

NUGGETS of HISTORY

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A YEAR OF CELEBRATION 1977-1978

by Hazel M. Hyde

A segment of Rockford culture and history was reviewed as a project for the entire Centennial Year of the Monday Club. Many facilities were pressed into service ranging from Rockfordiana of the Rockford Public Library to family attics of early families to round out the study of one hundred years in Rockford.

The Monday Club celebrated its Centennial in 1977-1978. Its beginning over a hundred years ago is recorded in an excerpt, from notes written by Miss Mary E Preston in October 1886:

"In 1877, Mrs. Harriet Sanford invited a few friends to meet at her house for the purpose of study and conversation on literature and art."

"The meetings were to be fortnightly, of a free conversational style, with no regular officers, no constitution, no rules and no essays. The tie holding together, that of mutual affection and respect and a desire for improvement and a higher intellectual life."

Original members were:

Harriet Austin Sanford (Mrs. Goodyear A.);

Anne Lathrop Taggart (Mrs. Charles J.);

S. Adeline Potter Lathrop (Mrs. William);

Fanny Jones Talcott (Mrs. William A.);

Abbie Richards Woodbury (Mrs. Frank P.);

Adaline Talcott Emerson (Mrs. Ralph);

Mrs. Julia Edwards Clemens;

Mrs. S. C. Withrow;

Marie Thompson Perry (Mrs. Seeley);

Miss Caroline Potter (Mrs. C. M. Brazee);

Miss Mary E. Preston.

The home in which the group originally known as "The Ladies Monday Club" held its organizational meeting was the Goodyear-Asa Sanford House. (See: NUGGETS OF HISTORY VOL. IV, No. 4, p. 4). The former Sanford home stood at 505 North Main, but on a short stretch of street known as Indian Terrace. The house had board and batten siding, windowed cupola, fanciful eave brackets, and other details of nineteenth century architecture. Known also as Indian Terrace, the home was owned later by the civic leader, Mr. Ralph Hinchliff.

In the club's clipping files is the Rockford Morning Star, December 10, 1950, article headed "One of Town's Oldest Organizations Plays Interesting Role in Cultural Life Here". An accompanying photograph showed some third generation members, which included:

Betty Williams Taylor (Mrs. Russell);

Deborah Williams Connolly (Mrs. C. David);

Betty Brown Smith (Mrs. Stanton K.); who are the grand daughters of the late Mrs. Charles C. Brown, a early



THE LAST FASHION PLATE PUBLISHED BY "THE LADY EDITOR"
From Godey's Lady's Book, December, 1877

member:

Elsie Aspgren Forbes (Mrs. John), whose husband was the grandson of Mrs. John Barnes;

Jean Wilkinson Lathrop (Mrs. William), whose husband was the grandson of Mrs. William Lathrop;

Louise Cunningham Forbes (Mrs. Alex) whose husband is the grandson of Mrs. Seeley Perry, and

Dorothy Hinchliff Williams (Mrs. Ralph) who was the grand-daughter of Mrs. Ralph Emerson, one of the founders of the organization. There have been other members known as "legacies" whose mothers or grandmothers or those of their husbands, have been members of the club.

For the election of new members the President shall appoint a membership committee of at least three members at the first meeting after the Holidays. This committee shall solicit suggestions for membership from the club. No member may submit the name of more than one prospective member in a year. The committee shall determine the number of new members to be invited and then formulate a slate. "Legacies" shall be given special consideration. Ballots shall be mailed to members one month prior to the last meeting. (Stamped addressed envelopes shall be enclosed.) To be elected, a name must receive two-thirds of all votes cast. Names of new members to be announced at last meeting. Active membership shall consist of approximately twenty-five members.

The purpose of Monday Club determines the type of person most likely to be invited to join the group. The Monday Club is a study club. Its programs consist of



October 5, 1906, at Mrs. Perry's home. Back row: Mesdames Clmons, Sanford, E.P. Lathrop, A.G. Case, Katherine Keeler, W.E. Hinchliff, Robert Lathrop. Front row: Mesdames Wait Talcott, William Lathrop, Walter Forbes, Calvin Mower, Ralph Emerson, William King, Aubrey Barnes, Seeley Perry, George Forbes, N. F. Thompson.

papers or talks given by its members or persons invited to speak. These members are divided into three groups: active members, inactive members and non-resident members.

The program committee for the following year is appointed at the first meeting after the Holidays. The programs tend to be of an educational, cultural, or civic awareness type. They illustrate an old philosopher's saying, "What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the soul." It was Kahlil Gilbran who said, "Knowledge is Life with wings."

The Rockford Morning Star, speaking of the "Theme for the Year" plan, outlined some of the areas of study. For the first year (1877) Miss Potter was chosen leader of the conversation and the general topic was "Literature and Art". For their second season the clubwomen had as their theme "Roman History---Shakespeare Plays---Romola". The next year's program was also built around Shakespeare. For the next six seasons Monday Club members studied painting and architecture--each for three years.

After sixteen years of informal study, the club voted to collect annual dues and have printed programs. Copies of all these yearbooks have been preserved in the Scrapbook.

In 1893-94 "Norway and Sweden" was the subject for a year of study. Other topics have been "Russian Culture",



Sixty-fifth anniversary celebration, April, 1942 at the home of Mrs. E. P. Lathrop. Standing: Mesdames Walter Green, William Miller, Leslie Geddes, Miss Louise Smith, Mesdames Benjamin T. Harper, Wait Talcott, Paul Bennett, Andrew MacLeish, Robert Lathrop, Almon G. Case, Harold Wolcott, W. E. Hinchliff, Clarendon Mower, Ralph Williams. Sitting: Mesdames Donald Ferguson, F. F. Bailey, Shaler G. Smith, Norman F. Thompson, Jr., E. P. Lathrop, Alan Brantingham.

"Indians of America", "Operas", "Japan", "The Theatre", and "Contemporary Literature".

For their Golden Anniversary Year in 1927-28 the club members investigated "The Modern Point of View - Its Origins and Trend."

Local history was stressed in depth during the 1949-1950 season. Seeking information from the city archives, historical writings, and family records, the members gave reports on the founding, civic development, and industrial growth of Rockford. Other areas covered were politics, churches, court trials, and landmarks. In many ways the studies parallel the findings of Rockford Historical Society's deceased honorary president, Ash Johnson. When he founded NUGGETS OF HISTORY in 1963, it was his purpose to stimulate interest in local history and preserve valuable data that might pass beyond recovery.

During World War II years Rationing and War work furnished a focus for club activities.

Various geographical areas as far flung as The Balkans, Russia, and the World were explored.

The Arts, Artists, Religion and the Arts were explored in different years in the 1960's.



Photograph taken in 1951. Mesdames Howard Monk, Ralph Root, Robert Lathrop, Walter Forbes, and William Miller.

American Patriots and Explorers, found their places in the yearly programs.

The methods of reporting changed over the years from the informal discussion or impromptu debate of a subject. In the year 1893-94 it was decided to print yearbooks. For a long period of time a topic for the year was chosen and broken down into its component parts. Then members took an assigned or chosen segment and wrote a kind of research paper. A few of these papers survive and show the bits of humor interspersed with facts that could have been dull. The outlines of study with accompanying bibliographies could well have been college credit course in literature or history. An apt quotation from the 1929-1930 study of the Chinese is, "He who would understand both the past and the present, must read five cart loads of books" -- Chinese Classics.

One of these mini-theses given by Mildred Geddes (Mrs. Leslie) served as a program for Rockford Historical Society for their July 1978 picnic at Severson Dells. Challenged to find something historical about the area, President Gertrude Mead borrowed the paper as the basis for a bit of the past. Mrs. Geddes had researched each farm along the road from Rockford to Geddesburg Estate, including the picnic area of her youth now made into a nature preserve. The story borrowed liberally from many sources such as NUGGETS OF HISTORY, Church's History, Rockfordiana Collection of the Rockford Public Library, and the personal recollections of local historians; all given proper credit. Lively discussions and an inter-



The Monday Club about 1955, in the backyard of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Monk.

play of ideas follow the program.

In an interview, July 10, 1978, with Mrs. Clarendon Mower, Jr., and Mrs. Leslie Geddes, a hundred years of history were reviewed. Surprisingly the topic of the year was a summation of the Monday Club's Centennial Accomplishments and History, but it included a panorama of the history of our area, our nation, and even the world. Girlish interests developed at Vassar or other universities were translated into continued study of literature of a serious type. World War I years brought consuming interest in world events and patriotic efforts. Far ranging interests developed through European travel or current happenings in the Orient helped in the choice of a subject to pursue in depth.

What would hold together a membership of some twenty-five women for over a century, with gradual replacements as older members were deceased? Sometimes a daughter was accepted and sometimes an interesting personality was cultivated and invited into the group. The old school tie, meaning a companionship dating back to school days in this case, or the daisy-chain graduation from Rockford College, or shared experiences when young mothers, made for a camaraderie that deepened over the years. These women were determined that the passing years should not dull their intellectual activities, limit their cultivation of the arts, or stifle their interest in global developments of their times. And changing times from 1928-1977 are reflected in the scrapbook containing yearbooks from the 1893 issue forward with many photographs. These are some



One hundredth anniversary of the Monday Club, taken at a luncheon meeting on October 31, 1977.

of the women who helped to establish the cultural atmosphere of Rockford and who were individually supportive of philanthropy and the arts. They were not worshippers of the past but forward-looking women of the Rockford community. Yellowing newspaper clippings preserved such memorable articles as the eulogy citing the attainments of Julia Lathrop, daughter of an original club member, Sarah Adaline

Some third-generation members of the Monday Club. Left to right: Mrs. Russell Taylor, Mrs. Stanton K. Smith, Mrs. John Forbes, Mrs. C. David Connolly, Mrs. Alex Forbes, Mrs. William Lathrop (seated), and Mrs. Ralph Williams.



Potter Lathrop, and husband William Lathrop.

Archibald MacLeish born 1892 in Glencoe, Illinois, is a noted poet, dramatist, and critic. He also served as librarian of Congress 1939 to 1944. The poem "Conquistador" won him the first of his three Pulitzer prizes. He has taught at Harvard and Amherst.

MacLeish's mother, formerly Martha Hillard or Rockford, wrote in a letter, October 15, 1927:

Craigie Lea
Glencoe, Ill.

My dear Mary Lathrop

How I would love to come out and help you celebrate the 50th birthday of the Monday Club-- and make the little



Helen Cleveland in 1880 Tafetta Costume



Ruth Ellen Mower in 1920 "Dansante" Gown

visit you so attractively dangle before my eyes. But alas! I cannot. Julia will tell you that I'm tied with a pretty short tether this year.

I have a story for you, though, of what my Monday Club was really worth to me once upon a time.

The last two winters that I was in Rockford we studied Dante and when I was married the club gave me Dove's Illustrated copy of the Inferno and the Paradiso.

I did a great deal of reading to my children, the two older boys especially, and Archie, the second boy -- now writing poetry, by the way -- was greatly attracted to the Inferno. He lay by the hour flat on his stomach absorbing those terrible pictures and asking what they meant.

He begged me to read it to him, to which I replied, that he was too young to enjoy it, but when he was older I would surely read it to him.

With the impatience of childhood he didn't want to wait till he was old enough, so one day I thought I would show him by experience that he couldn't understand and I yielded to his entreaties and read. The picture which he wanted explained was one of those in Canto XII who had committed deeds of violence and were standing in rivers of blood -- boiling, if I remember rightly, the depth proportional to their own violence. I read on and on

without comment and Archie took it in like the milk of the word.

He had himself a very violent temper against which our combined efforts had not been making much progress, but that picture and the poem got under his skin and from that evening's reading I could feel him trying to get himself in hand.

So, you see, Archie and I owe something to the Monday Club.

The members signed to my book are:

Marie T. Perry	Mary Tinker
Mary L. M. Smith	Clara G. Sanford
S. Adeline Lathrop	A. L. Taggart
Lydia E. Haskell	Caroline A. P. Brazee
Mary K. Underwood	Mary E. Preston
Katherine M. Keeler	Fanny C. Talcott
Anna H. Lathrop	Henrietta T. Kimball
Julia E. Clemens	Mary Taggart Briggs

My love to all who remember me and all my good wishes for the next 50 years of the Monday Club. Always sincerely yours,

Martha Hillard MacLeish

Since the Centennial Year was devoted to the study of the club itself, Rockford, and the varied programs since



Mildred Geddes in 1927 Wood Dress

the year 1877 when the Monday Club was organized, one facet was the September 19, 1977 paper of Mrs. Leslie (Mildred) Geddes, who narrated a style show of the first fifty years 1877-1927. After Helen Cleveland had pictured early Rockford as a background, pictures of "Godey's Ladies Book" were shown. The style changes from crinolines, to hoops, close fitting waists, leg of mutton sleeves, tight sheaths, bell sleeves and others figured in the story.

Pictures were taken and some of these are strikingly beautiful. Helen Cleveland wore a taffeta costume made in Germany in 1880 for Helen Bailey's mother, Mrs. Smith.

Betsy Laven was model for lingerie from the trousseau of Helen Bailey's mother, who was married in 1895. Each item was lace trimmed and monogramed.

Ruth Ellen Mower wore the summer gown of cotton and lace insertion of 1910 which had belonged to Mildred Geddes's mother, Mrs. George Purdy.

A silk dress made in Paris in 1922 for Mildred Geddes was modeled by Betsy Lavern.

A "teddy bear" from the trousseau of Helen Bailey in the 1920's was shown by Lucretia Paddock.

From Mildred Geddes' trousseau in 1925, Lucretia modeled a silk negligee over nightgown.

Ruth Ellen Mower wore Helen Woodward's elegant

"the Dansante" gown of 1920's, complete with cloche and string of pearls.

Mildred Geddes wore a smart fall wool made in Paris in 1922 that had a 1977 appearance.

Pictures were passed around showing such examples as a 1900 baptismal gown worn by Helen and Louise Smith. An earlier 1870 baby dress was also exhibited. There were other petticoats, chemise, drawers and a bed jacket brought from the attics and cedar chests. Then there were pictures from Sears Catalogue and Kate Greenway's Birthday Book for various years. So Fifty Years of Style were explored as a part of the year's activities.

But other meetings of the eight for the club year reviewed and re-evaluated studies. Club members reread some of the time-faded letters from members who had moved away.

"People and Papers of the Monday Club of Rockford, Illinois" was the official title of the 1977-78 study year. It was realized through the guidance of the officers:

President--Mrs. Clarendon Mower, Jr. (who is a legacy member);

Vice-President--Mrs. John Howard;

Secretary-Treasurer--Mrs. David Mower; and

Program Committee--Mrs. Robert Bailey and Mrs. David Mower.

The souvenir program listed the names of all members for the entire century indicating original, deceased, non-resident, and active members.

An Anniversary Committee for the official celebration meeting consisted of: Mesdames Gordon Eggers, John Howard, William Laven, Joseph McCoy, Clarendon, Mower, Jr., and Stuart Weller.

Assembled pictures were available for the years: 1906, 1911, 1927, (the 50th anniversary), 1942, 1960, and 1977, with identifying names.

Rockford must surely be culturally richer for having such a continuing study group composed of women whose influence has spread throughout various clubs and civic organizations of the community. Rockford Historical Society members salute the Monday Club on the occasion of the Centennial year.

FROM DUSTY RECORDS TO NEW PERSPECTIVES

by Hazel M. Hyde

(A speech given for Rockford Chapter DAR, April 16, 1976)

You know the old quip, that a speaker is said to have asked the program chairman, "What shall I speak about?" And the answer, "About 30 minutes." Rockford Chapter DAR program chairman, Mrs. John Reed (Barbara) is more exacting. She plans that local programs promote the three objectives

of NSDAR -- historical, educational, and patriotic. Barbara Reed has an eye open for local aspects as well as the perspectives that open out on the state and national scene. Since I have been Rockford Chapter DAR's genealogical records chairman for seven years, beginning in the Diamond Jubilee Year of 1969, I may have learned a few points worth sharing.

In a Bi-Centennial year, it is good to look at the local accomplishments. Genealogical Records Committee has diligently worked to copy dusty old records that they may be preserved. Some members have donated Bible Records, too numerous to mention, but I should like to cite Mrs. H. H. Carlin (Louise), because she was among the first to prepare six copies, indexed, and all ready to mail, of her Bible records. Some people give a single copy and the committee then prepares and types the copies, indexing, and mailing.

The first copy is sent to National DAR Library in Washington, D.C. Clear carbon copies are given to the Rockford Public Library, Newberry Library in Chicago, DAR Library at Centralia, and Illinois State Historical Library at Springfield. Thus certain aspects of local history and genealogical data are made available on the state and national level. These records are bound in useable books under the direction of the state chairman.

Locally we have some highly qualified researchers in the fields of family history and genealogy. Tribute is due Mrs. Carl H. Lindstedt (Louise) for her energetic and scholarly approach to the field of genealogy. For many years she conducted classes through the facilities of the YWCA. She introduced the beginner by easy steps and consulted with those in her classes who struggled for some years to complete a family history. The facilities of the Rockford library were explained in a class meeting held in the local history and genealogical records room.

Mrs. H. H. Carlin held a highly successful seminar with Mr. Clifford Neal Smith, who is nationally renowned. He spoke on "The Migration Patterns of Religious Groups in America." She held another conference with Mrs. John Devaney as the chief speaker.

"How to Climb Your Family Tree" was the title of a speech given for several local groups by Mrs. J. Warren Rowland (Kay). She exhibited family work sheets, charts, valuable books and her own family history. She has served as Registrar for the Daughters of Colonists.

Among local people who have published carefully researched family histories are Mr. and Mrs. O. D. Corbridge. A copy is available in the local library and copies were presented to representative libraries around the country.

(To be continued in next issue)

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