

Linda Beatty -GFWC Virginia Historian – 2024-26 – Southwestern District

(Tidbits of information gleaned from annual reports, Virginia Clubwoman Magazines at GFWC Virginia Headquarters and 50th & 100th Anniversary books.)

When the federation began members of this portion of the state were known as 1st District, then in 1952 became Southwestern District. This district has provided 5 State Presidents and 2 Director of Juniors. It grew from 8 clubs to as many as 69 in 1951 and now is back to 8 General and 3 Junior and clubs with 154 members total.

Mrs Roy Kyle of **Hillsville** assumed the office of President of VFWC when Mrs. Claude Eley became ill in the middle of a convention in 1948. The records indicate that “her conventions were the outgrowth of her predecessor’s aims rather than her own, a circumstance causing added strain to Mrs. Kyle’s whole planning” but state records also show that “her manner of presiding was pleasing to the delegation at all three conventions.” **Jonesville WC** reported that in 1942 Mrs. Kyle came to Jonesville to help organize the new club which today has eleven members. A notable project they did early on was to sponsor a recreation program for young people by hosting “open house” in a local high school gym every Friday.

Remember the Artmobile that Virginia clubs supported back in the 50’s? Well, one Southwestern club reported that they even sponsored it after it crashed thru a store window in their town.

Back in 1942 **The Narrows Woman’s Club** reported having sold \$96,000 in stamps and bonds. This club sponsored the **Narrows JWC** in 1936. The **Narrows WC** also sponsored the **Pembroke WC** in 1942 when members of the Business & Professional Woman’s Club of Pembroke expressed an interest in becoming part of VFWC. Among the most outstanding achievements of **Pembroke WC** was the founding of the town library in 1973 in cooperation with the Ruritan Club and in 1988 assisted with moving it and reorganizing its interior. They used the library project as a CIP entry. Their focus always seemed to be on Education because in 1973 all of their members were either teachers or parents of school children.

The **Narrows JWC** declared that their greatest achievement was establishing a live TV auction on a local cable station which in 207 netted about \$13,000 which was used to fund the club’s donations to charitable organizations including GFWC sponsored projects and their club’s scholarships. That’s a lot of work for a small club of about 15 members.

Richlands WC, organized in 1934 recently celebrated their 92nd club anniversary and **Grundy WC** their 75th. After celebrating their 50th, **Grundy WC** filed an oral history with the Women’s History and Resource Center in DC to preserve their valuable history.

Pennington Gap WC reported in the 70s tat their most noteworthy project was water fluoridation for Pennington Gap and also working toward establishing a “walk-in blood bank” for Lee County.

Mattie R. Stephenson WC reported in 2014 that in addition to their 23 fundraiser efforts (which brought in \$2,433) their members served as greeters at the Arts Depot in Abingdon and at the Country Music Museum in Bristol. They also served as ushers at paramount Theater, litter pickers and gardeners to take care of abandoned annuals. They reported having done 160 projects which also included awarding scholarships.

A more recent fact you might not know: a SW club member recently travelled to Germany and Austria and sang with the Voices of the Mountains – a 170-member choir performed at St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna – Congratulations to the Honorable Florence Powell – our singing judge – we are proud of you. She is a member of **Wytheville WC**.

Wytheville WC in 1973 reported that they held a benefit concert with over 100 local musicians to raise money for scholarships for two local students. The \$330 raised was split between the two to assist in their expenses abroad for their studies in opera and orchestra.

In that same year **WC of Hillsville** donated funds to arts and music also. The High School Choral group performed at a club meeting and in appreciation the club donated to the Band Boosters Club to help the school band attend Mardi Gras festivities to which they were invited.

The **GFWC Appalachian Leading Ladies JWC** brand new to the Federation in 2020 jumped right in when COVID 19 hit and started sewing masks. First, they provided them to hospitals and first responders, then to anyone who needed them. The masks were free but any donations received for them went straight back to purchase more mask supplies. They also got free kits from Joanne's Fabrics and kept on sewing. They proudly reported having made over 300 masks with 100% of their members participating in the project in some way.

GFWC Pearisburg JWC refurbished a ward at Giles Memorial Hospital by painting, adding shelves in a closet and benches for visitors and patients. Flameproof draperies were added and a mural was painted. This project entailed working with five other civic organizations.

Four items of note were gifted to Virginia's headquarters:

A pewter tea service by **JWC Grundy** and a China lamp by **Grundy WC**, a 3-drawer chest in 1938 and a clock in memory of Jane Peery, State President 1968-70.

Clubwomen like to share their talents – did you know that Mrs. Mary Baiers from Blue Ridge District came to the rescue in 1975 and designed a crest for Southwestern to use on their district banner?