

LOOKING BACK

“HAGUE MOTHERS' CLUB”

by Shelly Gautreau and Nancy Young



The Hague Mothers' Club, which was formed in 1920, was established during the “Women's Club” movement, a significant social movement, which emerged during the “Progressive” era (1896 -1917). It was a social movement establishing the idea that women had a moral duty and responsibility to transform public policy. By being involved, women found that companionship was a way to facilitate change in their communities. They focused on many endeavors including women's suffrage, civil rights, maternal and child health, education, art and music appreciation, the environment and conservation, sanitation, labor, legal and prison reform and the list goes on.

“One-hundred and fifty years ago, Americans believed that a woman's place was in the home. After household care, benevolent work at church and patriotic fundraising for Civil War soldiers were the only outlets that permitted women to contribute to shaping the public world. Education and career opportunities were few. Skill building beyond needlework was deemed unnecessary. Political activism, civic reform, and community involvement were regarded as outside the realm of big-hearted mothers and wives who should focus on loving their families and providing a good example of moral behavior.”

“A few brave women in New York and Boston challenged those constraints in the late 1860's and soon persuaded the general population of middle-class American women to form voluntary organizations in their neighborhoods to defy custom, undertake serious study of intellectual topics and current events, and organize for social reforms at the local, state, and national levels. All this well before they saw the



right to vote to effect change at the ballot box!” (Quotes from “The History of Women's Clubs in America” – Jane Croly, published in 1898)

The Hague Mothers' Club spent a lot of energy making “dressings” for use in cancer treatments and on raising funds for many health and local endeavors.

A supper held in December 1930, at the Town Hall, had an attendance of over 200 persons. In May 1934 a special program was held in honor of Mother's Day. Sixty members and friends attended.

On June 13, 1935, a supper held by this club was deemed a financial success. Music was furnished by Frank Meehan and Clarence Swinyer – violins; Steve Bevins – guitar; Kenneth Blanchard – accordion and Wilford Ross – banjo. Many men were also members of this club. Our town historian, Sally DeLarm Rypkema, remembers visiting her grandmother, Mrs. Rollin DeLarm, as a child and watching the club members as they produced cancer dressings from sheets and other materials.

The last meeting we could uncover via newspaper clippings was held November 13, 1969 at the home of Mrs. Rollin DeLarm.

If you or a family member were associated with this club or have any stories, memories or articles to share, the town historian or the Hague Historical Society would be interested to listen and share with you.

We should be proud that our mothers stood by us, male or female, because they struggled to make our world a better place, no matter who they were or where they came from. Bless them for loving us enough to see us through all the trials and tribulations life had to throw at us.

On this “Mother's Day,” let us honor her (or her memory) by being strong, lending a helping hand, and passing those strengths on to our children.

Happy Mother's Day to all. ❑