

ROARING 20's

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It seems that I should begin this little talk about the Woman's Thursday Club of Fair Oaks in the 1920's with once-upon-a-time because it was quite some time ago! I had been transplanted at the age of fourteen from my home in Berkeley to a home in Fair Oaks. My father had always wanted to be a farmer. Fortunately, he did not give up his Berkeley business because he soon learned that twenty acres out on Winding Way would not really support his family.

I spent my Junior and Senior years at San Juan High School, and at that time there were two hundred students. Some of them came from Folsom by Pierce-Arrow stage. The bus I rode in to school was sort of like a truck with a roof and open on the sides and at the end. A bench ran along each side for the passengers. Since the bus didn't have too much get up and go, sometimes when we came to the bottom of a hill we would jump out the rear end, pick some oranges or grapes or whatever was at hand, run up the hill and get back on.

During those two years in Fair Oaks, my mother was a member of the Thursday Club, but I don't remember much of the Club's activities other than the social events. I do remember that once there was a minstrel show, all local talent, and there were dances in the clubhouse nearly every Saturday night as other organizations rented it for their affairs. There were luncheons and parties and potluck feasts. A lot of excitement was created by some of the young more sophisticated girls and boys home from college and attending one of the Thursday Club holiday dances. It was at the time that the song "Chicago" became popular, and when the band played it several of the young couples included in their dancing that deep back bend of the female partner! The next morning our telephone was in constant use, and I recall that a special board meeting was called on account of this incident. How times have changed!

Since this is the Christmas Holiday Season, I had hoped to find in the minutes of the 1920's some reference to the sorts of activities of the Thursday Club that were held in the celebration of Christmas. The minutes did not reveal much of that kind of information. However, they did mention the singing of Carols at the December meetings. I didn't find any reference to discussions regarding Christmas activities. I did find a newspaper clipping concerning one event that was termed a "Club Classic." This was a

Christmas Luncheon given in 1925. In the center of the clubroom was a beautiful trimmed Christmas tree around which were placed the luncheon tables, gaily decorated with lighted red candles everywhere. On the stage, a guest gave a dramatic reading entitled "The White Robed Stranger" and the Christmas spirit was maintained by the singing of holiday songs by the choir of the Fair Oaks Federated Church.

Mrs. C. E. Phoenix was the Club President for the 1921 term, and while she was President, the Girls Club sprang into being. It was organized on September 15, 1921, and the slate of officers was as follows: President, Isabel Broadley; Vice-President, Vivian Lederer; Recording Secretary, Celia Raymond; Corresponding Secretary, Fay French; and Treasurer, Ann Keily. Mrs. Phoenix was called the "Club Mother." The dues were one dollar per year, and we met once a month. The object of the Girls Club was to acquaint the members with club work and to do some philanthropy. Now I can't remember any of this philanthropy, but the Thursday Club minutes state that "the girls did some very good philanthropy work in helping the Sacramento Orphanage." The minutes do not tell us what sort of work it was. I do remember that sometimes we met at the Phoenix home and always had delicious refreshments, and we sometimes served at Club luncheons, and there were many luncheons, called Reciprocity Luncheons. The various Sutter Districts were invited and these clubs also served Reciprocity Luncheons. We didn't have a very big kitchen and with all the Girls Club members helping there was some confusion. In those days, the coffee was made in a copper wash boiler that sat on a two-burner gas plate. To be eligible for membership in the Girls Club one's mother had to be a member of the Thursday Club. Once we gave a dancing party and invited those girls in the community who were eligible and boys whose mothers were Thursday Club members. Later on, the Girls Club By-laws were changed to allow applicants to become members whether or not their mothers were Thursday Club members. However, the applicants' names had to be approved by the Board of Directors. On August 3, 1925, a list of twenty-two names was presented and approved by the Board. I note that the slate of officers listed the name of one of our present members. The President was Celia Raymond; the Vice President, Esther Kirschman; Recording and Corresponding Secretary, Helen Day and Treasurer, Charlene Woodmansee. On December 2, 1921, the Girls Club gave a Christmas Dance.

In the Twenties, the following Thursday Club members served as President: Mrs. W. H. Williamson for the club year 1920-21. Soon after the Girls Club was organized, we were invited to a party in the Williamson home across the river. I was very much impressed as this home had a three-

car garage. The Williamsons had vineyards, and Mrs. Williamson often furnished beautiful leaves and bunches of table grapes to be used as decorations for fall Thursday Club social events.

Mrs. Phoenix was the President for the club year 1921-23, and I have already told you of my memories of her as the Girls Club mother.

Mrs. C. C. Woodmansee was President for the club year 1923-25. The Woodmansees were our neighbors, and we became very good friends, going together on picnics to Lake Tahoe and to the Memorial Park in Grass Valley where there was a swimming pool, and also for the sum of ten cents you could have the use of an outdoor gas plate set up in a small leafy covered arbor. While Charlene and I and our boy friends and our fathers went swimming, Mrs. Woodmansee always fried a heap of chicken and my mother assembled a salad. After the picnic lunch, we would drive out to the Empire or North Star Mines to watch the miners change shifts. Sometimes we were allowed inside the stamp mill - a deafening experience. We never on any trip or picnic, if my father was along, got home until after dark and completely exhausted!

After graduation in 1923, we moved back to Berkeley, and I continued my schooling there, so I can't tell you any personal experiences having to do with the next two presidents, Mrs. Hathaway and Mrs. Linn, but in 1929 Mrs. Guy L. Camden became the Thursday Club President, and I remember her well.

Harriet Camden came to Fair Oaks with her husband, Guy, in 1913. She served twice as Club President and many times as Chairman of the Music Section. The Music Section studied the lives of composers and the history of music. Mrs. Camden organized a Thursday Club Sextette, the members of which at one time were Mrs. G. L. Camden, Mrs. Kenneth King, Mrs. Roy Sullivan, Mrs. Charles McConnell, Mrs. Horace Massey, and Miss Margaret Dovey. The minutes of April 22, 1920 state that Mrs. Camden gave a good report of the sextette, having sung for the Saturday Club in Sacramento. The sextette sang so well it was asked to sing two selections at the State Federation meeting. Mrs. Camden also at one time organized a Thursday Club Octette. For twenty-six years, she was the choir director of the Fair Oaks Federated Church. In 1923, she wrote the words and music for a song entitled "California Your State and Mine" which was lovingly dedicated to the members of the Woman's Thursday Club of Fair Oaks. The minutes of the March 11, 1920 meeting state that Mrs. Camden furnished the music, singing several beautiful selections. I remember her leading the club members in the singing of carols and other appropriate music.

In the minutes of 1925, I note that the dues for the General Federation

were ten cents per person. At that time, the Federated Clubs were actively concerned about the preservation of the giant redwoods. It was explained by a Mrs. Barry that the Women's Clubs would raise as much money as possible and purchase trees which would be set aside as memorials. The Thursday Club passed a resolution to send "what we can" for the project.

In the twenties, our piano could be tuned for as little as \$5.00.

The rock crusher was across the river not far from the depot. Also across the river were cherry orchards and table grape vineyards, and at that time some of these properties were being sold to the Capitol Dredging Company. The huge dredgers squawked and groaned all day and all night, devouring everything at hand.

In those days we went swimming in the river, and one of the places was near the bridge supports on the Fair Oaks side. My friends and I would park my little old Model "T" on the far bank and then wade across to the deeper side where there was enough water for real swimming and diving. Since this was long before the Folsom and Nimbus Dams were built, by the middle of summer there was not much water in the river and by the end of summer one could walk across most anywhere. We would have to seek out the deep holes and back washes in order to really swim. Mother Nature was nearly always capricious, supplying too much water in the Spring and not enough in the Summer. Before the dam was built, there was seldom any boating or rafting down the river by the end of August. There often was terrible flooding in the late winter or early Spring, and the levees could not contain the deluge. Even where I now live I have seen nothing but water completely covering all the land in sight many times, and in order to go to or from Sacramento you would have to circle around and go in via Jibboom Street.

Speaking of water, some of you probably did not know that in the twenties in case of fire in Fair Oaks a siren would blow and volunteer firemen would call the telephone exchange and the operator would pass the word about where the fire was located. Those of us at home would have to rush about turning off the sprinklers on lawns and gardens and go out through the orchards to turn off irrigation lines. This was done to try to get enough water and pressure to the firefighters. The water was supplied through an open ditch by the North Fork Land & Irrigation Company - I believe that was what it was called. At times, always in the summer, the ditch would need repair. It was then that the town siren would blow a long blast, followed by shorter blasts, one blast for each day the water would be off. That horrible sound would mean get busy and fill all the buckets, pots and pans, bath tubs or whatever and again shut off all the sprinklers and

irrigation lines; get enough tubs or barrels filled in the barnyard for the cows and chickens and all other livestock. It was always something of a shock when the water came back on because when you dumped what water you had left and drained the bathtub the sediment was something to behold. A reddish gook had settled out and in it you very likely would see some dead polliwogs or small near relations.

And that's the way it was as I remember it.