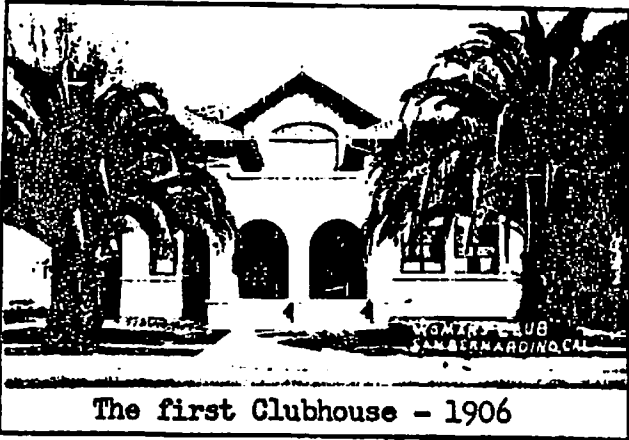


WOMEN'S CLUB: 1892-1980

By BERYL HOLCOMB



The first Clubhouse - 1906

It was eighty-eight years ago, in February, 1892, that a group of civic-minded women, under the leadership of Mrs. R. F. Garner, met together and organized a group which would not only share a cup of tea but discuss current events, review latest books, hold poetry readings, sew, and quilt. These were weekly meetings, held on Wednesdays at the homes of the members.

This was the beginning of the Women's Club of San Bernardino, which in 1899 became formally organized as a non-profit and non-political club with elective officers; in 1900 stepped up its program to include elective Chairmen, planned programs and social hours; in 1901 printed its first Yearbook; in 1902 became affiliated with the General Federation, and

the California Federation of Women's Clubs; in 1904 adopted its first Constitution and By-Laws and began a campaign to build its own Clubhouse, and in 1913 became completely federated in joining the District and County Federations.

By 1906 the Clubhouse became a reality at 580 West Sixty Street, where the Children's Dental Health Center now exists, and over 400 women members were entering wholeheartedly into Community projects. Loss of title to the Clubhouse in 1935 necessitated meeting in the Y.W.C.A. Building at 5th and Arrowhead. In 1955 the Club purchased the lots at 31st and E Streets; September 14, 1958, the new Clubhouse was dedicated as a "gathering place, a human relations Center for all of San Bernardino;" and by February 5, 1961, the members were able to hold a "Mortgage Burning Ceremony." The Club debts had been completely paid off in less than two and one-half years.

Throughout the years, in addition to Clubhouse ownership drives, the Club sustained its involvement in most Community improvement and Civic Affairs. In 1906-1907 members worked raising money to buy and clear land for a "People's Park," now known as Meadowbrook Park, with its own swimming hole. There still remains the concrete stairway with its plaque in tribute to the Women's Club and Mary Bennett Goodcell. The members continued to plant and beautify Meadowbrook Park, and in 1908-1909 purchased and had installed a water wheel in memory of Col. W. S. Vestal, who had been helpful in obtaining property for the park.

During these years the efforts of Club members were responsible for helping to get a curfew ordinance for children, a drive to clean up the vacant lots in the city, and for sponsoring a project to get sidewalks and curbs on C Street (now Arrowhead Avenue), D Street and E Street north to 9th Street. The Club women personally planted 71 Acacia trees on C Street (Arrowhead), and extended their tree and poppy planting project from I Street to the City Limits.

Later, the Club worked toward a sanitation system for the city, and purchased trash cans; it continued planting flowers and trees along all of the main streets. This interest has lasted throughout the years. In 1960, the members were instrumental in getting the Camellia Garden established in Perris Hill Park. The plaque donated by the Home and Garden Section of the Club reads "San Bernardino Camellia Garden Dedication, May 12, 1960." The members were also instrumental in naming the Camellia as the Official City Flower. They worked toward obtaining Blair Park and planted trees and flowers there. As the years progressed, the Club worked harder toward advancement in all lines

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