

A HISTORY OF THE  
TOWN & COUNTY CLUB  
1925-2005

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# FOUNDERS OF THE TOWN & COUNTY CLUB

Priscilla C. Aldrich	Hartford, CT
Georgia F. Barton	Hartford, CT
Helen B. Chapman	Hartford, CT
Julia W. E. Darling	Simsbury, CT
Harriet M. Dustin	Hartford, CT
Louise H. Fisher	Hartford, CT
Ellen Earle Flagg	Hartford, CT
Ruth Cheney Goodwin	Hartford, CT
Ruth C. Jaynes	West Hartford, CT
Josephine H. Maxim	Hartford, CT
Carrie K. Parker	West Hartford, CT
Lila Rose	Hartford, CT
Gertrude C. Robinson	Hartford, CT
Helen Damon Smith	Hartford, CT
Katharine F. Wadsworth	Middletown, CT
Grace Hall Wilson	Hartford, CT

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# PRESIDENTS

1925-28	Annie Eliot Trumbull
1928-31	Josephine H. Maxim (Mrs. Hiram Percy)
1932-36	Frances Williams (Mrs. Bernard T.)
1936-39	Julia L. Havemeyer
1939-42	Julia Andrews (Mrs. James P.)
1942-45	Dora Lewis (Mrs. Richard B.)
1945-47	Carrie Mead (Mrs. George J.)
1947-50	Florence Hatch (Mrs. James W.)
1950-53	Elizabeth Van Dyke (Mrs. Tertius)
1953-56	Rose Critchfield (Mrs. Howard E.)
1956-58	Dorothy Archibald (Mrs. Thomas L.)
1958-61	Hope Roberts (Mrs. Douglas J.)
1961-63	Gwen Smith (Mrs. Allan K.)
1963-66	Sybil Barringer (Mrs. Victor, Jr.) (Mrs. Lincoln R. Young)
1966-68	Dorothy Tennant (Mrs. Robert)
1968-70	Virginia Spencer (Mrs. Clayton B.) (Mrs. Ellsworth S. Grant)
1970-73	Greta Cheney (Mrs. Kimberly)

1973-75	Helen H. Dixon
1975-77	Martha Morrisson (Mrs. Reeves)
1977	Josie Manternach (Mrs. Bruce W.)
1977-78	Billie Sharpe (Mrs. Carleton F.)
1978-80	Mary Hoffer (Mrs. Frederic, Jr.)
1980-82	Noni Fairlie (Mrs. Chester, Jr.)
1982-83	Shirley Brodigan (Mrs. George D.)
1983-85	Hope Allen (Mrs. John C.)
1985-87	Margery Weed (Mrs. Chester A.)
1987-89	Geneve Brown (Mrs. Richard)
1989-91	Ellen T. Zeman (Mrs. Peter M.)
1991-93	Eleanor Flynn (Mrs. Frederic J.) (Mrs. John Cartland)
1993-95	Eleanor W. Hayes (Mrs. Donald J.)
1995-97	Joann Kidd (Mrs. James L.)
1997-99	Katharine H. Steinwedell (Mrs. Peter T.)
1999-01	Eleanor P. Abel (Mrs. Walter L.)
2001-03	Eleanor E. Zajac (Mrs. Thomas M.)
2003-05	Sally M. Richter (Mrs. Dale A.)

# 1: "ADVANCING THE INTERESTS OF WOMEN"

1925 was a boom year for Hartford. Stock prices soared, led by a sensational rise in insurance issues. Savings bank deposits climbed to a record high. New buildings dotted city and suburbs, and throngs of shoppers converged on the city's bustling downtown. In that year, radio station WTIC observed its first anniversary on the air, and inventors Frederick Rentschler and George Mead perfected the first air-cooled aircraft engine, an accomplishment that led to the founding of Pratt & Whitney Aircraft.

Hartford had long boasted clubs where prosperous business and professional men could meet to converse, eat, drink, and play cards together. The Hartford Club was founded in 1873 and the University Club in 1906. Women were occasionally admitted to these clubs as guests, sometimes entering discreetly through a special "ladies' door," but they had no gathering space of their own - until 1925. Such a gathering space was increasingly desirable, as longtime residents of Hartford (the "town") began moving out to the western suburbs, (the "county.")

Early in 1925, the Mark Twain house, which had by this time been made over into apartments, was put up for public sale. Harriet M. Dustin (Mrs. Edward) and Lila Rose (Mrs. Lewis), both of whom were living there at the time, were greatly disturbed over what might be the future of the property and decided to do something to preserve this literary landmark. They decided that a woman's city club might be formed which would buy and develop the house and grounds for its own use. They talked over the plan with their friend Louise Hennion Fisher and on February 6, 1925, called a meeting of ten other women to discuss the possibilities of starting such a club. Mrs. Fisher was an ideal person to help launch the project: She was a spirited community leader who served on the Hartford Board of Education, was vice president of the Child Welfare League of America, and a board member of what is now Catholic Family Services.

Among those attending the organizational meeting was Georgia F. Barton (Mrs. Philip) whose executive and financial ability had already been recognized, although she had only recently come to Hartford to live. She was elected chairman with power to appoint a committee of six to work with her in furthering the organization plans. After hearing a report on the cost of the Mark Twain property and the possibilities of its development, they voted to secure an option on the property.

Out of this, the first recorded meeting of our founding members, emerged the so-called pre-organization committee, which in addition to Mrs. Barton, Mrs. Dustin, Mrs. Rose

and Mrs. Fisher, included Miss Annie Eliot Trumbull, Priscilla Aldrich (Mrs. C. Morgan) and Gertrude Robinson (Mrs. John T.).

Within three days they had met and decided that the most practical way to finance a club was by a bond issue; they hoped to raise \$100,000 and secure a charter membership of 500. They appointed an organization committee of 50 women in addition to the original group of 10, which became the Advisory Committee. On February 16, at the first meeting of the Committee of Fifty, Miss Trumbull was elected chairman. During the next three months the two committees met some 20 times, decided on the type and number of bonds to be issued, drafted a constitution, sought advice on the method of incorporation, voted the amounts of initiation fees and dues, sold an impressive number of bonds to prospective members, named the Club and negotiated for the purchase of property.

It did not take long for committee members to recognize with regret that the amount of work and cost to adapt the Mark Twain house to the requirements of a club made their original idea impractical. But the club idea itself was firmly established. Since one point in favor of the Farmington Avenue location was its proximity to a trolley line, the women looked into the possibility of two available houses on nearby Woodland Street. With the aid of the realtor Herbert Fisher, husband of the Property Chair, Louise Fisher, the group compared 22 and 61 Woodland Street and in late April voted to take an option on the Lyman house at 22 Woodland Street.

Our Woodland Street block in 1925 was a quiet, tree-shaded residential area of substantial homes and landscaped grounds. Like Nook Farm on the other side of Farmington Avenue, Woodland Street was a neighborhood of good friends - Talcotts, Cheneys, Goodwins, and other long-established Hartford families. Three future Club presidents lived on the street. Frances Welch Williams, our third president (1932-36), lived at number 15. At number 49 were Judge and Mrs. Walter H. Clark, whose younger daughter, Dorothy, as Mrs. Thomas L. Archibald, became our eleventh president (1956-58.) And at number 36 had once lived Judge and Mrs. L.P. Waldo Marvin, and it was their daughter, Florence (Mrs. James W. Hatch), who was our eighth president (1947-50).

On May 14, 1925, when 460 members had pledged \$70,500, the Club held its inaugural meeting at the YWCA, called to order by Helen B. Chapman (Mrs. Thomas) in the absence of Miss Trumbull. The business of the meeting was to hear reports, to adopt a constitution, to authorize the purchase of the Lyman house for \$80,000, and to elect a board of 27 governors. Immedi-

ately after the general meeting, the Board retired to elect officers.

Miss Trumbull was chosen president; Grace Hall Wilson (Mrs. John C.), Josephine H. Maxim (Mrs. Hiram P.) and Katherine F. Wadsworth (Mrs. Clarence) vice-presidents; Mrs. Aldrich, secretary; Mrs. William Cheney, treasurer. Committee chairmen were: Finance, Mrs. Barton; House, Mrs. Fisher; Furnishings, Mrs. Robinson; Grounds, Ruth Cheney Goodwin (Mrs. Charles A.); Activities (later called Arts and Interests), Mrs. Rose; Library, Miss Katherine Berry. Dues would be \$35 a year. The original initiation fee was \$35 plus the ownership of at least one bond.

The Town and County Club was fortunate in having Annie Eliot Trumbull as the first president. Annie Eliot, a woman of great distinction and many talents, a civic and social leader, novelist, poet and playwright, was a vigorous 68 when she became president of the Club. For a short time she headed the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association. Her chief fame, though, was as a writer, with over a dozen published books to her credit.

An accomplished amateur actress, she not only wrote plays but acted in them. Two of her plays, "The Masque of Culture" and "The Wheel of Progress", were published and produced in clubs, schools and colleges throughout the country - many times in Hartford, including a performance at the Town and County Club in which she herself took part. A few volumes of her poems and novels are in the Memorial Collection in the Club Library.

On May 21, 1925, Miss Trumbull called the first regular meeting of her Board. At this time the Club was formally incorporated, with the assistance of attorney Barclay Robinson, under the name of "The Town and County Club, Incorporated." The 16 subscribers present signed the Articles of Association, which state the purposes for which the corporation was formed:

"For creating an organized center for women's work, thought and action; advancing the interests of women; promoting science, literature, and art; providing an accessible place of meeting for its members; promoting social intercourse by such means as the members of the corporation shall deem expedient and proper for that purpose, and for acquiring and maintaining a club house and grounds."

## II: ON WOODLAND STREET

The Club was now ready to move into its home. Built in 1895 for Mr. Theodore Lyman, a prominent Hartford attorney, the house was designed by the distinguished local architectural firm of Hapgood and Hapgood. The Lyman house, at 22 Woodland Street, was - and still is - a fine example of the Colonial Revival style. Its light-colored brick exterior, trimmed with limestone, is symmetrical while the interior details and finishing reflect great variety. Each room on the first floor has different woodwork- mahogany, oak, white mahogany, bird's-eye maple and pine. Each of the 17 fireplaces sports a different design in brick or tile or colored glass.

Few structural changes were needed to convert the house to a club in 1925. The first floor members' area was substantially as it is now. The Ballroom was not added for several years, nor was the present members' Dining Room. The major change on the second floor was the removal of partitions and closets between two large south bedrooms to create the Assembly Room. For five years this room was used for meetings, art exhibits, recitals, small dinner dances and members' luncheons.

Most of the house was completely redecorated, but a few of the first floor rooms were left as they were. The Library was unchanged except for the addition of an Italian chandelier from the Charles Dudley Warner house on Forest Street, given by Miss Mary Barton. The first Library Chairman considered putting curtains on the glass doors of the empty bookcases to hide the Club's apparent illiteracy! The Lyman's Dining Room, beautifully paneled in dark mahogany, with two large south windows overlooking a lovely lawn, was used, just as it was, for the Club's main Dining Room until the Ballroom was built. Mr. Lyman's own special room with its birch woodwork and safe became the office and was not done over until a later date.

Some of the larger pieces of furniture were bought with the house. In 2004, it is believed that the large curved sofa in the middle parlor is one of these original pieces. With purchase of the house, the Club also acquired the Lyman gardener, John Jones. Knowing and loving every tree, shrub and plant on the premises, John was an excellent gardener.

By 2004, only five of the houses that had been Woodland Street neighbors when the Club was formed were still standing, and all had been converted to other uses. The Talcott house (#19) became the Woodland Medical Center; the Jacobus house (#39) is the central office for the Connecticut State University System; the Perkins-Clark house (#49) is office space, as are the Cheney



(#40) and Marvin (#38) houses.

In 1975, 80 years after its construction, 22 Woodland Street was accepted for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

### III: A GOLDEN ERA

On November 3, 1925 -woman's work accomplished again in just nine months!- the Club was formally opened with an afternoon reception from 4 to 7 o'clock for members only. To guard against "gate crashing" or its 1925 equivalent, each member was asked to present her invitation at the door. The President and members of the Board were hostesses. The house was decorated with beautiful flower arrangements, elegant refreshments were served and members expressed their appreciation to those who had made it possible to have such a Club in Hartford.

Afternoon teas were inaugurated with the opening of the Club, served by day help from catering services. Within a year, a resident cook and small staff were hired and meal service began. Housekeeping, including "bed" as well as "board," posed endless but interesting problems during the early years. Mrs. Fisher, reminiscing years later about the pre-charter and early days of the Club, told of working in the Smith College tea room on Lewis Street for restaurant experience. As House Chairman, she visited other women's clubs, such as the York Club and the National Arts Club in New York City, for operating and management ideas. All members of her committee went "restaurant hopping" wherever they visited to sample menus that would be attractive and adaptable.

Programs developed quickly and by November of the inaugural year the Club saw the need of a monthly calendar of coming attractions. In November 1925 these included an art exhibit, an evening lecture by an out-of-town speaker, the first members' luncheon, at which Mrs. James P. Andrews (who would later become our fifth president) spoke on "Americanization Work in Hartford," a violin-piano recital with our Miss Helen Tiffany (later to become Mrs. Arthur Graves) at the piano, and finally a Thanksgiving dinner. At the foot of the page a notice read "Bridge every Monday afternoon, 2:30 to 5, in the card room." When Mrs. Maxim died in 1936, her bridge partners, Miss Trumbull, Mrs. Williams and Miss Havemeyer, presented the Club with a clock in her memory to insure that avid bridge players got home in time for dinner.

Miss Trumbull reviewed that first and all important year at the April 28, 1926 meeting: ...

"at this, our second annual meeting, we own a clubhouse valued at one hundred thousand dollars, an enthusiastic Board of Governors, more than 500 members with a long waiting list, and a full complement of ideas on a large number of subjects - and

are about to pay off some of our bonds.

After reviewing "the usual uncertainties and periods of storm and stress" that the Town and County, like any new club, had experienced in its first year, she reasoned that

We may safely conclude, therefore, with the founders of all similar organizations, that people like certain privileges. They like a pleasant place where they may go freely and meet pleasant people and different points of view without social responsibility - a place the advantages of which belong to each one of them in an equal degree; a place where they can sit down at a table and eat food which has not necessitated a personal interview with the cook and the marketman... a place where they can read or play cards or sit about and talk without answering the telephone or sustaining the burden of entertainment- in short, where one can be alone without invidiousness or in company without responsibility ... All these things make for the happiness of faulty human nature, and for these and other demands a club provides.

Miss Trumbull, who was to continue as a member of the Board until 1945, became Honorary President when Josephine Maxim (Mrs. Percy) succeeded to the presidency in 1928.

A leader in the woman's suffrage movement in the state, Mrs. Maxim was the first president of the League of Women Voters of Hartford, and an alternate to the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco in 1920, the year the "Votes for Women" 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified. That same year she was the first Connecticut woman to run as a candidate for the State Senate. Undiscouraged by defeat in that election, she remained a vigorous campaigner for the Democratic Party and served for many years on the Public Welfare Commission, Board of Health and Board of Education, all of Hartford. Mrs. Maxim had a lively sense of humor and loved parties and social events. She was an excellent golfer and bridge player, the first to suggest Contract Bridge at the Club.

It was during Mrs. Maxim's presidency that the Club took on major alterations and additions to the clubhouse. The second floor Assembly Room was proving inadequate in many ways, and the idea of building an auditorium received more and more attention. By the fall of 1929 members were seriously reviewing architectural plans, and the following spring the Board was empowered to spend not more than \$50,000 on new construction. On October 31, 1930, the auditorium, which soon became known as the

Ballroom, was formally opened with an evening reception.

At the time of the Ballroom addition, a new and larger Dining Room was added on the east where there previously had been a small porch. The south windows of the original Dining Room, now the Lounge, were eliminated when the Ballroom was attached to the main structure, French doors were cut through the partition that was originally an exterior wall to connect the Ballroom and Lounge, where the mahogany paneling was regretfully hidden by white paint to brighten the now-windowless room. Construction costs totaled \$50,643, very close to the budgeted figure of \$50,000.

New dining facilities prompted other improvements. The House Committee bought three electric refrigerators to replace old ice chests and estimated that annual running costs of the new appliances would be \$50 in contrast to \$200 a year for block ice. Dues took their first jump, from \$35 to \$40 annually, and the initiation fee increased. The Club was solvent and running smoothly. Then came, not the deluge, but the Depression. Although Hartford did not suffer so severely as many parts of the country, still the Club became more of a luxury than a necessity, and many members had to choose between the two. Membership declined. A women's club in St. Louis, Missouri offered reciprocal privileges, which might have attracted members, but the T&C voted this down as being against policy.

To attract new members the initiation fee was lowered from \$75 to \$40 and committee budgets were cut. The House Committee, bemoaning the loss of income from rentals and restaurant, lowered the price of meals and urged members to use the Club more often, particularly for special parties. Despite the slump in income, the Club still had taxes to pay. In 1930, The Club's property tax was \$1,757.50. (In 2003-2004 it was budgeted at \$72,000.) Looking to the future, the Club made provision for depreciation in its 1930-1931 budget.

Frances Welch Williams was president of the Club during the worst years of the Depression (1932-36.) Mrs. Williams and her successor as president, Julia L. Havemeyer (1936-39), were great ladies in their era, the former involved in every "good work" in the city, the latter a patroness of the arts and music.

Mrs. Williams was a progressive innovator. She was a member of the first Hartford Zoning Commission, the first Board of Trustees of the Bushnell Memorial and the first Board of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. President of the Civic Club, she also headed the Consumers League, whose function was to boycott stores, protesting poor labor practices, and she was an active lobbyist for labor legislation to protect women and children. For 25 years president of the Children's

Village (now The Village for Families and Children), she was responsible for construction of the "Village" buildings at Albany Avenue and Scarborough Street. Mrs. Williams is remembered for her charm and gracious manner as well as the competence she brought to her presidency.

Miss Havemeyer was a noted hostess, loving parties and entertaining with the elegance of a past era. Aspiring young artists and musicians as well as the famous found stimulating company at the "salons" at her homes, first on Washington Street and later on Gillett Street. An avid and observant traveler, she developed a photographic skill that made the records of her trips thoroughly professional travelogues.

When Julia Havemeyer became president in 1936, a "golden era," as her successor remembered it, was ushered in. Each year Miss Havemeyer gave a beautiful party for the Club members. Invariably she provided an interesting program - perhaps an outstanding speaker, or her own slides of a foreign tour - followed by a delicious buffet supper. Service was perfection, with exquisite lace cloths, Venetian glass and lovely flowers, all arrangements for which Miss Havemeyer took personal charge.

Miss Havemeyer's contributions to the Club continued - even after her death in 1942 when James, her former chauffeur, succeeded John Jones, who had been Club gardener since its founding. Surnamed "Havemeyer" by most of the members, James was concerned with every facet of the comfort and care of "his ladies." In the 40's chauffeured cars were no exception and it was James, in the garage, who took the calls summoning chauffeurs to the porte cochere for departure. He considered chauffeured driving the only suitable method of transportation and took a very dim view of the parking ability of those ladies who drove themselves.

When Julia Andrews (Mrs. James P., 1939-42) took up the gavel after this "golden era", she modestly expressed the hope that she would not steer the Club into a "stone or iron age" but there was no danger under her wise leadership. Committee reports dealt with plans for painting the house, making interior alterations and for transforming the unused second floor porch into an out-of-door dining room. This innovation proved impractical. On hot days members preferred the cooler indoor rooms and on cool days no one thought of using the porch.

As much as the Club enjoyed Miss Havemeyer's lovely parties, it was quite good at entertaining itself with amateur theatricals, charades, and costume parties, all, of course, for members only. One of these was a Walt Disney party, with members costumed as blue fairies, little pigs and Walt himself. The hit of the evening was a pair of penguins who turned out to be Mrs. George

H. Gilman and Miss Mabel Wainwright. Another program of the era was a take-off of a symphony orchestra, with Miss Lydia Guernsey of the Oxford School as the conductor.

The Arts and Interests Committee furnished outstanding professional programs as well. Noteworthy were those of Cornelia Otis Skinner, an actress who presented humorous monologues, writer John Mason Brown and literary critic F.P. Adams.

There were musical programs and art exhibits of exceptional merit, with our own members displaying talents in these areas as well as sharing an endless variety of interests in readings, book reviews and talks at membership affairs.

#### IV: WORLD WAR ■■—THEN PEACE, AGAIN

Four months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, triggered the U.S. entry into World War II, Dora Lewis (Mrs. Richard B.) was elected president of the Club (1942-45).

The Club faced the same household problems that plagued its individual members- only to a greater degree. U.S. cities were "blacked out" at night as a defense against potential enemy air raids- and the Town and County Club had to equip 37 of our oversized windows with lugubrious black curtains. The country faced food shortages -and T&C members were warned that they might have to cut their sugar consumption in half and that all coffee might be served in tiny after dinner cups. One Club report of the time describes complete frustration: a total lack of some foods, disconcerting shortages of others, few deliveries and a dwindling if not altogether disappearing staff, as workers left to join the service or take lucrative jobs in defense plants that operated 24 hours a day throughout the Hartford region.

The austerity of the war years curtailed many privileges, as well. There were no more Saturday Night Dinners. Members were limited to a single non-member guest at buffet suppers preceding evening entertainments; Thanksgiving dinners were out for the duration of the war. (These resumed in 1948.) While outside organizations were welcome to continue meeting at the Club, they had to forego their customary tea and homemade cookies. But the members were assured they would not be deprived of their afternoon tea!

The Library Committee cut out all travel magazines as no one could travel anyway. The Grounds Committee showed its patriotism by turning flower beds into vegetable gardens. The Arts and Interests Committee did its best to cheer up the members with as little expense as possible - and some rare entertainment was the result.

Carrie Mead (Mrs. George J.) was elected our seventh president in 1945 and that November the Club gave itself a 20th birthday party, an occasion for thanksgiving as well as celebration, as World War II hostilities had ended only a few months before with the Japanese surrender.

That year of peace was also the year when the original bonds matured. Many of the 800 had been generously given back to the Club and many had been bought back, but there were still some 350 outstanding. The Finance Committee decided to issue new bonds to run 15 years at 4%. Members still holding old bonds were given their choice of \$100 cash or one of the new bonds. Many were glad to take advantage of a good 4% investment, while others loyally turned in their old

bonds for love.

The extraordinary generosity of the members since the inception of the Town and County Club is noteworthy. Their concern for the Club has been expressed in many ways - by substantial cash donations for special projects, by gifts of silverware, furniture, mirrors, paintings, and other household valuables.

Mabel Johnson was an example of such philanthropy. A founding member of the Club, Miss Johnson was its Finance Chairman for 25 years. In addition to seeing us safely through the formative years, a depression and a war, she took out the mortgage of \$50,000 so that we could build the Ballroom and Dining Room. She gradually lowered the interest rate to 3% and in 1956 reduced the principal by \$10,000. By 1960, former gifts and payments had reduced the mortgage to \$25,000. She now cancelled this debt in its entirety. Club members created a permanent record of their gratitude by naming the Ballroom in her honor. A portrait of Miss Johnson hangs on the west wall of the Mabel Johnson Ballroom and was unveiled at the first Members' Luncheon of the Club's 35th anniversary year, in 1960. Florence Hatch succeeded Mabel Johnson as Finance Chairman.

Under the guidance, of Mrs. Mead (1945-47), and then Florence Hatch (Mrs. James W., 1947-50) things were serene but not static. Our Victorian driveways were improved to provide better parking, but no sooner was the area enlarged than the number and size of cars increased. Within, the Fire Department was appeased by installing exit lights, rehanging doors to open outwards, turning a Dining Room window into an exit and cutting an emergency door in the west wall of the Ballroom. In the Assembly Room modern lighting brightened our meetings through the generosity of Dorothy Archibald who made her gift in memory of Muriel Alvord Ward.

Another achievement of the late forties was the modernization of our "Gay Nineties" kitchen and pantry- a big job financed by a bank loan of \$9,000, which was repaid gradually by an annual assessment of \$5.00 per member. The soda cooler with which the restaurant had "made do" during the war years was replaced by a deep freeze at a cost of \$649. In 1951, the Club bought an electric dryer for laundress Annie Harris, who averaged, per week, 250 napkins, 24 tablecloths (some of them four yards long) and 34 bedroom sheets. Annie appreciated the dryer's convenience, but grieved for her old line of super-white linens a-flutter in the back yard.

As the Club approached the quarter century mark, it was felt a real celebration was in order. The new president, Eliza-



beth van Dyke (Mrs. Tertius, 1950-53) appointed Dora Lewis chairman of a special committee and a request, if not a decree, went forth that everyone was to come garbed in the spirit of 1925. Anything from a ball gown to a bathing suit would be permitted - and full advantage was taken of that permissiveness. Solomon, or rather the Queen of Sheba, was never arrayed as were the Town and County ladies that night with waists down to the hip bone or lower, skirts at or above the knee, and the evening dresses, if not the bathing suits, bead encrusted and garlanded.

In 1950 anti-war concern prompted a United Nations study group and special programs with authoritative speakers to present views and information on possible roads to world peace.

Over the years much of the landscaped beauty of our grounds has been sacrificed to necessity. The south lawn, where a colorful garden party was held in the late 20's, disappeared when the Ballroom was built. Bites were taken out of the landscaping as the parking area was enlarged and the driveways widened. The perennial garden finally gave way to a meadow in 1952 to accommodate more cars, but, as parking areas expanded, so did the number- and size - of cars.

Next-door neighbor Immanuel Congregational Church asked if the Club would permit parking by church members on Sunday mornings and, after due consideration of snow removal, liability and supervision of the lot by the church sexton, the Board said yes.

In 1954 the Club finally settled a question that had vexed it almost all its days. When the T & C was organized in 1925, Prohibition was the law of the land. A prohibition against serving alcohol at the Club was written into its constitution as Bylaw VII.

Then, in 1933, Congress approved the Twenty-First Amendment, repealing Prohibition, and most states, Connecticut included, quickly ratified the Congressional move. It was now legal to buy, sell, and consume alcoholic beverages in Connecticut.

But at the Town and County? At the May 1934, Board meeting, the "question" surfaced openly. The Board deliberated, then voted five months later, 15 for, three against, repeal of the Club's prohibitory bylaw. The next month the Board pondered the advisability of a special membership meeting on the matter, but not until March 1935, was it decided that such a meeting should be called. Then, at the annual meeting March 24, 1935, those who had been discussing the "question" over teacups at the Club as well as over husband-poured cocktails at home finally found an open forum.

Despite the fact that the majority of those who spoke were against any change (their chief reason: the difficulty if not impossibility of control), 125 voted for repeal and 118 against. However, since the bylaws required a vote of two-thirds of the membership for passage, no change could take place. At the 1936 annual meeting, that bylaw was amended to two-thirds of the membership present by a vote of 369 to 6. Still, the anti-alcohol rule remained in place.

In 1940 the House Committee recommended to the Board that champagne or wine punch be served at receptions. The recommendation was tabled. There was no recorded action for eight more years, but there was talk-at a February 1948 meeting, the Board voted to cut off all discussion of wine service in the Ballroom. Still, the proponents of wine service did not desist. They succeeded a year later in having the question put to the membership in a more or less informal poll. More than half the members replied, 203 in favor of repeal, 73 opposed. In March 1949 the Board voted 15 to 2 that the matter should be submitted to the membership for consideration -without a recommendation but not, perhaps, without some prejudice, as a closed ballot at the meeting showed 14 Board members opposed to any change, only 3 in favor.

The next month, the annual meeting was enlivened by a spirited discussion pro and con, climaxing with a vote of 53 for and 58 against serving champagne in the Ballroom at members' receptions. Voted down again, the "question" was dormant for another five years. Then, in 1954, the House Committee asked the Board to consider taking another champagne vote. Members held a special meeting to consider the permissive change in the bylaws and "champagne or champagne punch served in the Ballroom at receptions given by members" won a 120 to 13 victory.

Still the Club had no bar, no "cocktail hour." Apart from the cocktail controversy, Rose Critchfield, (Mrs. Howard E.) president from 1953 to 1956, reported her first year had been "peaceful with no crises to tax our energies." Perhaps the first impact of changing times might be traced to 1955, when in her second annual report, Mrs. Critchfield urged that a beginning be made on a long-term period of rehabilitation. "I wonder if the time has come to take stock of our program. Have we become too complacent, going along for years in the same pattern?" she asked.

To "take stock" was to become deeply involved in Club activities. Mrs. Critchfield's successor, Dorothy Archibald (Mrs. Thomas L., 1956-58), remarked in her first annual report that she had attended 45 Board and committee meetings during one year alone.

## **V: FINANCIAL CRISES AND THE RESOLUTION OF BYLAW VII**

The late 50's and early 60's brought new challenges to our city Club whose members were moving to suburbia. The character of Woodland Street began to change: several of the old homes were torn down and replaced with condominiums and office buildings. Creative use of historic properties was not a factor in planning at the time.

The first portent of rising costs and falling income appeared in deficit Finance Committee reports, particularly serious in the 1959-60 fiscal year. The house was getting to an age when increasing maintenance expenses were to be expected, as evidenced by a \$5,000 plumber's bill. Not only the building but some of our most loyal staff were showing signs of advancing years.

Dues were a major item in the budget that was based on a membership of 500. A dues increase of \$20 for residents and \$10 for non-residents was voted at the 1960 annual meeting. It was anticipated that this additional income would balance next year's \$71,000 budget, which had been figured on a new basis, including for the first time restaurant income and expenses. However, the financial situation deteriorated month after month. Expenses mounted and the membership number reached a critical low of 475 in 1960 and was to drop to 460 the next year.

For many years the Club had enjoyed a remarkable record in management staff. From 1925 to 1958 we had only three House Managers serving with Miss Rees- Mrs. Frederic Goodwin, Eva Jones and Katherine Stuart, and later Elizabeth Siddall. Katharine Stuart continued along with Mrs. Alfie Fugge, whose part-time employment became permanent in 1956 when Miss Rees retired. Our first resident Executive Secretary was Miss Mildred Hull, who was established in Club quarters in 1957.

Mildred Hull's resignation in 1960 was followed by seven changes in executive personnel. There were staff illnesses that meant double expense for substitute kitchen and dining room help. Conditions that were to recur in the twenty-first century: plumbing breakdowns, expensive electrical work, necessary replacement of equipment, rising insurance premiums and increased taxes, meant that the Club resorted to short term bank loans while reserve funds were disappearing. It is difficult to contemplate what conditions might have been without Mabel Johnson's beneficence. The president who saw the Club through three of these battering years was Hope Roberts (Mrs. Douglas J.) (1958-61).

In addition to the financial difficulties, Mrs. Roberts pre-

sided over the decision to allow a more permissive liquor policy. Several members resigned merely in anticipation of further revision of Bylaw VII. In September 1960 the motion to allow "alcoholic beverages to be served only to Club members and their guests" passed by four votes. Mrs. Roberts was our delegate to the State Liquor Commission. Undaunted by this responsibility (but, she confessed, with some trepidation) she brought home in triumph the Club's liquor license.

Inauguration of liquor service did not come at a financially happy time. Moreover, the bar, operated by a professional barman (hearsay, not documented, has it that members felt their husbands might have cause to criticize a "ladies bar") contributed to the Club deficit for many months. The detailed House Committee reports continued to show a decrease in meals served and beds slept in as well as the deficit for "afternoon and evening refreshments."

The finance report of January 1962 stated bluntly that the Club was in a period of crisis. Property revaluation meant the Club taxes doubled, jumping to \$7,000. There was talk of selling 22 Woodland Street and locating elsewhere. The possible relocation of the Club was to be a recurring theme. As early as 1954 there had been discussion about the availability of the Cooley house on Prospect Avenue. In 1965 the Immanuel Congregational Church indicated interest in buying our property if and when it ever came on the market. Its value at that time was approximately \$500,000. Some felt that with values skyrocketing and another tax reassessment to come, serious consideration should be given to relocation. At that time a concerned committee investigated in depth, and the matter was to come up again in 1969 and 1972. We are still here.

A survey was made early in 1962 by a representative of the University of Connecticut Extension Service toward a more efficient operation of the housekeeping facilities. Despite an increase in the number of meals served, the restaurant deficit mounted until the Personnel Committee (until 1963 a House sub-committee) brought the wage items in line. Club policies for holidays, sick pay, salary schedules and job descriptions were put in writing. The effect of careful supervision of wage items was financially gratifying, although the turnover in staff during 1961-62 presented incredible difficulties and added greatly to overhead. During her first year as president, Gwen Smith (Mrs. Allan K.) (1961-63) worked with three Executive Secretaries, and six different people worked on the books.

However, in her annual report as outgoing president a year later, Mrs. Smith was able to predict a brighter and more tranquil future. The House chairman gratefully acknowledged the

achievements of "a hardworking crew (who) guided our ship into calm waters. We are all aware of the delightful homelike atmosphere that permeates the Club, which is a good sign we have passed over the troubled waters."

After World War II, an increasingly informal environment in the Club reflected the changing times. Fewer hats and white gloves were seen at luncheons and teas. More husbands were in attendance in the evening with business suits replacing formerly *de rigueur* dinner jackets. No longer did hostesses have to rush their guests through cocktails at home to meet the dinner hour at the Club. Then too, cocktails before lunch instead of a leisurely afternoon tea better suited the busier life style of the 60's. The bar was to prove a financial asset.

"Afternoon and evening refreshments," carried in the household accounts as "bar," finally led the way in the climb to solvency. A 1962-63 House Committee "before and since bar" comparable period survey showed a total of 1200 more dinners served "since." The originally strict "where and when" liquor service rules were slowly relaxed. By 1966 bar profits were helping to equal restaurant deficits. Another dues increase of \$20 for residents and \$10 for nonresidents occurred in 1962. Membership had grown by that time to 512, including 39 non-resident members. A 15% service charge on restaurant, bar and rental bills was initiated and the Employees' Fund was incorporated in the budget. The Finance Committee anticipated the Club would get through 1962-63 without borrowing. At the 1963 annual meeting Mrs. Smith was given "a rising, clamoring, enthusiastic and grateful vote of thanks for her two arduous, time-consuming and valiant years in office."

Despite these years of problems on both sides of the pantry door, Club programs were lively and attracting more attendance and participation. In 1959 the present duplicate bridge series was inaugurated, successful and profitable from the beginning, under the direction of Mrs. Theodosia Emory. Then came the Little Evenings, member-guest bridge luncheons and theater parties, all popular innovations. Board teas for the membership began at this time. There was a sustained excellence of programmed events by the Arts and Interests and Library committees.

When Sybil Young (later Mrs. Victor G. Barringer, Jr.) succeeded Mrs. Smith in 1963, the financial pressures were easing and the staff was approaching normalcy.

The year ended with revenues outdistancing expenditures by over \$9,000, and the Treasurer was able to report the rebuilding of reserve funds. During the summer much interior refurbishing had been done, the house painted and the drive-

ways and parking area resurfaced - all paid for out of current income.

The fortunes of the Club continued to improve through Mrs. Barringer's three terms as president. By 1966 resident membership was at its limit of 500, with a long waiting list. An eager House Committee could begin to de-emphasize economies. The Assembly Room was redecorated from bare floors and no draperies to wall-to-wall carpeting, draperies and new furniture. The White Room, at the Woodland Street end of the second floor, was done over as a gift from a member; downstairs the Lounge and Parlors were freshened with paint; furniture was reupholstered, new draperies were installed and a new Dining Room floor was laid.

A major change in Club management was instituted in 1965, centralizing duties. Miss Ann Barnes, employed the previous year, was given the title of Club Manager with responsibility for staff supervision, dining excellence and satisfactory maintenance of building and grounds. Mrs. Edith Crockett, appointed her assistant the next year, was to succeed Miss Barnes, who resigned in 1971.

Members were busier than ever, planning and attending events in an ever-expanding program. French and Spanish classes had several years of popularity; many enjoyed crewel instruction; duplicate bridge and lessons continued as a leading attraction. A birthday party in 1965 highlighted the 40th anniversary year. Past presidents played themselves in an historical skit, "Good Old Daisies," written for the occasion by Elizabeth van Dyke.

## VI: THE CHANGING NEIGHBORHOOD

Changes came to Woodland Street with a vengeance during the 60's. For several years we were surrounded by modern development, with its attendant construction noises, dust and confusion. The Medical Arts offices and Woodland House were built across the street, and next door there was the Parish House expansion. Then the Garvan house on our north was demolished in preparation for Regency Towers. This led to the discovery that we had been using six feet of our neighbor's property for driveway and parking space long enough to establish "squatters' rights" if we chose litigation to legalize ownership. Instead, we agreed to give up the land in exchange for fencing and plantings of our choice on our side. After months of mistakes and delays the work was complete, permitting nature to take over and screen the north boundary.

With an eye to our frontage on Woodland Street, the developers of Regency Towers, the large apartment complex, predicted that we would be forced out by tax increases within five years. After a thorough study, a courageous Long Range Planning Committee recommended unanimously that the Club should not feel uneasy about our future and should plan to stay at 22 Woodland Street for the foreseeable future, continuing to maintain and improve buildings and grounds.

However, once it was decided that the Club would remain in its present location, it was agreed that the kitchen demanded immediate attention. Harsh words- antique, outmoded, unsafe- described the kitchen facilities that weren't even up to the minute when remodeled in 1947. A \$20,000 modernization program was voted at the 1966 annual meeting to be paid for by a \$40 per member assessment. Another less expensive but welcome improvement about this time was the sound-proofing of the Ballroom.

Mrs. Barringer's busy years "left the Club in excellent shape," according to her successor, Dorothy Tennant (Mrs. Robert) (1966-68), who noted in her first annual report that the two major projects, the Kitchen and Ballroom, had been most satisfactorily completed. Through the generosity of several members, funds for these improvements were loaned without interest, members' assessments repaying these loans in 1968. Even though annual income was keeping ahead of expenses now, early warning signals of a fiscal foe, inflation, that would affect all future operations were heeded by Mrs. Tennant's Board. Cost of food, labor, maintenance repairs, insurance and taxes were rising with no relief in sight. Another increase in dues was imminent.

Repetition cannot dull the luster of committee effort, staff cooperation and future planning that has been necessary in every year of our history to keep the Club running smoothly for the comfort and pleasure of its members. The years of Mrs. Tennant's presidency and those of her successor Virginia Spencer (later Mrs. Ellsworth S. Grant) from 1968 to 1970, were no exception.

The Internal Revenue Service informed us in 1966 that the Club was violating its tax-exempt status, with more than the allowable percentage of income coming from non-member functions. We brought that in line and remained tax-exempt.

A severe drought threatened our extensive new plantings one summer, the next February two rubber-booted volunteers, Edith Crockett and Mrs. Fugge, were seen (but unfortunately not photographed) sweeping water off the Dining Room roof after a torrential rain. Mary Shea, who had come to the Club as a parlor maid in the very early days, retired in 1966. Her note, acknowledging our gift of appreciation for her years of solicitude for our needs in many categories of service, was signed "Mary, Keeper of the Minks."

The Personnel Committee was reactivated in 1969 to undertake a comprehensive job analysis to adjust salaries and job descriptions. Restaurant and bar prices had been increased in 1967 to offset rising expenses. The next year the kitchen assessment was continued as a permanent addition, bringing resident dues to \$120, and the initiation fee to \$150. In 1970 the House Committee reported they had held the line on food prices as long as possible and another increase brought dinners to \$4.00, cocktails and wine to 90 cents.

Faced with rising costs on every front, the Long Range Planning Committee in 1969 made another study of the economic expedience of moving the Club. Again, after much thought and research, it was concluded that the cost of duplicating our present facilities elsewhere would be prohibitive. Attention then focused on the problem of our barn, a relic of the days of horse and carriage and a handsome building in its own right. A committee recommended that it was no longer practical to maintain the sizeable structure. Demolition of the 75-year-old barn and construction of a new garage with storage facilities took place with a minimum of inconvenience to anyone but the members of the Long Range, Finance, House and Grounds committees, who spent many hours with engineers, architects and builders to achieve success, including several more needed parking spaces.



During Mrs. Grant's second term, the Club was faced

with another expensive project. After three furnace emergencies in as many years, the Club replaced the 34-year-old boiler, with no disruption to life above stairs.

These projects had scarcely been completed and the hard-working committee retired when the newly elected president, Greta Cheney (Mrs. Kimberly, 1970-73), was confronted with the gravest threat yet to the continued occupancy of 22 Woodland Street. As a result of the periodic review of city property values, our assessment had gone from \$163,000 to \$313,500. Even if the tax rate remained the same, which was problematic as there was a good possibility of an increase, our taxes would almost double, from \$12,028 to \$23,146.

Unfortunately our lawyer could find no evidence of overvaluation in view of recent real estate sales in the area. There was cold comfort in the legal recommendation: "Recognizing the financial strain that the increased tax will put on the Club, it may be necessary to increase the members' dues to meet the additional cost. In view of the extent to which the dues would have to be raised, with no assurance that the tax burden will level off in the future, the Club might give serious consideration to disposing of the present Club property and relocating in facilities, which would be more economical. The first step toward investigating this possibility might be obtaining a realistic analysis and evaluation of the present facilities by a qualified appraiser."

Mrs. Cheney called together another committee to study the long-range future of the Club in the light of this advice. The appraiser's report valued our land at a minimum of \$600,000 and a maximum of \$800,000. The clubhouse itself would succumb to the bulldozer. He predicted, in January 1971, that by 1975 the property tax would soar to \$50,000, and, pointing out that the Club was situated in a deteriorating neighborhood, advised us to move. Space and facilities required "to produce a modern, streamlined, efficient operation" were analyzed by the appraiser and conscientiously reviewed by the study committee.

It was during the course of these deliberations that the director of Asylum Hill, Inc., a newly formed work and study project sponsored by the leaders of the substantial business interests on the "Hill," informed the Club of their efforts to upgrade and stabilize the neighborhood through community cooperation. The Board responded by the appointment of a Public Relations Committee to support efforts of Asylum Hill, Inc. as our interests and needs of the organization might dictate. It was agreed that this committee's

immediate focus would be to identify and research the Hill's remaining historic houses, including our own clubhouse.

During Mrs. Grant's second term, the Club was faced

The various possibilities being explored by the Future Planning Committee and the financial condition of the Club were realistically reported by Greta Cheney at a business meeting called after the members' luncheon in February 1971. Although the threat of eventually being taxed out of house and into a new home hung over our heads, the overwhelming sentiment of the membership confirmed the committee consensus that we should take whatever steps needed to stay at 22 Woodland Street as long as possible. Clearly we preferred "gracious atmosphere" to "streamlined efficiency."

The most needed steps were financial, of course. Resident dues went from \$120 to \$200, non-resident from \$60 to \$100, initiation fees from \$150 to \$200. With inflation having taken hearty bites out of reserve funds, \$20 of annual dues would now be earmarked for reserves. Bravely, the Club undertook more improvements that summer: renovation of the Dining Room, redecoration of other areas, and installation of air conditioning in the Assembly and Dining Rooms. Even though Mrs. Cheney noted in her second annual report that 1971-72 had been a successful year and that "our beautiful Club is safe for another few years," there were, as usual, unforeseen difficulties.

The Internal Revenue Service was in the picture again, a repeat of its 1966 visit. A new law went into effect in January 1971, further limiting the allowable amount of income from non-member functions at private clubs. Whereas we had been trying to increase rentals, now we had to turn down new applicants. Additional Arts and Interests programs and special dinners were scheduled to compensate for the loss of rental income. Response was gratifying and profitable as Club attendance grew steadily, setting new records.

Miss Ann Barnes resigned in 1971 after six and a half years with the Club. Mrs. Edith Crockett succeeded as Club Manager with Cora Fugge as her assistant. Minor emergencies that year saw noteworthy staff and member cooperation to insure a smooth operation. Prominent among the all-purpose members were Mary Addison Rees who came to our aid in the office and member Helen Dryhurst who supplemented her House Committee chairmanship with housekeeping chores. Allen Dryhurst, one of our best friends, was busy as usual with hoe, rake and hose, functioning as an auxiliary member of the Grounds Committee. The Dryhursts and the Barringers were honored by Greta Cheney's Board with a "thank you" party at the Club for their many years, and continuing, "beyond the call" service.

In the summer of 1973 major changes were made on the second floor. The kitchen was modernized and an efficient serving bar was installed, a small card room and the

ened by redecoration.

Despite rising costs, major expenditures, and a budget that put the Town and County Club definitely in the category of big business, Mrs. Cheney's three-year term ended with the Club sound and stable economically and socially.

Helen H. Dixon, elected our 18th president in May 1973, succeeded to the usual and some unusual situations. That December, the Club suffered with the community from a severe ice storm and power outage, and there were shortages in gasoline and oil. Cost of food as well as energy fuels constantly increased. It is interesting to note that for the first time, members' given names as well as their married names were listed in the Club's directory.

Lyman Room (the present bookkeeping area) were bright-

## VII: FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Anticipation of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Club in 1975 was reflected in house improvement planning during the 1974-75 fiscal year. A special committee undertook the cataloguing of every item in every room, noting, when known, origin or donor. Such a close survey revealed needed repair work in numerous categories to put the Club in mint condition for the anniversary year. Preliminary estimates for upholstery, cleaning, furniture repair, interior and exterior painting came to more than \$25,000. The Board voted to meet the costs of this program by an assessment rather than drawing down reserve funds held for taxes and inflation.

Improvement in Library lighting, needed since 1925, called a "must" by the House Committee in 1966, was finally realized in 1974. New ceilings in this room, both parlors, and the pantry necessitated sheetrocking over the 80-year-old plaster beyond repair throughout the house. The lounge between the East Parlor and the Dining Room was brightened by a new crystal chandelier, with matching brackets on each side of a floor to ceiling pier glass. This mirror, gift of Mrs. J. Hamilton Scranton, one of our charter members, was for many years in the second floor lounge, once designated as the Brides' Dressing Room. The gold leaf pediment, long forgotten in the attic, is now in its proper place.

Other attic treasures were dusted *off* and brought to light during the "houselifting" process. A magnificent piece of cut glass was discovered in the old flower room under the Ballroom and transformed into a lamp for the East Parlor. The original brass valances were restored to the Front Parlor, and Mr. Richard Hughes, husband of Virginia, rescued and polished the brass fireplace fender now further brightening the Library. The house was safeguarded by a smoke detection system, replacement of old electric wiring, and construction of a firewall at the top of the stairs that at last satisfied the Fire Department inspectors.

The day before the Club reopened after the renovations, the entire House Committee removed plaster dust with Q Tips and lemon oil from the intricate woodwork of the Library and staircase. As exhaustion set in, Emma, the cook, suddenly produced hamburgers and fresh tomatoes served buffet style in the kitchen. Jessie, the waitress, said the Club was so beautiful it gave her the shivers, but, she added, "What gives me the most shivers is how much the members love their Club."

The efforts toward refurbishing of the Club paid *off* handsomely. At the annual meeting on May 8, 1975, Helen Dixon, the outgoing president, said, "It is a wall to wall, year round, night and day and week-end endeavor, held together by mutual reliance

and respect between Club employees, members, the Board of Governors and the President. No one does anything alone."

"The success of the endeavor" was marked by attendance of 300 individual members during the month of October alone.

To climax our anniversary year we received official notification that the house had been accepted by the National Register of Historic Places and that we were now registered as an Historic Monument. The plaque designating the building as an Historic Monument may be seen next to the entrance door.

In spite of the anniversary improvements, much remained to be done. The Ballroom was never intended to be a dining room: "tea and light evening refreshments" only were to be served. By the nineteen sixties four Club luncheons or dinners and several rentals were served there each month. Service was provided, rain or shine, summer and winter, by one of two methods: (1) outdoors, down the kitchen porch steps and through the ballroom entrance, or (2) through the dining room, through a narrow door, down four dark steep steps to the promenade, where, alas, service was visible to the guests. Often 150 people were served in one of these two manners. Clearly, something had to be done.

The architect, Mr. Sherwood Jeter, husband of Edwina, volunteered his services. He designed an ingenious enclosed passageway along the east side of the Dining Room from the Kitchen to a service area in a portion of the promenade of the Ballroom. The two levels, however, remained a problem. What could be done? A gently sloping floor? No. A cart might get loose! Five steps instead of four? A kind of dumb waiter to lower trays to another waitress?

Finally, one day in desperation, Greta Cheney, the House Chairman, went on an expedition to the industrial area of Hartford. She entered several hopeful looking factories and stated her problem to surprised personnel. Ultimately she found what she wanted: a lift. (Technically, a scissors hoist.) It was just the right size to accommodate a dish cart, and would fit perfectly in the passage. Today this same lift is still in use. Stringent rules have always prevented a human being - handicapped or otherwise - from using it. This new facility greatly improved the ease and efficiency of ballroom service.

For many years the House Committee had wanted a suitable carpet for the Library. When Mrs. Vincent Wilcox died in 1975, Mrs. Cheney remembered that she owned a large beautiful oriental rug. She persuaded Mrs. Wilcox's brother, Mr. Robert Knox, to allow her to measure it. She measured first the Library, then the carpet. Eureka! It fit within inches! Mr. Knox kindly allowed us to purchase it for its estate value of \$4,000. It is a rare Indian Ardabil. The carpet was paid for in part by profits from

Bridge, art sales, and Mrs. Cheney's Lenten Bible lectures. In 1989, due to the generous gift of two members, the Library furniture was upholstered to harmonize with the carpet.

At the Board of Governors meeting of March 1976, the Treasurer's report made us feel a bit poor. Suddenly there was a knock on the door, and Club Manager Mrs. Crockett handed President Martha Morrisson (1975-77), a letter. It was a legacy of \$20,000 from Mrs. Ross Allen in memory of her cat Grimmalkin! For some time we had been feeling the acute need for more space during the pre-meal cocktail hour, because many members could not climb the stairs to the second floor. The elegant columned front entrance was never used. Why not make it a porch? This would bring light and air into our attractive hallway.

Work went well; by the summer of 1977 the porch was finished, except for heat. Then we struck a snag. The building inspector refused us a permit. Our chairman called him. "No basement, no heat," he said. "Aha," she replied, "We do have a basement. The most beautiful in the world." He came to inspect it and declared, "They don't build'em like that anymore!"

Another great need, which far exceeded Mrs. Allen's bequest, was to air-condition the Ballroom. The compromise was three large fans over the balcony which did help some. The remainder of the bequest went for the beautiful memorial garden designed by Miss Mary Edwards, which has now been moved to the parking island. For many years a photo of Grimmalkin and a small statue of a cat were on the front porch. Alas, the statue has now disappeared.

In April of 1977 annual dues were raised to \$240 and drinks from \$1.10 to \$1.50. The Arts and Interests Committee that year reported "enormously successful art exhibits" with commissions from sales after expenses of \$2,728.

Since 1925 it had been customary for the President to preside over all Club functions -two luncheons, two dinners and any special events every month, and to provide cocktails except wine in the Library beforehand (at her own expense). This custom was changed, making committee chairmen the hostesses, and drinks at Club expense.

Due to the illness and death of our Club President, Josie Manternach, (Mrs. Bruce W.) who was elected in 1977 and died that same year, the Vice President, Billie Sharpe (Mrs. Carleton F.) (1977-78), ably finished out her term.

In 1978 the painter who did the outside trim refused to paint the front pediment because of a bees' nest. All sorts of experts were consulted who agreed that it was too high to get at. Finally, the brave painter said, "Well, I'll just plaster it over; they'll die of suffocation!" They didn't! They invaded the attic;

when that entrance/exit was plugged they descended to bedroom #1. At last in 1990 an intrepid exterminator was found who smoked them out. No one knows where the honey is!

An important change in the bylaws was voted in 1978. Two separate committees, offshoots of the overworked House Committee, were created: Personnel and Restaurant and Bar, both with voting chairmen. In her first annual Personnel Committee report, Mrs. Dorothy Wulp complained of "galloping inflation." In April of that year the Community Relations Committee (under the Program Committee) invited "14 private, public, and business chairmen of the Asylum Hill community for luncheon and discussion." The busy Library Committee reported 973 books taken out by 301 members. Their high point of the year was a lecture by Virginia Chase Perkins entitled "A Defense of Fiction."



## VIII: PERSONNEL CHANGES

The presidency of Mary Hoffer (Mrs. Frederic, Jr.) (1978-80), began with another modernizing project. The ladies' room on the second floor still had a toilet with a wooden seat and a water tank, a huge marble bathtub with clawed feet, and a double marble washbasin (which is still there.) Antiquity had to give way to modern convenience at last! The plumber's bill was astronomical because he had to go through walls "three feet thick." In one crevice he found a calling card of Mrs. Louis Cheney - a charter member. It took six men to carry the tub downstairs and out to the garage. The committee hoped to sell it as a "rare old antique."

On May 1, 1979, Mrs. Hoffer received a blow: without warning Edith Crockett resigned as Club Manager. She had been with us since 1968, and the burden suddenly got too heavy. Her quiet efficiency and gentle manner belied her sturdy "down under" Maine courage and determination. Unfortunately, Mrs. Fugge, the stalwart second in command who had been with us since 1962, was in poor health. She resigned in 1981. Miss Saunders took over temporarily.

In addition to her position as Manager, Mrs. Crockett lived on the third floor of the Club. She, therefore, had become responsible for its security, an increasing burden in a changing neighborhood. It was impossible to find another live-in manager. The Personnel Committee engaged two male students to live in two third floor rooms and patrol the house at night. Eight years later, a third floor utility room was transformed into a nice kitchenette, and a shower was installed in one of the bathrooms. This provided our agents-in-residence with most satisfactory living quarters.

The search for a manager ended in March 1980, with the selection of Mrs. Grace Einsel, hostess par excellence.

A new problem confronted the President, Noni Fairlie (Mrs. Chester, Jr.) (1980-82) in 1981. She describes it as "the year of the cooks" because of the resignation of long-time cook, Emma Kufita. She had often stayed overnight at the Club during bad weather to be sure and be there the next day. After a succession of failures in the kitchen, a replacement was eventually found.

One of Mrs. Einsel's first parties in February 1983, was entitled "Farewell to the Bathtub." Said bathtub, which had cluttered the garage for five years, had been sold! Mrs. Einsel's talented husband Dick had it brought into the ballroom where he decorated it with balloon sculpture and serenaded it with appropriate music.

Despite a ten year plan, it always seemed that urgent expenses, such as repairing a frequently leaking roof, pruning our huge and beautiful trees, or insulating and replacing the attic floor because someone fell through it, interfered with the large picture. A continuing problem was security: there had been two burglaries and one mugging in the parking lot, fortunately without serious injury. Since 1980 there had been a guard after dark, and burglar and smoke alarm systems which seemed to need constant updating.

During Hope Allen's (Mrs. John C.) presidency (1983-85), membership stood at 508 active with a waiting list of 12. By 1984 the Treasurer's Report showed a Restaurant and Bar profit of \$6,000, a reserve fund of \$130,000 and a contingency fund of \$40,000. "We are in a position to consider major Club improvements," said Finance Committee Chairman Ohlheiser, and Mrs. Allen concurred.

On the advice of an *ad hoc* committee, an engineer, Harold Erlandson, was retained to advise us on (1) a new roof, (2) washing the brick exterior which had become a dingy gray, and (3) air conditioning the ballroom and house. At the annual meeting of 1984, however, only the air conditioning of the Ballroom was approved, with an assessment of \$150. It is interesting to note that the new electric hook-up from the street cost almost as much as the air conditioning itself. The whole house could have been done for another \$10,000. This was a decision we have since come to rue!

The Ballroom was ready by the spring of 1985, in time for the sixtieth anniversary. That summer the roof was repaired again, and the house was washed - becoming a soft yellow instead of a dingy gray, and layers of old paint were removed from the woodwork before repainting. The Club looked beautiful from the outside, but it was apparent that the nineteenth century building - however beautiful - could not survive without twentieth century amenities, and these were extremely expensive.

The *ad hoc* committee, now working with an architect, Roger Clarke, concluded that our necessities were: a modern kitchen convenient to both the Dining Room and Ballroom; an efficient bar close to the dining areas; air conditioning of the house; handicapped access and AN ELEVATOR. It took a year and the hard work of many committees to synchronize all of these items into a workable whole. Finally, the package was presented to the membership at the annual meeting of June 1986. After a great deal of discussion, especially over the wisdom of a mort-

gage, all was finally approved (except for air conditioning the house) to be financed by a twenty-year mortgage. Happily, some generous gifts were made to reduce its size.

Club President, Margery Weed (Mrs. Chester A.) (1985-87), remembers the experience thus:

"Surely the renovation brought about more planning, discussion and controversy than any issue perhaps since the serving of liquor on the premises. ...No issue was raised more often than the installation of the elevator. We have it! It is used and appreciated."

During President Weed's term, our manager, Mrs. Einsel, resigned after six successful but hectic years. After much debate as to whether or not it was "fitting" for a woman's club to have a male manager, Mr. James P. Standish, a young gentleman with the highest qualifications, was selected. His devotion to the Club was to be a great asset. One memorable Saturday-his day off- instinct told him to go to the Club. There ensued an epic battle with a squirrel who was engaged in shredding the parlor draperies. Mr. Standish won.

Geneve Brown (Mrs. Richard) (1987-89), was president of the Club during the period of construction of the new kitchen and installation of the elevator. She and her Board kept activities on an even keel during this time of inevitable upheaval, and she provided the membership with timely periodic updates of progress through the monthly bulletin.

In 1990 the Club was faced with two major concerns, one constant and the other new. In 1975, the year of our fiftieth anniversary, the budget was \$175,625- in 1990 it was \$928,313. The property tax in 1975 was \$27,000 versus \$50,000 in 1990, and it was estimated that it would go as high as \$72,000 in 1991. In addition there was an annual mortgage payment of \$78,000.

A second concern was that of declining membership. In 1990 our resident membership number was less than 430. This drop was partially due to an unprecedented phenomenon of the eighties: the opening of two area retirement communities offering their own attractive dining rooms and entertainment. This resulted in many resignations and, due to transportation difficulties, several of the sixty-two individuals in retirement communities who continued their membership were able to use the Club very seldom.

When the Club celebrated its sixty-fifth year as an organization, Ellen Zeman (Mrs. Peter M.) was president. Our handsome house was filled with a profusion of beautiful flower arrangements, as it was in 1925, and enjoyed a membership of women as active and enthusiastic as its founding members.

## Town & County Women

### In the Connecticut Women's **Hall** of Fame

Beatrice Fox Auerbach 1887-1968

Business leader and philanthropist, president of G. Fox & Company, Hartford department store

Evelyn Longman Batchelder 1874-1954

Sculptor, creator of Bushnell Park's *Spirit of Victory*

Katharine Seymour Day 1870-1964

Grand-niece of Harriet Beecher Stowe, preservationist for the Harriet Beecher Stowe House and Mark Twain House at Nook Farm

Katharine Houghton Hepburn 1878-1951

Champion of women's rights and planned parenthood

Mary Goodrich Jenson 1907-2004

First woman with her own by-line in the *Hartford Courant*, first woman in Connecticut to have a pilot's license

Ellen Ash Peters b. 1930

First woman to be named Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court

Theodate Pope Riddle 1867-1946

Noted architect who designed the Hill-Stead Museum, Avon Old Farms, and Westover Schools

Hilda Crosby Standish b. 1902

First medical director of Connecticut's first birth control clinic

Chase Going Woodhouse 1890-1984

First woman Secretary of the State of Connecticut

## IX: THE LAST DECADE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the 90's the Club responded to the need for increased membership by adding several categories. The Club offered membership to widowers of deceased members, a category called Special Associates. Junior Members, under 40, could join for reduced costs. Eventually men were able to join the Club, without the widower status required earlier.

Ellen Zeman (Mrs. Peter M., 1989-91) presided over the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala of the Club. To help the Manager in our busy restaurant, John Bates began as the Dining Room Supervisor. The Club reached out to the local community, and began the tradition of giving gifts to local children in Asylum Hill. The Hospitality Committee and Hospitality tables began so that new members could feel comfortable and welcome.

The opening of two retirement communities had serious implications for our aging membership, and with Eleanor Flynn (Mrs. Frederick J., later Mrs. John Cartland, 1991-93) as president, both Junior Members and men were admitted. The imposing grandfather clock in the foyer, originally housed in the Wiremold Corporation in West Hartford, was donated by the Murphy family. The governance structure changed as the size of the Board of Governors was reduced. The Club continued to reach out to the neighborhood as the Community Relations Committee grew in popularity and activities.

Governance and an aging and dwindling membership were problems which continued during the term of Eleanor (Elly) Hayes, (Mrs. Donald J., 1993-95). The Club received a wonderful surprise: a \$60,000 legacy from the estate of Grace Swift Nye, an avid bridge player and long-time member. Some of the funds were used to seek professional help from a consulting firm, as recommended by the Strategic Planning Committee. The Club's mission was abbreviated to read: "The Town and County Club, Incorporated, shall create and maintain for its members an environment which fosters cultural, intellectual and social development."

The results of the consultant's survey were revealing: 50% of the membership was over 70. The Club was viewed by outsiders as a membership of the older well-to-do woman with leisure time. With the evidence that in the 90's a large percentage of women in the Hartford area were employed, the consultants concluded that programs and activities needed to appeal to, and be scheduled for, the working woman. The Dining category of membership was created to attract the member who would use the Club for business entertaining.

In 1995 another gala celebration was held, with a "Top to

Bottom" Party, from the attic to the cellar. The house was beginning its second century, the Club was 70 years old, and 22 Woodland had been designated an Historic Monument for 20 years. A formal tea honored past presidents. A series of programs entitled "Women of Vision" brought our most honored guest, former First Lady Barbara Bush. She spoke at the Club in March, and stayed on the third floor in the bedroom which is now known as the Barbara Bush Room.

Joann Kidd, (Mrs. James L., 1995-97) streamlined the Board of Governors to 15 from a large and unwieldy group which had representation from all committees of the Club. A huge promotion for membership in 1996-97 grew our numbers. The Hamer Report, the product of the consultants hired in 1995, recommended that the Club's newsletter be updated as a membership recruitment tool.

The grand elegant house, now 100 years old, needed some major maintenance. The tiled roof of 1895 was replaced, and the tiles were stamped with a drawing of the house, purchased by members as mementos. Many tiles remained in the attic, and were converted later to trivets.

Intensive work on the house continued through the presidency of Katharine Steinwedell (Mrs. Peter T., 1997-99). Environmental concerns of the 90's were addressed by removing the asbestos in the attic and basement, and the 2,000-gallon oil tank under the driveway. Air conditioning the main house made summer usage a pleasure. The capital improvements were funded by an assessment of \$1200 per member, over three years, causing a rash of resignations.

Two trends continued: first, an increased interest in giving back to the community. The active Community Relations committee established a scholarship fund in the name of the Town and County Club, to be managed by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Giving to the community struck a responsive chord in the membership, and the scholarship fund met with instant success. By 2004, over \$120,000 had been generously donated by the membership. The second trend was the recognition of the needs of increasing numbers of working women. The Lunch and Listen meetings were quick lunches with speakers of shorter duration, so that the employed member could enjoy the program without being away from the office for more than an hour and a half.

## **X: THE NEW CENTURY AND CHANGING TIMES**

The turn of the century brought broad changes reflecting the turbulent times. Recurring themes of fiscal difficulties, changing membership, and staff upheaval made for lively Board of Governors meetings and Annual Meeting votes.

Escalating costs over which the Club had no control (property taxes, utility rates, and snow removal) continued to be a challenge even though the membership drives of 1996-97 and 2000 had brought younger members eager to help meet the Club's chronic fiscal crises with new solutions. Tension existed between newer members who often had professional expertise in finance and business and some long-time members who tended to depend on staff. Eleanor (Eieo) Abel (Mrs. Walter, 1999-2001) presided over an often fractious Board of Governors which struggled to meet financial and personnel challenges. The Finance Committee wrestled with ongoing debts of the mortgage, which was an annual \$150 per member charge, the continuing HVAC installment payments, and the increasingly sophisticated insurance for the Club. The computer system in the business office was woefully inadequate for the complex financial demands required to make the Club efficient.

In an effort to provide opportunities for the membership to understand these complex issues, the Board of Governors initiated Town Meetings, beginning in May of 2000. The meetings provided a forum for informing membership of issues facing the Board, and for answering questions. Seating Governors among the membership at Annual Meetings, rather than on the balcony, helped dispel "we/they" feelings.

The Long Range Planning Committee reported on a membership survey which showed interesting results among respondents: 70% of our members were over 55 and under 80, 63% had incomes under \$150,000; among the "like best" category were the gracious house, the interesting programs, and the Town & County staff. Suggestions from the membership resulted in Saturday night openings and a smoke-free environment. The Lyman Fund, established in May 2000, was to be used for the continued preservation of the historic house. The fund commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Club, and by October of 2001 almost \$35,000 had been contributed.

Major staff changes occurred in the spring of 2001: James Standish, the General Manager since 1986, resigned and John Bates became Acting Manager. After the Club's first paid, and highly successful Membership Director Jean Graham returned to her status of member, a search committee selected Susan Barney as the new full-time Membership Director. Her upbeat attitude and

energy in welcoming new members and producing the monthly newsletter have been great additions to the Club. A second floor room was refurbished as the Membership Office.

Progressive programming continued apace and members showed an increased awareness of the neighborhood with generous holiday gift-giving to children in the Connectikids program, reading to young people from West Middle School (ended after 2 years due to transportation costs), walking tours of our block emphasizing history and architecture, and the Knit-Wits knitting lap robes for a nearby nursing home.

However, the Audit Report for May 2001 dropped a fiscal bombshell: an unanticipated deficit of more than \$85,000. Once again, members were assessed (\$60) and a \$6.00 monthly energy surcharge was levied. The restaurant operations closed on Mondays to save expenses. Reserve funds were beginning to drop precipitously.

This series of seismic events resulted in remedial efforts. Eleanor E. Zajac (Mrs. Thomas, 2001-03) encouraged the Board to begin building a team of members that could work together effectively to identify tasks for the year. A practical aspect was to change the meeting time from mid-day to 4 p.m. to accommodate the increased number of members employed outside the home. Two *ad hoc* committees were appointed: First, a Governance Committee, which recommended changes to help the Nominating Committee meet the challenges of recruiting officers and committee chairs. The President and the two Vice Presidents, of Operations and Personnel, served one year terms, with a second year optional, and the past President no longer served a third year on the Board. Second, a study of all Restaurant & Bar operations began, as membership levels and dining room usage were down and operational expenses were rising. The Club dining facilities were hemorrhaging money. Many positive corrective actions were taken, including a \$100 quarterly minimum. A lovely addition to the dining room was the set of new china donated by members of the 2001-02 Board of Governors.

The Program Committee requested help in managing the many events for diverse membership requests. Yoga, Line Dancing, Movie Nights, Lunch & Listen were some of the newer options. The Program Committee's responsibilities had become too large and demanding for one individual, and so the Governance Committee's recommendation was to divide the position into Activities and Program, with each chair sitting on the Board.

Two new neighbors arrived next door. Loaves & Fishes Ministries moved from Sigourney Street to Immanuel Congregational Church. The Carriage House at 360 Farmington Avenue (next to the Club driveway) was restored by the Hartford Children's



Theater into a 75-seat "black box" theater. There were new energies and hopefulness for the neighborhood.

In November 2001, Bruce Hall of Washington, D.C. was selected by a Search Committee to be General Manager. He worked to help put the books into proper balance and reduce the operating loss. However, in the fall of 2002, the Club again faced a fiscal crisis: many areas needed immediate attention in both the house and the business office. In order to replenish diminishing reserves and to pay bills, a \$600 assessment was levied. The Club suffered many resignations, and membership numbers dropped alarmingly.

By May of 2003, the Club's Board of Governors had established three goals to plan for 2003-05: financial stability, operational efficiency, and membership growth and retention. Always, the Board strove to ensure that the membership received good value.

The stringent actions taken began to produce results under the energetic leadership of Sally Richter (Mrs. Dale, 2003-05). The Long Range Planning Committee worked diligently to extend the strategic planning process to the full Board of Governors which was wrestling with major policy issues including:

- 1) How could the Club be financially sound, provide membership services, and adequately compensate the loyal staff?
- 2) How should the Club respond to its changing demographic profile in order to meet the needs of and attract younger and/or employed members?
- 3) How should short and long-term maintenance of the Club-house, both interior and exterior, be managed?

Even though there was much to consider, the disciplined and focused Board meetings often lasted only one hour.

While the reactivated Lyman Endowment Fund income helped to defray some of costs, care and upkeep of the house remained a constant concern. The first moneys generated from Lyman Fund interest were used for the restoration of the lovely tile floor in the Sunporch.

New procedures were put in place for the Restaurant and Bar operation which included a new computer system, effectively implemented by Interim General Manager Jonathan Jensen. (General Manager Bruce Hall returned to the Washington, D.C. area in the fall of 2003.) Thanks to the new minimum, careful budgeting, and the creative cuisine of newly promoted Chef Shannon Murphy, the restaurant and bar numbers broke even, and, wonder of wonders, began to produce revenue for the Club! Staff members acquired email addresses, and reservations for Club events could be made on-line. By 2004, the directory included email addresses for many members. The Club had successfully

become technologically up-to-date.

In May 2004, Stephen St. Peter arrived, bringing three decades of experience in the hospitality industry. With boundless energy and creativity, the new General Manager helped the Club get a new look: furniture was rearranged with the help of the House Committee, drapes were hung, and the third floor bedrooms brought in more revenue after they were freshened up and made more inviting. Two new residents of the third floor were Keith and Micky, from India and Thailand. They were part of an intern program based in Washington, D.C.

While the tight national economy did not produce a strong environment for private city clubs, the Club weathered the storm largely by maintaining strict budgeting practices on all levels and creating an assertive membership development program. "Renew the Tradition" attracted 111 new members in 2003-04. In our anniversary year, the membership goal is a new member for each of the Club's 80 years. At the other end of the Club's very rich spectrum of membership, a special category was created: the Centennial Member, for the member who reached the age of one hundred years. Concordia Gregorieff became the very first Centennial Member.

When the Town & County Club was chartered, the women were quite homogeneous, mostly WASP. They belonged to the same social class and churches. They were obviously persistent, dynamic women of intelligence who successfully created the Club and bought and managed a large clubhouse. The last surviving Charter Member, Margaret Zacher, died in 2003.

Bit by bit the mixture changed, with the admission of Jewish women and women of color, and the creation of special categories of membership. The first men offered membership were the widowed spouses of women who had died while a member. Ultimately men could join, and have. By 1992 there were Junior Members, and in 1995 Dining Members became a new category. These members have a dining minimum, and cannot participate in most Club programs and activities. A former Club Manager, James Standish, is an Honorary Member.

In 1925, the founders of the Town and County Club were from Hartford, West Hartford, and one each from Simsbury and Middletown. In 2005, the membership resides in thirty-seven towns in Connecticut and six different states. In 2005 the mix is more diverse. From roots of "at home" women, the Club now has many women working at careers. Instead of "waiting until I am old enough", younger women are joining, and those with younger children. Both the timing and the content of programs

reflect these changes.

The mood is cautiously optimistic, excited, and ready to celebrate the Club's eightieth birthday in May 2005. The city of Hartford is being re-energized by Adriaen's Landing, the neighborhood has added the new headquarters of Connecticut Public Broadcasting, Woodland Street has been completely torn up and repaved, and the Town and County Club remains a unique haven for stimulating interaction, fun, and friendship among its members.