

CLUB WOMEN LIVE BY MOTTO:

# Be Good For Something

Don't expect to see the club woman as usually portrayed in cartoons when you glance toward the Bradenton Woman's Club.

For these members are just as dedicated as were the 16 women who first met in 1913 to organize a club. Fifty-eight years cover many memories as well as many "firsts" for the City of Bradenton.

The women made the first gift for a baseball diamond, equipped and opened the first public playground and secured the first public health nurse in the county!

As one newspaper editor remarked: "They worked through the hardest time the United States have gone through in this country . . . that of a world war . . . overcoming hardships and making sacrifices." The club was formed long before any other institution interested in public affairs.

The editor went on to say, when writing in 1925 as the mortgage on the building was paid off, "Bradenton admittedly is one of the most moral towns in the state and the merits for these achievements must be credited to these good women."

There was a time when the women decided the sandspur should be cut in the vacant lots in the very center of town and finally in desperation 18 bravely visited the city fathers to protest.

The men stated it was the fault of the women . . . if they had stayed in the home where they belonged and not made the men keep the cows off the street then the cows would have cleaned out the sandspurs!

Nothing daunted, the women took their shovels, rakes and hoes, put on old clothes and went down to Main Street and started chopping weeds. Mr. Layman and Mr. Wallace, owners of most of the lots, were so distressed to see the women working that way they told them to go home and they'd see the lots were kept clean . . . and they did!

Charter members were Mrs. T. J. Bachman, Mrs. H. Baer, Mrs. F. H. Bogle, Mrs. E. H. Carter, Mrs. E. F. Coulson, Mrs. Charles T. Curry, Mrs. Gillespie, Mrs. S. G. Hollingsworth, Mrs. G. A. Keyes, Mrs. W. U. Lathrop, Mrs. M. Lightfoot, Mrs. L. Martin, Mrs. I. P. Miles, Mrs. George Riffin, Mrs. Fred Tallant, Mrs. H. K. Tallant, Mrs. Josiah Varn, Mrs. H. Wadham, Mrs. R. T. Ward, Mrs. A. D. Williamson.

Birthplace of the organization: the Juplinor Hotel, on Main Street (now 12th) where the Tamiami Cleaners used to be. The hotel was named for the three Reasoner children. Mrs. T. J. Bachman was the first president and Mrs. John Graham choose the motto: "Be not simply good, be good for something. The flower: the allamander.

When members decided to erect a club house the treasury contained no more than three dollars but through sponsoring fairs, bazaars, dinners and luncheons they had enough money in 1918 to buy a lot at Virginia Drive and Manatee Avenue for \$2,500. The Bradenton Bank and Trust Company agreed to take a mortgage for \$12,000 and al-

though the building was contracted for \$20,000, initial payments were fully met (payments were a thousand a year) and Nov. 25, 1925 the mortgage was burned!

At this time a tax-free status was acquired with the stipulation that if the club were ever to be dissolved the property goes back to the city.

The building was completed in time for the first meeting in 1921, with the bank holding a mortgage and the treasury empty. The president, Mrs. G. P. Smythe, suddenly realized the building was to be dedicated with no chairs for persons to sit on. A "distress meeting" was called and enough money was secured (from husbands and friends) to buy chairs in a hurry.

In the years that passed club members worked tirelessly to raise money for mortgage payments, sponsoring operettas, bazaars, Fair booths, dinners. Help also came from men in town who had been assisted by club members when a campaign was on to raise funds for the Dixie Grand Hotel. The women served a dinner a day for six days so 100 solicitors for the drive could give reports. On the sixth day the required amount was in and the men were then asked to help raise funds to pay off the club debt.

While money for the mortgage was being raised other members were busy planting trees, assisting county commissioners in putting on free health clinics and the education committee began organizing PTA units.

In 1932-33 the first scholarship for an outstanding high school



girl was set up and the club also sponsored the Original Thirteen, a club for high school girls.

Citywide plantings continued, with palms and oleanders being planted by members along Wares Creek. During the years additional furnishings, including a grand piano were added to the club. Outstanding programs were sponsored for the community—then came the war clouds. Boxes for silk stockings were set up on street corners, as were collection boxes for salvage.

Defense activities were stressed and the club house was placed at the disposal of the Defense Council. First aid stations were added to bond drives and salvage collections.

In the late 1940s the high school group became the Mammies and a Bradenton Junior Woman's Club was organized. One of its projects was the

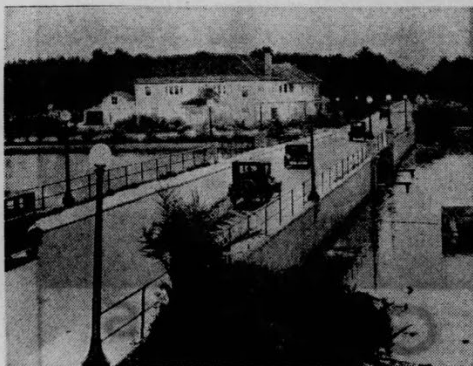
sponsorship of what is now the Manatee Players.

In 1959, Mrs. Virginia Whitehill left part of her estate to the club, the \$62,000 making possible extensive redecorating and repairs, including an outdoor patio. That same year the state paid the club \$5,500 for the right-of-way when Manatee Avenue was widened and a parking lot was prepared on the south side of the building.

In recent years the club has continued presenting outstanding programs, dividing members into interest groups, giving financial aid and volunteer service for needy children and nursing homes. Much aid has been given by the club and individuals to Children's Haven and the Girls' Club.

Mrs. Graham's motto "Be good for something" is just as representative of members' actions today as it was 58 years ago. Time has only increased its true meaning.

By Mary McMurria



The Bradenton Woman's Club in 1925 as one looked to the west across Wares Creek on Manatee Avenue. The building was completed in 1921 and the mortgage paid off by 1925.

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