

THE HISTORY OF THE KENSINGTON CLUB

prepared by Mrs. R.N. McLellan

On July 6th 1909, several of the ladies of Lawrence Station and vicinity met at the home of Mrs. John McCormack in the village of Lawrence Station, in the home now occupied by Mr. & Mrs. Chas. Annett, Jr. The house on the left hand side of the road after you cross the R.R. track, this is the birthplace of the Kensington Club. These ladies were invited for the purpose of forming some sort of a Ladies' Club. The ladies who met were as follows:-

Miss Bell McFarlane (now Mrs. Howe of Windsor)
Miss Lizzie McArthur
Miss Jean Killins
Mrs. W.H. Turner
Mrs. A.C. McArthur
Mrs. John Meek (now of Lambeth)
Mrs. A.A. Turner
Mrs. M.P. Campbell
Mrs. F.R. Kestle
Miss Burgess (a guest of Mrs. J. Meek, who lives in Leamington)
Mrs. Barber (Mrs. McCormack's mother, who lived with her)
Miss Charlotte Killins (now Mrs. R.N. McLellan)

These names are to the best of my knowledge, as no accurate account has been kept.

These are the minutes of the first meeting, and I thought I would read them as they were in the Sec. book.

" After the meeting was called to order by Mrs. Barber, on motion of Mrs. Jno. Meek, seconded by Mrs. A.A. Turner, Mrs. J. McCormack was appointed chairlady and Miss Charlotte Killins sec. pro.tem.

It was moved by Mrs. J. Meek, seconded by Mrs. A.A. Turner that we organize a club. Carried

Moved by Mrs. J. Meek, seconded by Mrs. A.A. Turner that Mrs. J. McCormack be chosen president. Carried.

Moved by Mrs. A. McArthur, seconded by Mrs. M.P. Campbell that Mrs. Jno. Meek act as vice-president. Carried.

Moved by Miss B. McFarlane, seconded by Mrs. A.A. Turner that Miss Charlotte Killins act as recording Sec. Carried.

Moved by Mrs. J. Meek, seconded by Miss B. McFarlane that Miss Lizzie McArthur act as treas. Carried. Moved by Mrs. W.H. Turner, seconded by Mrs. A. McArthur that Miss B. McFarlane act as corresponding Sec. Carried.

Moved by Mrs. A.A. Turner, seconded by Mrs. Kestle that our meetings be held the first Wednesday of each month. Carried.

Moved by Mrs. W.H. Turner, seconded by Mrs. M.P. Campbell that a monthly fee of 10¢ be charged each member. Carried.

Moved by Miss B. McFarlane, seconded by Mrs. Jno. Meek that the society meet at the homes of the different members. Carried.

" Moved by Miss B. McFarlane, seconded by Mrs. A.A. Turner that we serve a lunch. Carried. Moved by Mrs. M.P. Campbell, seconded by Miss B. McFarlane that the meetings be held at 2.30 P.M. Carried. Moved by Mrs. W.H. Turner, seconded by Mrs. A. McArthur that the lunch be limited to any two things. Carried. Moved by Miss B. McFarlane, seconded by Mrs. Jno. Meek that a fine of .05¢ be imposed on any of the member who failed to attend the meetings. Carried.

Moved by Mrs. J. Meek, seconded by Mrs. M.P. Campbell that Mrs. A.A. Turner have the essay for the next meetings and Mrs. Jno. McCormack read the legion story. Carried.

The following program committee was appointed by the President, Mrs. M.P. Campbell, Mrs. A. Turner, Mrs. W.H. Turner, Mrs. Kestle and Miss Charlotte Killins.

The meeting then adjourned to meet at the home of Mrs. A.A. Turner on Aug. 4th 1909.

A dainty lunch was served by the hostess. "

I remember the lunch very well. We were invited to the dining room where Mrs. McCormack and her mother served us with a delicious cool drink from a beautifully hand-painted punch bowl, while we remained standing around the table. She also served small assorted cakes.

The one thing impressed upon us at this meeting was, that just a very light lunch should be served. This was carried out very well for upwards of a year. I remember having the club, during this first year and served a cup of coffee and ice-cream wafers. I seemed to think this wasn't quite sufficient, and with "fear and trembling" I served some other small cakes I happened to have on hand. This worked very well for the first year and some one, - I don't remember whom - served a very elaborate lunch, and from then on every one seemed to be trying to out-do the other. This went on for some time when a halt was called and a fine imposed if more than two things were served. For a while this plan was followed but for some time past the lunches have been out of all accord from the first meeting. The idea being that we would meet to-gether each month for a social afternoon without too much work for the hostess.

The naming of the club was given to Miss F. Burgess, the only guest. She chose "Kensington", which means "bring your sewing". This accounts for the first 15 years of the Club finding nearly every lady with some sort of fancy work. Many of us I'm sure can recall Mrs. Biddle's tatting shuttle flying, the click of Mrs. L. McAlpine's knitting needles and Mrs. M.P. Campbell's crochet hook working equally as fast. At the last meeting of the Club there wasn't one lady who had any work.

Mrs. McCormack had a book belonging to a club called "The Current Topic Club", which we patterned our Club by. The first meetings of the Club had current topics for nearly all of the roll calls.

After the organization meeting, Mrs. McCormack typed a couple

of books with the first officers and a few of the meetings. Every other year has the regular club books and the club is in possession of all of them. *Paul Cronsen*

The first real meeting of the Club was held at the home of Mrs. A. A. Turner and the minutes tell us that there was a large number of visitors and members present. Quite a few of the ladies joined at this meeting, but I just can't tell exactly who they were. The 1910-11 book has the list of members and 19 new members were added the first year.

The business wasn't all completed at the organization meeting and at this meeting, we find Miss Kate McDougal elected 2nd Vice-President. Miss Jennie McNaughton 3rd vice and Mrs. James Pollock 4th vice.

During the first year of the club, we were given parliamentary drill by Mrs. Barber at every meeting. For practise some meetings had the members giving the drill. Mrs. Barber didn't only teach the drill, but she made us put it into practise. We were all required to say Madam President when we addressed the chair and were not allowed to speak until given permission from the President. How many meetings pass over without once hearing "Madam President" and if any one has the courage to say it, you can hear a pin drop. But why? Let us get out the old Parliamentary drill book and at least once a year have parliamentary drill. I remember of one of the Institutes visiting the Kensington Club and hearing the President say "Well, I learned a lot to-day about conducting a meeting that I didn't know before". Very few organization had the privilege that our club had in having Mrs. Barber and Mrs. McCormack as organizers.

Our club colour was mauve and we each had little bows of ribbon. we would scarcely be admitted to a meeting without them. At our banquets or when we were entertaining guests a box of bows was always on hand in case any of us forgot.

You can see by the photo that the members are wearing them. This is just a regular meeting at Mrs. A.C. McArthurs in March when Mrs. M.P. Campbell was the President. There aren't many visitors there, so you can also see the size of the club at that time.

Mrs. Nestle had the next meeting and Mrs. J. Meek read a paper on "The Tragedy of a Farmer's Wife", and Miss B. McFarlane read a reply to the same.

At the October meeting held at Mrs. W.H. Turner's, it was decided to have Rev. Mr. Gilmour of Fingal give his lecture on a 50-50 basis. At this meeting a kitchen shower was given myself. I still have some of those utensils. Some discussion took place at the next meeting at Mrs. M.P. Campbell's whether the meetings be held in the evening or afternoon during the winter months. The day-time proved the more popular. *picture*

The December meeting was held at my home, and the day was so mild we had our photos taken outside by Mrs. King. Some of us didn't get into the picture. A lot of these are visitors because at that time the Gore ladies: Mrs. Biddle, Mrs. Turner, Miss Sarah Kerr, Mrs. Albert McIntyre, Mrs. A.J. McLellan and Mrs. Dougal Mc-

Lellan didn't belong.

The January Meeting was held at the home of Mrs. J. Meek, when the Iona Institute was entertained. Mrs. Mitchell gave a paper on "Housekeeping made easy". Dr. McKenzie of Shedden gave a talk on colds and how to cure them. Mrs. Duncan Brown of Shedden was present and in a few well chosen words thanked the club for the invitation. The Iona Institute was organized the same year on June 16th. They held their 25th Anniversary at the home of the first President Mrs. Brown. We are twin organizations.

Mrs. Robt. Meek had the February meeting and the roll call was responded to by apron suggestions, each lady taking an apron. Miss B. McFarlane read an original paper. Just as soon as I heard I had the paper to write, I thought of that paper but didn't think it was Mrs. Howe who wrote it. I thought it was Mrs. King. Mrs. W.H. Turner told me it was Mrs. Howe. The minutes tell us the same. I tried to find out if Mrs. Howe still had it but her memory wasn't as good as mine, because she couldn't remember anything about it. It was rather a personal paper and I don't believe any member missed some take-off. The only item I remember was that Miss Kate McDougal was peeking in the crack of the door in the dining room to see how Miss Mary McArthur was getting along riding the goat. They both joined at this meeting.

A letter was read from the Sec. of the Iona Institute inviting the club to attend the next meeting. It was decided to drive two sleigh-loads. There couldn't have been any snow as we were all taken by Mr. Jno. McCormick in the first automobile that was in the vicinity.

The March meeting was held at the home of Miss Ada McNaughton. The Pres. read a letter from Mrs. Woolard asking us to organize our Club as an Institute, but it was unanimously decided to remain as we are. At this time the Institute movement was started in West Elgin. The Club was among the first Ladies' Organizations in West Elgin. The Dutton Institute was organized in 1905, and continued until 1912 when it was discontinued for a few years. The Shedden Institute compares very favourably with any of them. The Rodney Institute was the only one with a larger membership. Eighty on the roll, and an average attendance of 73.

The Fingal Institute was organized in 1913, and lasted a few years then they disbanded. The Executive of this branch were entertained by the Kensington Club at the home of Mrs. Alex. McCormack.

To come back to the meeting at Miss Ada McNaughton's, a debate was held on "Resolved that our Grandmothers were more progressive than we are". The affirmative was taken by Miss Alice Killins and the Negative by Mrs. Duncan McKillop. No decision was given, but a lengthy discussion took place. That is another thing we nearly always had and it proved very interesting. At this meeting it was decided to send flowers to Mrs. McFarlane and Mrs. McCormack. These two ladies received the first bouquets sent by the Club. Just to show you how the Club has grown, I was the only member on this side of the village, and I remember driving myself to this meeting. When I got near the house I couldn't see a rig going, and thought perhaps

the day had been changed. Some one from the Onieda Road had taken a sleigh and picked up every one on the way. Imagine my surprise, when I got around to the front porch to find it full of rubbers. Some boys who worked there at the time, tossed the rubbers about and I don't know whether we all got our right ones or not.

The April meeting was held at the home of Mrs. A.C. McArthur when Mrs. Kestle read the paper on "Is life worth Living". This was a very popular subject, also, "The Sunny side of Life". They were both given quite a number of times in the minutes.

At this meeting a letter of thanks was read from Mrs. Ben Languor for a kitchen shower given her after being burned out. They lived opposite where Thompson. Howe now lives.

The May meeting was held at the home of Miss Mary McArthur. The interesting item at this meeting was the vote taken regarding the club colour, and mauve was the color receiving the largest vote. It was then moved by Mrs. J. Meek seconded by Mrs. A.A. Turner that the club color be mauve. Carried. The treasurer was then given instructions to purchase a bolt of ribbon and take it to the next meeting.

The June meeting was held at the home of Miss Alice Killins, when the business meeting for 1910-11 was held. Mrs. J. Meek was the new President and Miss Jean Killins her secretary,

Mrs. Laingor, who now lived in Port Stanley sent an invitation to hold the next meeting at her home in Port Stanley, and for years a picnic was held in the month of August. When the families went to Port the ladies would get together in a group and hold the meeting just the same as if in a home.

The November meeting, during this year, was held in the hall in the afternoon, when the gentlemen were invited, as well as the Iona Institute and the Dutton Institute. The topic "Resolved that Women should have the Franchise", was ably handled for the affirmative by Mrs. Duncan McKillop and Mrs. King and the negative by Mrs. Mitchell and Miss Pollard of Iona. Dr. McKenzie of Shedden, Mrs. Watts, Iona, and Rev. Mr. McKay of Cowal were the referees. Mr. McKay acted as chairman. This was the beginning of the month of November being our guest month.

At the next meeting at Mrs. Wm. Telford's, it was decided to give a Xmas dinner to Mrs. Manchen and send \$10.00 to the Children's Hospital in Toronto.

At the March meeting at Mr. B. McLaughlin's, Parliamentary drill was given by Mrs. Barber with illustrations.

On June 28th, the business meeting was held, and Mrs. Crossan, appointed President and Mrs. J. McCormack recording sec. For some reason, Mrs. Crossan resigned after the first meeting, and Mrs. M.P. Campbell appointed in her place.

You are all aware of the fact that the aster is the club flower. During this year it was chosen. Moved by Miss McDougal, seconded by Miss Mary McArthur that the sweet-pea be our club flower. Lost.

Moved by Mrs. Kestle, seconded by Mrs. McArthur that the chrysanthemum be our club flower - lost.

Moved by Mrs. J. Telford, seconded by Miss B. McFarlane that we have the aster as the club flower. Carried.

The banquet was started this year, and a bountiful chicken-pie supper held. Mr. M.P. Campbell acted as toast-master. Mrs. Chas. Joiner was editor of the "Club Journal", and it was given for the first time at this banquet, and was listened to with great interest by all. This Journal was not unlike the current event papers that are given at our meetings now. She nearly always gave it at the meetings, and it was a very commendable journal.

Mrs. Leitch and Mrs. Johnson of Delaware belonged at this time and the Club was entertained at both of their homes. I am mentioning this in passing to show you the extent of the Club, from Delaware Township in Middlesex to Dunwich Township in Elgin. Now the territory is from Mrs. J. McFarlane's as far the other direction as Mrs. Russell Kerr's in Dunwich.

The business meeting for 1912-13, was held when Mrs. F.R. Kestle was appointed President, and Miss Jean Killins her recording sec.

During this year the picnic was changed and held in the grove in McLellan boy's wood, opposite the Lawrence School house. These picnics joined with the Sunday Schools and very pleasant outings were held. Tables and booths were built. Games of baseball, basket-ball, races. Prizes in baby shows given, also prizes for the largest family and the oldest lady and gentleman. Mrs. Ed Walsh and I usually tied for the prize for the largest family. I remember once getting a luscious watermelon.

The September meeting was held at Mrs. A.D. Turner's and the special feature of this meeting being a button hole contest. The prizes, a work bag and a pretty apron were donated by Mrs. J. McFarlane. The first prize was won by myself and the second by Mrs. Kestle. Mrs. Love and Mrs. (Rev.) Armstrong were the judges.

The November meeting had its usual banquet and Mr. Angus Turner acted as toast-master.

"Canada" was responded to by Mr. J.A. Thompson, Bank Manager.

"British Parl." by Albert McIntyre, Elgin Biddle and Mr. Robt. Meek. "Kensington Club" by Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Barber.

Mr. A. McAlpine delighted all with a gaelic song.

The June meeting had the library started. Each member was required to purchase a book and exchange it with some one else. Mrs. Alex. McCormack acted as Librarian and when she left, Mrs. Angus Turner was appointed.

The July meeting was the business meeting for 1913-14, instead of June, and Mrs. Robt. Meek appointed Pres. and Mrs. Chas. Joiner her secretary.