

HIGH POINTS IN THE HISTORY OF OHIO'S FEDERATED WOMEN

Quite forty years ago in Cleveland, Ohio, Mrs. Harriet K. Price called six women together and organized the "Minerva Reading Club" for the sole purpose of self culture and social intercourse. Mrs. Carrie W. Clifford was one of these women.

Club Joins National

In the second biennial meeting of the National Association of Colored Women that was held in Chicago in 1899, Mesdames Price and Clifford were sent by their club as delegates. At this meeting Mrs. Price was appointed organizer for Ohio and Mrs. Clifford was elected third recording secretary.

1899 Convention

This national convention coming in the midst of the administration of the first national president, Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, gave the greatest surprise to the white women who were visitors, because of the discussions, speeches and deliberations. There were gathered from all parts of the country—North, East, South and West—Negro women who were giving their lives, their strength and brain to the uplifting of their race and they came together to talk it over. A writer has said that, "There were no rhapsodies about Wagnerian motifs, no interpretations of Browning, not even a paper on Shakespeare but instead, there were earnest talks on grave problems that affect the Negro. There were women who handled the labor question in its relations to the Negro; other women spoke of the effect of convict lease system, on child nature; others spoke on 'Jim Crow' and the lynch laws, of prison work, social purity and kindergartens; discussing these subjects not in a general way but as each related to their race."

From the Chicago Tribune

"Could Abraham Lincoln have looked in upon the nearly two thousand people crowded into Quinn Chapel the other evening and seen the representative of the race he emancipated and listened to the addresses so admirably spoken by the president, Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, of Mrs. Booker T. Washington, Mesdames Jerome Jeffries, B. K. Bruce, Lucy Thurman, Libbie Anthony and others and observed their essential dignity, evident refinement of manner and noted the breadth of their outlook for their race and for their country, it is not difficult to imagine some of the emotions which would have stirred him, especially in view of their so clear apprehension of the real conditions of the problems before them."

Effect Upon Ohioans

So deeply were the two Ohioans affected by this convention that on their return to Cleveland, Mrs. Price, who was a school teacher and church worker, spent a year sending letters to interested women of the state urging them to come together and organize a state federation. The responses were few. Mrs. Price finally resigned and turned the work over to Mrs. Clifford. In the year of 1901 Mrs. Clifford succeeded in getting ten clubs to come together. They organized tentatively and she was made president pro tem.

Buffalo, N. Y., 1901

At the third biennial convention at Buffalo, N. Y., July 1901, Mrs. Jerome Jeffries then national organizer, finding eleven delegates from Ohio present organized the Ohio Federation of Colored Women's Clubs with Mrs. Carrie Clifford, president; Mrs. Lutie Ashley, secretary, and Miss Elnore Alexander as treasurer.

First State Meet

The first state convention was

held during the Christmas holidays, December 1901, at Mount Zion Congregational church, Cleveland, Ohio. The delegates from outside of Cleveland were: Mrs. Amanda Friend of Dayton and Mrs. Irene Evans of Springfield. Mesdames Hattie Fairfax and Miss Sarah Mitchell read papers. Mrs. McKay of Detroit, Mich., was a visitor. The convention lasted two days and adjourned to meet in Springfield, in July of 1902. Special mention of some of the women who helped to lay the foundation of the Ohio State Federation were Mesdames J. S. Jackson, Emily Lewis, Hattie Fairfax, Rosa Johnson and Misses Emma Tolbert and Eleanor Alexander. The Mt. Zion Missionary Society was the second club in the state organization. The members of this club worked hard for the success of this their first convention.

Later Meetings

A very short time passed before the clubs of Wilberforce, Cincinnati, Toledo, Chillicothe, Youngstown and Lima joined the federation. Columbus, the state capital, was slow in joining. In the second convention eight cities were represented among the delegates of which were Mesdames Linnie Guy, Minnie M. Waters and Mamie Bates.

Club Journal Started

In 1903, Mrs. Clifford, then president, published "Queen's Gardens" and financed it herself for several months. When the convention met, it took over the journal as its official organ and appointed Mrs. Clifford the editor. She served until 1908. It is the oldest state paper in the country and has been published consecutively for the past thirty-six years.

State Presidents

Ohio has had nine state presidents, namely: Carrie W. Clifford, Hallie Q. Brown, Minnie M. Scott, C. Hughes, Estelle R. Davis, Della H. Fields, Lethia C. Fleming, Margaret Barnes and Lulu McClure representing respectively the cities of Cleveland, Wilberforce, Toledo, Columbus, Cincinnati and Oberlin.

Other Leaders

Among the high-ranking leaders of Ohio who have contributed largely to the development of the group are the late Mrs. Sarah G. Jones who was honored with the title "Poet Laureate" of the state organization; J. Estelle Barnett of Zanesville, who was vice president to Miss Hallie Q. Brown; Nellie DeBraugh, who served as editor of "Queen's Gardens;" Mamie Artis, a composer of songs; Elizabeth Lynch, a junior president; Dena Smith, supervisor of N.A.C.G.; Ella P. Stewart, now treasurer of the National Association of Colored Women; Sophia W. Bailey, Lila D. Rickman, Cora Hawkins, Bessie Lockett, Arvona Lynch, Hazel Collins, Ida Williams, Anna V. Hughes, Mary Bates, Elizabeth Ward, and the late Jennie Porter. Some of these pioneers have gone across the great divide but their works go on forever.

Jane Hunter

Words are truly inadequate to express the value of Jane Hunter and her model "Phillis Wheatley" to the Race women of the country for not only is it a wonderful institution in itself but, as Miss Hunter's achievement it is a "lighted torch" to club women all over the country—all over the world. It is exhibit "A" and more and more in all parts of the country the example set by her is being carried out by club women. Its program has been made a department of the National Association of Colored Women.

Other Achievements

Club women of Ohio have bought

and established in all of the cities numerous homes for children, the aged, working girls, unmarried mothers, and community centers, and playgrounds. They have carried more than their part in the building of their churches and their maintenance. They have city and state scholarship funds for needy children and besides all these local and state accomplishments, they have contributed largely to the national program. Ohio gave more than \$1,000 to the redemption of the Frederick Douglass Home; \$2,107 to the National Scholarship Loan Fund; almost \$1,000 to National Headquarters in Washington, D. C. Many of the wonderful women who have brought these things to pass are not known nationally, nevertheless their contributions have laid the foundation for the enviable record of Ohio's women and made possible the immortalizing of its great leaders.