

Culture Club History And Achievements

Community Rendered Great Service By Club By Fay Miles Benton

[Insert: A book “Columbiana Culture Club Celebrating 100 years (1910-2010)” was written by Beverly Hall. This book is in the collection at The Shelby County Museum & Archives. In addition, this article was transcribed by Bobby Joe Seales exactly as it appeared in the Shelby County Reporter, Columbiana, Alabama, Thursday, September 30, 1937.]

To try and get all the activities and achievements of the Culture Club in the years since its organization into a short paper is like trying to get a feather bed into a band box. But if I roll up my comments on them tightly and pack them close together, I may be able to shut the lid down on them all – Let's see how it goes.

Columbiana had no Literary and Social Club back in 1912 when our beloved Mrs. Lightcap assisted by Miss Pardue, then principal of the Grammar School realized the urge for such an organization. So in the fall of that year an enthusiastic group of women gathered at the home of Mrs. J.W. Brooks and formed the Culture Club. Mrs. Lightcap was the first president and served in that capacity for three years. Upon her retirement she was presented by the Club with a beautiful vase which is still one of her most prized possessions. The membership of sixteen soon grew to twenty making it necessary to limit the membership to 24. Among the charter members whom we all know were, Mrs. Lightcap, Mrs. Mildred White Wallace, Mrs. J.R. White, Mrs. Paul Luck, Mrs. W.F. Davis, Mrs. Rosa Teague, Mrs. T.K. Roberts and Mrs. W.A. Parker. Mrs. Lightcap is the only charter member now in the club.

For the first two years Shakespeare was studied then a Bayview course in Art and Music was enjoyed. The game of Dominoes played with cards was the diversion for several years, then changed to Boston Rook. At this time little civic work was done as a club because Columbiana boasted a Civic League composed of both men and women. However this club soon disbanded so the Culture Club took over this work, as practically all the members belonged to both clubs.

The 4th District Federation was entertained by the club in 1914.

The first notable civic improvement by the Culture Club was the paving of side walks around the court house grounds. To finance this the Board of Revenue issued warrants which were discounted at the bank and paid as they fell due.

During the next few years contributions were made to the Red Cross, Illiteracy Fund. The club federated, giving generously to all activities, sent flowers to its members who were ill or had bereavement in their families. Five dollars was contributed to the Girls Industrial School at East Lake through the club's delegate to the Federation and donations were made to the Scholarship and Illiteracy Fund of the Federation, but later founded a Scholarship Fund of its own.

In 1919 under the leadership of Mrs. Fred Koenig, president, an extensive clean-up campaign was instigated in every club member worked untiringly in an effort to really clean up the city. Attractive posters were made and placed in every conspicuous spot. All vacant lots were thoroughly cleared, spaded up and planted in flowers, by the women themselves who were saying with rakes and hoes assisted by groups of Boy Scouts. Garbage cans were purchased by the club and placed in front of every business establishment. To finance this drive contributions were solicited from every citizen who gave generously.

A course on "Citizenship" was planned and carried out during the year 1920, which was particularly timely as woman suffrage was the topic uppermost in the minds of both men and women. Each member was assessed \$1.00 with which an entire course was secured, the ladies entering into this study earnestly and enthusiastically.

Miss Virginia B. Handley was a distinguished guest in October, 1920 when she gave an interesting account of her Red Cross work in France. The club contributed generously to this worthy cause.

In January 1920 Mrs. Wales Wallace who was one of the clubs most active and helpful members suggested we use the funds in the Treasury to establish a circulating library. This idea was received whole heartedly. Mrs. Wallace, Mrs. Christian and Mrs. Benton, comprised the community to select books and book cases. This was done and the library placed in the Columbiana Drug Store to be accessible to the public. After the books were read they were sent to the Traveling Rural Library and later a number were shipped to Florida for which a check for \$25.00 was received.

At a meeting the same year a motion was made by Mrs. Benton that instead of presenting gifts for high score, a book be presented later to be placed in the library. This seems to have been a popular suggestion as the custom has continued for sixteen years.

Each year since federating the club has sent a delegate to the meetings and instructed to contribute \$5.00 to some worthy cause.

The week of November 1, 1920 was fittingly observed as Art Week and the program arranged appropriately.

The Smith-Towner, and Shepherd-Towner bills were endorsed in 1920 and mailed to each of our Senators. Contributions were made at this time to the Armenian Relief cause from the library fund and through contributions from each member. The sum of ten dollars was given to both Armenian and European relief.

In the spring of 1922 the club members attended the meeting of State Federation of Clubs in a body which met in Montevallo. Since 1924 a contribution of five dollars has been sent to Brother Tom Roberts for aiding and cleaning the cemetery and at intervals sums have been given to Parent-Teacher Association.

In 1924 the circulating library was moved to Davis Drug Store.

Child Welfare was assisted with a donation in 1925 and this continued for several years.

"Seeing America" was the subject for study in 1926. "Washington, the City Beautiful", being the first topic. The club members joined the Parent-Teacher Association making it 100% and most of the ladies retain their membership. A scholarship fund of \$80 a year was established and presented to Josephine Nelson to study at Snead Seminary for two years. This amount was, in 1929, loaned to Geraldine Anderson. Later in 1935 Lottie Wolf was sent to Alabama College for one year on the Scholarship fund. While these young women were in school boxes of clothing were sent them at intervals. A marker was placed on the grave of an old veteran buried in the Columbiana Cemetery in an unmarked grave.

Shrubery was purchased for the churches and following the storm at Helena sheets were sent to the needy.

The Welfare committee has worked untiringly sewing for the needy and arranging baskets of food at Thanksgiving and Christmas time.

A unique program on January, 1933 had for its subject "Ment Making and Favorite Receipts". Each club member brought her favorite recipe and exchanged with others. Another interesting program was "Current Events" and another was "Interesting People of Alabama".

At every meeting the programs have been especially interesting and instructive.

As a means of making money for expenditures the club has depended on fees from its circulating library, dues, rummage sales, serving dinners for Exchange Club and selling articles made by the blind.

A flag for the Court House dome was purchased and erected in January 1936; at this time a contribution was made to help restore General Lee's home into a national shrine. The crippled children's clinic was given \$12.50 in 1936, and \$15.00 was loaned to a young Chelsea high school girl for her books and matriculation fees at Vincent high.

These are only a part of the noble work the Culture club is doing for the community and may we continue to carry on with the same helpful enthusiasm. Everyone has something to give his community and if these gifts are assembled and put to use much could be accomplished as has been shown in this history of accomplishments of the club.