

### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY APRIL 22



Cover of booklet for West Virginia  
Federation of Women's Clubs, 1910-11 (Sc82-294)

**On April 22, 1904, representatives of 15 women's clubs gathered in Wheeling to form the West Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs.**

**CSO: SS.8.24, ELA.8.1**

**Investigate the Document: (General Federation of Woman's Clubs, West Virginia Collection, Sc2014-019)**

Document 1

1. What was the primary purpose of establishing women's clubs?
2. Where was the second annual meeting of the West Virginia Federation of Women's Club held?
3. What three words were used to describe the federation?

Document 2

4. What opportunity did women's clubs provide for women?
5. What issues did women's organizations fight against?
6. What was the "New Woman" that emerged in the 1890s?
7. What were the two types of women's organizations?

**Think Critically:** In your opinion, what is the current status of gender equality in the United States? Why is it important to recognize and explore women's history? Why is women's history sometimes overlooked? Who are some women that inspire you?

## Report

### Of the Second Annual Meeting of the West Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs.

Although the West Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs was organized so recently as April 22nd, 1904, with but fifteen clubs on its roster, the Second Annual Meeting of the Federation held in the lecture room of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, of Parkersburg, September 27th, 28th, and 29th, was, from many standpoints, quite an important event. At no previous time had there been such a gathering of the club-women of the state in our city.

Most of the visiting delegates arrived in time for the opening session, Wednesday evening, when Mrs. Mary E. Rathbone, Chairman of the Program Committee, called the convention to order.

A quartette of ladies from "The Wednesday Musical Club" of Parkersburg, gave the opening number, at the conclusion of which Mrs. W. H. Smith Jr., the President of "The Woman's Literary Club," of Parkersburg, delivered the "Address of Welcome," Mrs. Guy R. C. Allen, President of the "West Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs" making the "Response."

Dr. Harriet B. Jones, president of the "Woman's Parliamentary Law Club," of Wheeling, gave a bright little talk on "The West Virginia Laws Relating to Woman."

The principal feature of the evening was the address of Mrs. James R. Hopley, a prominent club woman of Bucyrus, Ohio. Mrs. Hopley was for some time President of the "Ohio State Federation of Women's Clubs," and is thoroughly conversant with all subjects pertaining to club work. The message she gave appealed to all club women, and to others who were not club

enthusiasts, her theme being "The True Inwardness of Federation."

The evening closed with an informal reception tendered by the members of "The Woman's Literary Club," of Parkersburg, to the visiting club women, and other invited guests.

The second day of the convention was an unusually interesting and busy one.

At nine a. m. was held the regular Executive Meeting and Council, which included the officers of the State Board, together with the club presidents, at which were discussed plans for the betterment of club conditions throughout the state.

At ten o'clock the State Convention of the Federation of Women's Clubs was formally opened, Reverend William Love, of Parkersburg, offering the invocation.

Mrs. Guy R. C. Allen, State President, and presiding officer, then introduced Professor William Ward, of Boston. Professor Ward came as a substitute for his wife, Mrs. May Alden Ward, Second Vice President of the "General Federation of Women's Clubs," who was prevented from coming by illness, and who was to have addressed the Federation on Wednesday evening, on "The Study of Fiction."

Professor Ward paid a high tribute to "Woman;" and "Women's Clubs," and spoke of the great work accomplished by the federated clubs in different parts of the country.

At the conclusion of Professor Ward's talk the "Quartette" sang "The Florian Song," by Gounod, and Ries' "Slumber Song."

Mrs. H. H. Moss, Sr., the Federation Treasurer, read quite an encouraging financial statement. Her report was followed by those of the Chairmen of the Standing Committees; Mrs. Rathbone, of Parkersburg, on Membership; Mrs. Mendel, of Wheeling, on Traveling Libraries; Mrs. Wood, of Wheeling, on Art; Mrs. Brittingham, of Wheeling, on Domestic Science; Mrs. Morrison, of

Wheeling (representing Miss Hubbard), on Reciprocity; Mrs. Taylor, of Parkersburg, on Education; Mrs. Morrison, of Wheeling, (representing Mrs. John M. Birch, Chairman) on "Federation Literature and Printing;" and Miss Stephens, of Wheeling, on "Credentials." These Reports were found to be very satisfactory.

At "Roll Call," forty-three delegates responded to their names.

Quite an animated discussion was held relative to the advisability of changing the date of the Annual Meeting from September, which is an unusually busy month for house-wives, to October. After an expression of opinion from the members, Dr. Harriet Jones, of Wheeling, moved to amend Section 1, Article 6, of the Constitution, by substituting "October" for "September." The amendment was adopted.

At the conclusion of this discussion, ballots were distributed by the tellers, but the near approach of the noon hour precluding the hope of completing the election before then, a motion was made that the polls be kept open until 2:30 p. m.

After a short talk by Professor Ward on "Work of the Federation," the Convention adjourned.

The afternoon session was called to order at the hour designated, by the president, Mrs. Allen, who made a short address, after which the "Quartette" sang two numbers of Schubert's, "Hark! Hark! the Lark!" and "Hedge Rose."

Mrs. James R. Hopley was the first on the program, and talked very entertainingly of "Club Work in the General Federation." She stated that "federation," in her opinion, was best expressed by the use of the three words, "friendship," "fealty," and "faith." These were the inner motives which were expressed in outward manner by the energetic way in which the great work outlined by the officials was carried on.

Professor Swartz, Superintendent of the Parkersburg Public Schools, was introduced by Mrs. Allen, who had

asked him to give a talk on "Manual Training in Our Schools," as he is much interested in that phase of school work. His talk was instructive and entertaining. Some personal experiences relating to actual work accomplished in other schools closed this interesting talk.

Professor Ward again addressed the Convention on "Forestry" and "Pure Food Laws." After a plea for the preservation of the beautiful trees of the country, which through avarice are continually being destroyed, Professor Ward waxed eloquent over the impurities of food which are allowed now under the imperfect food laws of our country. Many of the states have passed a satisfactory law which has each time been defeated in the Senate. Professor Ward further stated that this evil could not be rectified until there was passed a United States law governing the manufacture of impure food, and the shipping of such products from one state to another.

After another song by the "Quartette," Mrs. Brittingham, of Wheeling, offered the following resolution: "That, hereafter, delegates pay their expenses for entertainment at the West Virginia State Federation." Following a general expression of opinion the motion was adopted, that plan (of entertainment) being considered the more business-like.

Preceding the report of the tellers, the State President read a most interesting report of the year's work.

Following the President's report those of the presidents of individual clubs were listened to with interest. They were Mrs. R. H. Thomas, representing Mrs. D. A. Beatty, of the Woman's Literary Club, of Parkersburg; Mrs. J. H. Strickling, the Woman's Literary Club of Sistersville; Mrs. A. U. Wilson, The Woman's Literary Club, of Wheeling; Mrs. M. W. Sloan, The Woman's Literary Club, of Huntington; Miss Ida M. Armstrong, The Four O'clock Club, Pt. Pleasant; Miss Addie Brown, The Country Literary Club, Wheeling; Dr. Harriet B. Jones, The Woman's Civic Club, Wheeling.

Mrs. J. H. Strickling's cordial invitation to the Federation to hold the next (Third) convention at Sistersville, was accepted.

The tellers then reported that the following officers had been elected on the nominating ballot:

Mrs. R. H. Thomas, of Parkersburg, President.

Mrs. Charles J. Proudfoot, of Parkersburg, Corresponding and Recording Secretary.

Mrs. Guy R. C. Allen, of Wheeling, Federation Secretary.

Mrs. Milton McNeilan, of Parkersburg, Treasurer.

Mrs. Charles S. Morrison, of Wheeling, Vice President of the First Congressional District.

As the result of the election by ballot, the following names were read:

Mrs. John Driscoll, of Ronceverte, Vice President of the Third Congressional District.

Mrs. J. H. Strickling, of Sistersville, Vice President of the Fourth Congressional District.

Mrs. M. W. Sloan, of Huntington, Vice President of the Fifth Congressional District.

Miss Ida M. Armstrong, of Pt. Pleasant, Auditor.

Mrs. Thomas, the newly elected president, then announced the names of the Chairmen of the Standing Committees for the ensuing year.

A motion, made by Mrs. Morrison, of Wheeling, that Mrs. Thomas be elected delegate to the Eighth Biennial of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, which is to be held in St. Paul in May, 1906, with power to appoint the other delegates from the West Virginia Federation, was carried.

The report of the Committee on Resolutions closed the business of the afternoon. The committee was as follows: Mrs. M. W. Sloan, (Huntington), Chairman; Miss Van Meter Wison, (Wheeling); Mrs. Ben Rauch, (Parkersburg.)

In the evening a large and representative audience assembled at "The Auditorium Theatre" to enjoy Miss

Caulfield's lecture on "American Art and Mural Decoration in America," illustrated by magnificent stereopticon views which were manipulated by Dr. Hamilton, of Wheeling.

Previous to the lecture Miss Hayes, of Morgantown, gave a very pleasing piano solo.

This entertainment practically closed the convention. The members of the Federation were much gratified over the interest manifested by club women, and outsiders, in the work, and believe that a new era in Federation work will be marked by the coming year.

MRS. CHARLES J. PROUDFOOT,  
Corresponding and Recording Secretary.

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West Virginia Women's Organizations, 1880s-1930 or "Unsexed  
Termagants . . . Help the World Along"<sup>1</sup>

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by Barbara J. Howe

By the late nineteenth century, women were organizing for myriad reasons, in literary clubs and insurance societies, in temperance unions and patriotic organizations. Clubs provided an opportunity for women to unite for a common purpose, to effect change in a society that long denied them political rights, to socialize, and to gain financial assistance. Women from the smallest communities in the country were linked with those in the largest through shared rituals, publications, and conventions as they worked for an agenda that included issues usually designated as "women's concerns," such as protecting health and home, promoting education, and transmitting values and culture. Annual reports, convention proceedings, minutes, occasional membership lists, community histories, city directories, anniversary histories, and memoirs are among the sources available to document the dreams and achievements of these clubs.

As Alexis de Tocqueville noted, and as historians are fond of quoting, Americans seem to have a propensity toward voluntary association. In *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville wrote that "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations. . . . If it be proposed to inculcate some truth, or to foster some feeling by the encouragement of a great example, they form a society." He continued: ". . . I have often admired the extreme skill with which the inhabitants of the United States succeed in proposing a common object to the exertions of a great many men, and in inducing them voluntarily to pursue it." Decades later, at the end of the nineteenth century, Mrs. J. C. Croly, chronicler of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs, noted that in the nineteenth century the woman's club "became at once, without deliberate intention or concerted action, a light-giving and seed-sowing centre of purely altruistic and democratic activity."<sup>2</sup>

Urban women organized into clubs to deal with issues like prostitution and care of the elderly in the early nineteenth century, but these were basically local and isolated efforts.<sup>3</sup> The first efforts to organize

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Barbara J. Howe is director of the public history program at West Virginia University. With Emory Kemp, she edited *Public History: An Introduction* and has written many articles for other publications, including *West Virginia History*. She received the Ph.D. degree from Temple University.

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1. The term "unsexed termagant" was used by Mrs. Thomas W. Flemming, president of the Woman's Club of Fairmont, in 1908 when she announced, "There was a day when a club woman was grossly misunderstood when she was pictured as an unsexed termagant, neglectful of her God-given privilege as wife, mother, home-maker. Now the world's vision has grown clearer, and a club woman is known as one who wants to help the world along" (Vera Andrew Harvey, *The Silver Gleam: Pageant and History of the West Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs in Celebration of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary, 1904-1929* [Charleston: n.p., 1929], 84).

2. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. and abridged by Richard D. Heffner (New York: New American Library, 1956), 198. This work was originally published in 1835, following his 1831-32 tour of the United States; Mrs. J. C. Croly, *The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America* (New York: Henry G. Allen & Co., 1988), 13. This is the best contemporary source of information about early women's clubs.

3. For information on these organizations, see Barbara J. Berg, *The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism, The Woman & The City, 1800-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

## WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY

women on a broad geographical basis were the women's antislavery societies that formed in the decades before the Civil War, and the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, to protect George Washington's home, which attempted to unite women in both North and South on behalf of a common cause.

Between 1870 and 1930, many major women's organizations were formed on the national level, including most of those examined here. Nor was this an isolated movement, as increased opportunities for higher education for women, growing interest in suffrage, and new career openings converged in the 1890s with the debut of the "New Woman" eager to challenge previous restrictions on women's sphere but still cognizant of the fact that she was responsible for safeguarding the country's morals. At the same time, massive immigration during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries encouraged some native-born Americans to cling more tightly to their identity as "real Americans" through the formation of patriotic societies, while immigrants sought support from their compatriots in adjusting to a new country by forming associations.<sup>4</sup> Reform activity, an important agenda item for some women's clubs, flourished during the Progressive Era but became less visible after World War I. By 1930, the country's attention was focused on the Depression, with less money available for club activity.

The period of this study also encompasses an important transition in West Virginia, which was struggling to recover from the Civil War and establish its new identity as a state in 1870. By 1930, the state was beginning to feel the effects of the Depression severely, and some club records reflect members' concerns for the less fortunate.

Limited space and sources make it impossible to document the work of every women's club, or even every type of club, in West Virginia. Those selected for study here represent major national women's organizations, such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs and Pythian Sisters, which were active throughout the state. They also were organizations for which records were available in a public repository. While this may seem initially to be an easy method of selection, it is important to note that women's clubs operating solely on the local level probably kept their records in the hands of their members, if they kept records at all. State organizations were more likely than local chapters to be aware of the need to deposit records in an archives, and it is those annual reports and histories that are located most easily. Finally, some organizations, such as secret Greek letter sororities, would deliberately keep most records within the group, closed to outsiders.

In several cases, membership lists provide an opportunity to identify the women who belonged to these clubs. Apparently, members of reform clubs generally held slightly higher positions on the social ladder than those who belonged to the sororal and benevolent clubs, a reflection that these women had the resources to be concerned with more than the immediate needs of their families. However, few membership lists were available to permit checking for overlapping memberships among clubwomen. Even if lists were available, it can be difficult to track women: is Susan Smith the same person as Mrs. John Smith on another list? or is she the woman who married and is listed as Mrs. John Jones (Susan) a few years later?

The clubs discussed here can be divided into two types: those that focused on some type of reform activity and those that existed primarily as sororal and benevolent organizations. Both certainly provided companionship and a sense of identity and belonging for members, but the programs of the reform clubs were more often directed outward into the community, while those of the benevolent organizations were directed toward the concerns of their own members. Absent from this discussion are political clubs, farm

4. For a description of the "New Woman," see Lois W. Banner, *Women in Modern America: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 1-49. For a discussion of the importance of associations to immigrants, see Judith E. Smith, "Circles of Assistance: Reciprocity and Associational Life," in *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 124-65. For a discussion of clubs as a manifestation of nativism, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1967).

## WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY

women's organizations, and church women's organizations, all of which deserve separate consideration. "Reform clubs" was not a contemporary label, but the organizations so classified here focused much of their agenda on issues that they felt would improve life for their immediate family, city, or the community of nations. There are no formulas to apply in categorizing these clubs, except to say that they relied less on ritual than did sororal organizations and did not provide financial benefits for their members.

The first large national "reform club" for women, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), grew out of the "woman's crusade" that swept the country in 1873-74. Quickly becoming the country's largest women's organization, it also organized women around the world. The WCTU's greatest strength was its ability to organize at the local level.

Wheeling women were apparently the first in the state to organize for temperance. The 1877 Wheeling city directory lists the Ladies' Temperance Union, while the Ladies' Temperance Band was cited in the 1880 directory. It is unclear whether these women were organizing in response to the national WCTU's efforts, but they did precede WCTU organizing at the state level in West Virginia. The state's WCTU began at an Interstate Convention meeting in Mountain Lake, Maryland, from August 31 to September 5, 1883; representatives from nine West Virginia and Maryland cities attended. The first local union was organized later that year by Frances Willard and Jennie Smith. The first state convention was held in 1884 in Parkersburg, with Willard as a special guest; "the women marched down Market Street stopping to pray for those engaged in the liquor traffic." By that time, there were unions in seven West Virginia cities.<sup>5</sup>

The state WCTU adhered closely to the goals of the national organization. For example, the WCTU was interested in the problems of prison reform and the status of women offenders as early as the 1880s. Indeed, this was the first nontemperance issue for the WCTU.<sup>6</sup> Members visited jails, almshouses, and prisons to get inmates to sign temperance pledges. Women in West Virginia, and across the country, delivered thousands of pages of temperance literature annually to those in prison. By 1924, the WCTU was working on the national level to get an "Industrial Home for Federal women prisoners"; this would eventually be the Alderson prison in West Virginia, which opened in 1928.<sup>7</sup>

Like the national WCTU, the WVWCTU worked for a wide variety of causes related to health, both personal and public. In 1911, the state convention condemned the use of tobacco and, especially, cigarettes, asking the boards of education for schools at all levels "to employ no teacher who uses tobacco." To prevent the spread of tuberculosis, the WCTU also wanted ordinances against spitting strongly enforced. These ordinances required "no spitting" signs on public streetcars and, later, buses.<sup>8</sup>

The WCTU created a Department of Franchise in 1882, but it was not until 1900 that the WVWCTU adopted a resolution in favor of suffrage. In 1916, delegates at the state convention pledged their support for the Suffrage Amendment on the ballot for the general election in November. In that election, voters overwhelmingly rejected suffrage. But WVWCTU members were eventually successful when the Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment was adopted at a special legislative session held on February 27, 1920.<sup>9</sup>

5. Mrs. Ned Johnson, comp. and ed., *Mountaineer Memories: 1883-1983* (n.p., n.d. [WCTU?]), 2, 3, 4. The first seven unions were in Wheeling, Clarksburg, Parkersburg, Charleston, Keyser, Huntington, and Weston.

6. Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1981), 100.

7. Elizabeth Putnam Gordon, *Women Torch-Bearers: The Story of the Women's Christian Temperance Union* (Evanston, IL: National's WCTU Publ. House, 1924), 200.

8. Johnson, *Mountaineer Memories*, 13.

9. *Ibid.*, 7, 16, 18. For an account of this 1916 election, and the campaign leading up to it, see Anne Wallace Effland, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in West Virginia, 1867-1920" (M.A. thesis, West Virginia University, 1983).

