

A voice tape of the following report was placed in a time capsule at the Chocksett School to be opened in 2031.

A History of the Sterling Women's Club

1943 was an unsettled year as the second World War brought much anxiety and worry to families. There was a woman in Sterling who saw the need for a Woman's Club, feeling that young mothers and wives wanted to serve too. Thus, 35 women met at the home of Mrs. Rachel Patten to organize and plan a year book for the ensuing year. During the first two years, the members met at the little brick school house on School Street, which was then an unoccupied building. Members brought chunks of wood for the big black stove that heated the rooms. Also, all the water used was carried in by the hostess committee of the day. Electric plates heated the water. Furniture and dishes were donated.

The first year book was published in September 1944 and the first officers were as follows:

President: Mrs. Charles Patten

First Vice-President: Mrs. Albert Brown

Second Vice-President: Mrs. Clifford Todd

Recording Secretary: Mrs. Frank McKinstry

Corresponding Secretary: Mrs. Mae McLean

Federation Secretary: Mrs. Edwin Wilder

Treasurer: Mrs. Harvey Dudley

Auditor: Mrs. Michael Flanagan

Directors: Mrs. J. Thurston, Mrs. Louis Blanchard, Mrs. Herbert Waters, and Mrs. Luther Trow.

The club seal was planned and presented as a gift to the club by Mrs. Fred Bourne. In February 1944, we were welcomed to the State Federation of Woman's Clubs at the mid winter meeting in Boston. We then belonged to a club of 43,000 women having a District Director and State committee chairmen to guide us. Our membership entitled us to attend conferences, workshops, meetings and special events. In 1951, the Club was elected to membership in the General Federation, bringing to us events and projects of National and International Importance. Then we belonged to a Club of eleven million members.

The following are some of the highlights and accomplishments that the Sterling Woman's Club members have shared together through the years, some at which the women have worked hard to raise funds for scholarships and other philanthropies. We gave to the School department a sterilizer for the dental office, books for the Library, plus a film on art, and money toward an Audubon course. We sponsored programs for the children such as musicals, dance classes, puppet shows, mother-daughter banquets, record hops, weeteen clubs and Saturday a.m. handicraft classes. Club members organized and ran Halloween parties for all the youngsters of the Town for many years. We gave camperships and donations to the Little league Baseball Team. Toys were collected and given to the little Wanderers Home In Boston. Financial contributions were made to the building funds of St. Richard's Church, The First Church and Clinton Hospital. Each year we served the hospitalized Veterans by making bags and filling them with necessary toilet articles. In the forties, we had Thornton Burgess here who put on, a delightful program open to the public, we put on a pageant, "History of Sterling", also an operetta "The Forest Prince". We had yearly Easter Monday bridge parties. For several years we served a smorgasbord on "guest night". We had a gay nineties revue, food sales. Fashion shows, hobby shows, auctions and penny sales. Another play we put on was "Arsenic and Old lace". Several members entered sewing contests and one year, Ruth Hopfmann won second prize at the State Federation contest sponsored by Vogue patterns. In 1962, the Sterling Woman's Club won second place, the prize of \$200, in a two year Community improvement program sponsored by the General Federation and Sears Roebuck Foundation. This project was the brain storm of a very dedicated President during her office, Mrs. Elizabeth Patten Schmohl. The whole-hearted cooperation of the citizens of Sterling made the project a success. The unsightly. rundown Common was rejuvenated with a new lawn. shrubs. trees and a repaired and painted fence. Two new tennis courts were built located behind the Butterick School. The P.O. grounds had the addition of a new lawn and shrubs.

More highlights and accomplishments of the club. In 1965, we had a concert violinist, Mrs. Virginia Rittenhouse, a Sterling resident, who gave a splendid program. That year the baby

sitting courses were started. In 1966, a night still remembered, we put on a Hawaiian Luau for "Guest Night". Can you imagine how the parish hall looked decorated with Hawaiian thatched roof huts or booths all around the room, a fountain with water falling over rocks in the center of the hall and flowers everywhere? Everyone came in costume. The women in muumuus and men with flashy shirts. All wore leis. Each couple brought a dish of Hawaiian food. In 1969 Don Kent came again to entertain us. We sponsored a Valentine dance at Twin Oaks and the proceeds went to the Scholarship Fund. In 1970, Betty Pearson and Lorretta Toder won a prize at the Sharfman's table setting contest. Also that year the Elizabeth P. Schmohl Scholarship Fund was started in memory of the deceased past President Elizabeth Schmohl. Then, in 1970-71, something dreadful happened. We had no elected President. However, the Club came through as it always does. The meetings went on with past Presidents presiding. They were Mrs. Henry Brodrick, Mrs. George Cobb, Mrs. Marguerite Brown, Mrs. Eleanor Wilder and Mrs. Irving Pearson. Our grateful thanks to them. For the two ensuing years, 1972-73, our newly elected President, Shirley Stockwell, did a superb job in pulling the Club back together. During her reign, we had a huge auction to augment the Library Fund and a scholarship dinner and dance at the Sterling Inn. We also sponsored a glaucoma clinic. In 1972, the yearly, popular Oktober Fest was born and has been enjoyed by many ever since. This is a Scholarship Fund project. In 1974, a memorial tree, a red maple, in memory of Rachel Patten was given to the Town by the Garden Club and the Woman's Club. It is planted in the N.W. corner of the Common. May I interject here and say that trees in memory of our deceased beloved past Presidents are planted in the State Forest in Sudbury, Mass. This Forest belongs to the women in the State Federation. The trees are supposedly marked. In 1975-77, under the Presidency of Carol Spankable, the Club sponsored an interfaith Thanksgiving service held at St. Richard's Church. It was repeated the next year at The First Church. Carol also introduced the health clinic with free monthly blood pressure checks. 1976 - Our Country's 200th birthday! Sterling celebrated with a Bicentennial pageant depicting scenes of historical events of Sterling. This was sponsored by the Sterling Woman's Club with many members and Town folk participating. Tickets were sold out at each of the four performances. Maureen Higgins and Janet Baker were co-chairman and Dianne Voglmayer did an excellent job as Director.

During Maureen Higgin's term in office, 1977-79, many worthwhile events took place. Her major interest was to get a CPR (cardiac pulmonary resuscitative) "heart saver" program started. The interest was overwhelming with over 1,000 people trained to act in emergencies. Through Channel 5 WCVB-TV, Heart Saver program and Massachusetts Heart Association, the Club was awarded two resuscitation mannequins for instruction. A year later, in 1978, we were honored to have Dr. Timothy Johnson of Channel 5 "House Call" program speak to us. He praised us for our achievements in the Heart Saving program. For Community Improvement, the Woman's Club joined with the Sterling Garden Club, the Sterling Education Association, the 4-H Nature Club and the Sterling Conservation Committee to form a nature trail committee. As a result, a nature trail was blazed which is designated as "The Butterick School Nature Trail" located just behind the Butterick School.

The next two years, 1980-81, brought changes to the Town. 1981 being Sterling's 200th birthday, the Bicentennial year, we tried to do something special. With Judy Hanson as President, we raised money in various ways to help with the erecting of a colonial-type band stand located at the newly built Memorial park. The Chocksett Men's Club worked with us on this project. One interesting program during that year, we had, as a guest speaker, Mr. Anthony Borgatti Jr., better known as "Spag", who told of his start in his million dollar business. Also, we have continued with the annual money-raising Oktober Fest for the Scholarship fund - this being the 9th consecutive year. The most impressive program we sponsor every year, is the interfaith Thanksgiving service which is open to the public. Leaders of all faiths participate in the service which alternates meeting at St. Richard's Church with The First Church.

This brief history brings us to the beginning of 1982 with Elizabeth Wilder Philbin as our new President to bring fresh ideas to our Club. This is the 38th year of existence having had the Club's following objectives to uphold:

1. In Sterling - to maintain an active, aggressive interest in things pertaining to the moral, social and civic welfare of our Town.
2. In Massachusetts -- to awaken responsibility and opportunity in fields of education and

public service. To make Club women aware of their heritage, to promote interest in the fine arts and to become informed on legislation and international relations.

3. In the General Federation -- to unite with women throughout the World for the promotion of their common interest in educational, industrial, philanthropic, literary, artistic and scientific culture.

Compiled and recorded by:
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Historian, September 1981