nutley."

Such might have been the appeal of the old house on 226 Chestnut Street in the early days of the year 1912.

Long in the possession of the Vreeland family the house in early 1900 had been occupied by tenants who did not treat the historic structure too kindly.

Answering the appeal was a group of civic minded women who in 1912 were organizing a new club - "The Woman's Club of Nutley." They stated as one of the objects of the Club "to preserve the Vreeland house as a historical landmark."

The formal opening of the Woman's Club took place on October 3, 1912. The house blessing was given by Reverend W. L. Hoagland; greetings by Mrs. Arthur B. Proal; a historical sketch by Mrs. Gilbert Livingston; history of the club house by Mrs. Laura Vreeland Tuers; the club ethics by Mrs. Jeanne de la M. Lozier; address, "What a Woman's Club Can Do for Nutley," by Reverend Douglas Matthews; welcome to State Federation, Mrs. George F. King; benediction by Reverend W. L. Cunningham; music by Miss Lois Huntington, violinist, and Sig. Frank Sabbatino, harpist.

In addressing the club during the first years, the President, Mrs. Arthur B. Proal commented: "Guard well the Democracy of this organization! Let it be the point of contact between the women of the Town of Nutley as citizens, where class, creed, political differences, factions of all kinds may be laid aside and a genuine desire for each other's good and the advancement of civic ideals for our Town and State impel us toward united action."

The executive officers of the club during the first two years were: Mrs. Laura Vreeland Tuers, Honorary President; Mrs. Arthur B. Proal, President; others, Mrs. Charles B. Van Dewater, Mrs. Henry G. Prout, Mrs. Alfred G. Sturges, Mrs. Joseph D. Little, Mrs. Marion L. Lewis, Mrs. W. J. Kinsley. Chairmen of departments were: Mrs. Louis E. Carmen, Miss Annie VanWinkle, Mrs. J. B. Williams, Miss Mary Hawley, Mrs. Guy Ed words.

In April 1916, the members of the active Woman's Public School Auxiliary voted to disband and to join the Woman's Club as the department of education. Mrs. Perley A. Prior was chairman of this department.

Influential in many town civic affairs was the Village Improvement Society. This group also joined the new club and became the civic department with

Miss Annie VanWinkle as chairman.

With the membership thus increased, the Woman's Club became the leader in promoting a woman for membership on the Board of Education; it also arranged for the celebration of the "Safe and Sane Fourth of July"; the first classes in First Aid were given at the Club by Dr. George B. Philhower before the Red Cross was formally organized during World War I.

In the Presidency of Mrs. Joseph D. Little, the final plans for ownership of the club house were drawn up whereby the Woman's Club purchased the historic building from Mrs. Laura Vreeland Tuers and her husband Willis J. Tuers on June 25, 1923.

The Vreeland homestead was built in 1702 by Jacob Vreeland for the Van Giesen family and was, with the surrounding fields, lost at the close of the Revolution when the entire estate was confiscated.

After the war was over, the property was bought by Captain Speer, who, history tells us, was "a very tall old man, in a long snuff-colored coat, always followed by Judge, a huge dog, just the color of his master's coat." He sold the house and part of the land to John M. Vreeland who made it his home.

This little Dutch homestead always remained in the possession of the descendants of John Vreeland for it was tradition that the house be left by father to son.

When the restoration work was begun by the Woman's Club, plaster was removed from the ceiling so that the original timbers were exposed. Those in the loft are still to be seen, picturesque in their fine old trusses of pinned oak. The immense iron latch still adorns the cellar door, wide oak boards still form the floor. The wooden cupboard, now filled with old glass and china, is just as it was two centuries ago. One of the most interesting objects in the house is a framed square of the wall, showing the building material, which is a mixture of local clay and straw.

Another object of the Woman's Club is "to promote by mutual counsel and united action the fundamental interests of women," and the Club is today interested in many subjects.

From the Treasury, support is given to many local projects; a student's loan fund provides money for a local high school girl for her college years; through the State Federation the Club contributes to the Margaret Yardley Fund, the Meta Thorne Scholarship Fund, to the restoration of the Allaire Village and to the many activities at Douglass College, Rutgers University.

Through the efforts of Mrs. George D. Wellbrock, a State President's pin was designed and was accepted as the official pin for all Club Presidents of the Federation.

The present officers and Chairmen of departments are: President, Mrs.

Rudolph L. Bartel; 2nd Vice President, Mrs. R. E. Farabaugh; Federation Secretary, Mrs. George D. Wellbrock; Recording Secretary, Mrs. Frank L. Aires; Treasurer, Mrs. William F. Pratt; Financial Secretary, Mrs. Duncan McAllister; Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Charles Dangelmajer; American Home Chairman, Mrs. Dorothy de St. Clement; Art Chairman, Mrs. Richard Talmadge; Civics and Legislation Chairman, Mrs. Herbert Fluhr; Drama, Mrs. Carl Schick; Education, Mrs. William Irwin; Evening Department, Mrs. Kearns Schemm; Garden, Mrs. Robert Elmendorf; International Relations, Mrs. Alfred Burns; Literature, Miss Ann A. Troy; Music, Mrs. Leona Ryan; Public Welfare and Civilian Defense, Mrs. Fred Job; House, Mrs. John Schweser; Membership, Mrs. Robert Gray; Nominating, Mrs. William Irwin; Junior Woman's Club Advisor, Mrs. Fulton B. Ryalls; Junior Woman's Club President, Mrs. Fred Schwarzman.

Presidents who have served since the organization of the Club are: 1912-Mrs. Arthur B. Proal; 1914-Mrs. Henry B. Prout; 1916-Mrs. William J. Kinsley; 1917-Mrs. G. B. Philhower; 1919-Mrs. F. H. Sanford; 1921-Mrs. G. B. Douglas; 1923-Mrs. Joseph D. Little; 1925-Miss Emma L. Mott; 1929- Mrs. William J. Vail; 1932-Mrs. Horace Tantom; 1935- Mrs. Henry Conover; 1938-Mrs. Ambrose Wildey; 1941- Mrs. Albert F. Beh; 1944-Mrs. Joseph H. Dow; 1947-Mrs. William J. Shannon; 1949-Mrs. F. C. James; 1951-Mrs. J. Warren Young; 1953-Mrs. Richard E. Talmadge; 1955- Mrs. William F. Pratt; 1957-Mrs. George D. Wellbrock; 1959-Mrs. Rudolph L. Bartel.