

History of The Murray Woman's Club

Eight young women of Murray, Kentucky, formed the "As You Like It" Club in 1905. They were Maude Cook, Miss Kate Diuguid, Miss Betty Thornton, Miss Hattie Cook, Miss Gray Gatlin, Miss Mary Diuguid, Mrs. John McElrath and Mrs. O.J. Jennings. The goals of these young women were to foster continued study and deepening appreciation of cultural values. Out of a sense of municipal responsibility, the As You Like It Club changed its name to "The Woman's Club of Murray." In April, 1907 the Club affiliated with the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs/General Federation of Women's Clubs (KFWC/GFWC).

The Club began by meeting in members' homes. As membership grew, so did a need for larger meeting space. In the Fall of 1937 at the Club's opening banquet, plans were begun for a permanent Clubhouse. The project got underway with the gift of 2.7 acres on Vine Street by the Barnett sisters; Mrs. Adrian Barnett McRee of Central City, Kentucky and the late Mrs. Maude Barnett Schmidt, and Mrs. Larena Barnett Fulton. Starting with \$500 on hand, fund raising began by the 100 Club members.

In the Fall of 1938, the City of Murray obtained a NYA (National Youth Administration) Resident Program consisting of fifty men and women. State officials of NYA met with members of the Club and developed an agreement, whereby the NYA would furnish unskilled labor to construct a new Clubhouse, and the Club would pay the superintendent, skilled labor, and furnish materials.

The need for such a structure was evidenced by the fact that the Club received such major donations from its members as well as the community. Along with the gift of the 2.7 acre property and the City of Murray's willingness to co-sponsor the project, the limestone was donated by Mrs. G.B. Scott (President, Murray Woman's Club 1917-1921) from the quarry on her family farm. The motto of the Club "Another Round – A Higher" was suggested in 1907 by Mrs. Reubie Wear. The motto was hand carved on the massive oak mantle in the main hall and was a gift from the artist, Mary Ed McCoy Hall, (Chair, Art Department, Murray State Teachers College). The Clubhouse was dedicated on September 27, 1940.

The Clubhouse was the scene of many home front efforts during World War II. The Red Cross set up hospital rooms in the Clubhouse for training nurse aides. Five hundred women completed the course. Members worked with the Red Cross rolling bandages for hospitals and in making kits for soldiers overseas. Dinners and dances were hosted at the Clubhouse for soldiers from Camp Tyson (U. S. Army's Barrage Balloon

Training Center, opened in January, 1942) in Henry County, Tennessee, as well as for the cadets in the Naval Flight Preparatory School training on the campus of Murray State Teachers College, now known as Murray State University. In 1943, The Murray Woman's Club joined with KFWC/GFWC clubs in buying government bonds to help with the "purchase" of a bomber. The project was so successful; the Treasury Department was able to purchase two bombers. Painted on their side was the name "GFWC".

From its earliest years, the Clubhouse has been a favorite location for weddings, receptions, and community events.

As the Club grew beyond 400 members, a departmental organization was developed: Alpha (1913, literature/education), Music (1913, appreciation of music), Home (1913, home economics), Delta (1927, healthy lifestyle, Garden (1936, horticulture), Zeta (1942, community projects), Creative Arts (1954, personal development in art forms), Sigma (1954, education/City Park renovation), Kappa (1964, community projects), and Theta (1965, Clubhouse projects).

In 2010 the Club Historian, Linda Scott, received approval from then President Bobbie Weatherly of the MWC Executive Board to begin work on the nomination to list the MWC Clubhouse on the National Register of Historic Places. The following criteria were submitted:

"The Murray Woman's Club Clubhouse (CWM-208) meets National Register Criterion A. It has played an important role in the social life of Murray, seat of Calloway County, Kentucky."

The MWC Clubhouse nomination was approved by the Review Board of the KY Heritage Council on September 6, 2011, and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 10, 2011. It was designated a Kentucky Landmark by Gov. Steve Beshear in January 2012. The Clubhouse nomination and materials are archived in the Murray State University Pogue Special Collections Library, Murray, KY; the Kentucky Heritage Council Archives, Frankfort, KY; the GFWC Women's History and Resource Center, Washington, D.C.; and the National Park Service database of the National Register of Historic Places, Washington, D.C.

In 2012, The Murray Woman's Club Heritage Fund was established to accept donations for the preservation and maintenance of the clubhouse and property. Tax deductible donations may be given in memory and/or in honor of a loved one. Checks should be made payable to: The Murray Woman's Club Heritage Fund and mailed to: P.O. Box 162, Murray, KY 42071.