

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

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

Did you know that **The Ashland Woman's Club** was one of THE ten charter clubs when the federation's organizational meeting was held in 1907? They originally organized as a club in 1897 but only stayed in the Federation for 2 years before withdrawing. Later in 1955, **Ashland Junior WC** joined the federation. Although neither of those federated clubs are active today, thankfully, a graduating Jr spearheaded an effort to organize another club in the Ashland area resulting in the **Ashcake Woman's Club** in 1999.

Lee District - by other "numbered" names - has been a part of the Federation since its inception, thanks to Ashland WC. However, there was quite a controversy in 1952 over naming what had been the 5th District when numbers were replaced with names for districts. Some wanted to keep 5th, others suggested Capitol and others Lee - which finally prevailed when the vote was put before the members.

In 1944, while President Mrs. R. G. Boatwright of Lee District purchased a state president's pin which was then passed along to every state president thereafter to wear during her administration and even until today that practice is continued and "passing the pin" has been a part of many installation services.

Did you Know? With a current membership of 494 members and 19 clubs consisting of 13 General and 6 Junior Clubs (the district with the most Junior clubs in the State), Lee has the 3rd largest membership in GFWC Virginia in 2026. They also chartered the **GFWC Lee District Past Presidents' WC** in 2023 which has 14 members.

From Lee have come many talented women, not the least of which are the 9 women who have served as President of GFWC Virginia and at least 10 Junior members who have served as State Director of Junior Club.

One of those Past Presidents was Miss Lucille Bland, whose 1940 state pin was given to Linda Beatty by her cousin and Linda used it as the center of her own past state president's pin.

We always associate Lee District with Camp Easter Seals, the Tobacco Ball or Grand Ball or Charity Ball, Docents for the Governor's mansion and Lee's Traveller to name a few things, but a remark made by a District President in the late 40's summed it up for her Lee clubs "Where there is work to do, there you will find our club women". Just a few of those randomly selected accomplishments are listed here.

In 1973 the **Louisa JWC** brought the Huckleberry Players for children in the area, some of whom would never have seen a play if not for the club's project, providing them with free tickets AND transportation.

Capitol WC wrote in their 2006 report: “This has been a great year for our small club. We had fun and enjoyed our meetings and made an impact philanthropically”. Their annual May meeting turned into a beach weekend at a member’s home at the beach. Their time together was used to brainstorm for the next club year.

In 1980 **Kanawa WC** reported that they recycled newspapers and used the money earned to purchase bulbs to plant at the Ronald McDonald House and were also able to purchase alarm clocks for the parents who stayed there.

Metropolitan Richmond WC reported a unique fundraiser for their club in 1990 – “Every-Member-Write-a-Check” which raised \$161. They also recycled aluminum for the State’s “Pool Your Resources” project and turned in the money they earned at their district meeting.

Regency WC reported in that same year that their most successful project was “Downtown Presents” which raised \$1200. They were able to donate \$220 for the Camp East Love Wall and \$250 to a family who had a child with cerebral palsy.

Right after they were newly chartered in 1999, the **Ashcake WC** got busy focusing on GFWC projects and by 2006 they were proud to be able to donate \$2,000 to the “Helping Hands” project.

Essex JWC in 1973 held a Halloween Carnival which they broadcast live on WRAR radio station. It successfully provided a safe place for the kids and raised \$200 for a scholarship for a local student. They proudly boasted in their report that 100% of their members participated in the project which was attended by 400 children and adults.

Did you know that there used to be a club named **WC of Dogwood** for Deaf Women in Lee District? It was founded in 1976 with 21 members. A sister club – **Monacan JWC** (also no longer a club) assisted the members of Dogwood club with preparing two Thanksgiving baskets and two Christmas fruit baskets to present to residents of a local nursing home.

The **WC of Powhatan Co** conducted a clean-up campaign in the fall of 1973. That 10-day effort involved the cooperation of about 2,000 residents, businesses, school children, religious groups and civic clubs. It even included a poster contest for school children to help advertise the project.

Their sister club **Powhatan JWC** were also busy that year as they assisted the general club in the clean-up campaign. It was called “Let’s be Clean for Christmas”. They also found time to assist young people who were looking for part time jobs by providing a “clearinghouse” to match perspective employers with experience the kids had. The goal was to provide work experience for the youth and possibly future employment with the companies they worked for, plus the added bonus of the youth being able to provide good job references.

The **WC of Sandston** spent about 400 hours making 75 garments for the Henrico Christmas Mother and filled 25 stockings for Eastern Shore Hospital.

The **WC of Essex Co.** celebrated their 50th anniversary at Rose Hill in 1973 where their very first meeting was held. An original narrative by Mrs. Roy D. Whitlock, a charter member of that club, was read by herself and dramatized by young women whose mothers had been in the club.

In 2005 the **New Kent JWC** was federated and in 2006 after only half a year of belonging to the Virginia Federation their president wrote in the annual report: "I believe all our club members are proud of our accomplishments to date and hope to continue to enhance our community with the work we do." Their focus had been on the Heritage Public Library and The Farms of New Kent project.

The **Goochland WC** initiated a "listening" program involving 19 club members who listened to students read for about 65 hours each week. The project was well-received by the school, the students and the parents. Some members who had been skeptical became listeners themselves after seeing how successful it was.

Worthington WC in 1973 proudly adopted VFWC's resolution in support of Sunday Closings. They also presented a nursing school scholarship for a student who would not have been able to attend without the club's help.

Nine members of the **JWC Chester** met in 1973 with the newly opened Chesterfield County Detention Home to tour the facility and determine how the club could best volunteer their service. They decided to provide one activity each month for the Home starting with a Halloween Party in October and a night of games in November. In December three members visited on Christmas Eve taking gifts to the young people there who could not go home for Christmas. They proudly reported that 40 of their 47 members took part in the activities for the Home that year.

In 1993 the **Henry Clay WC** entered a float in the Chamber of Commerce Christmas parade and won a 2nd place ribbon. They also sponsored an Art Mobile visit along with a Junior club. **Varina WC's** unique project in 1973 was their Doll Show. Members and some local residents restored old dolls, old doll collections were brought in to exhibit, and doll houses were assembled for the 1-day show. They used the Show as a fundraising opportunity also as some dolls were made and sold.

The **JWC of Williamsburg** which was chartered in 1954 in Tidewater District petitioned the Virginia Federation in 2011 to be allowed to be a member club of Lee District instead of Tidewater; it was allowed with much regret. In 2012 their annual report noted that their 9 successful fundraising projects had enable them to give cash donations amounting to \$39,968.29 to charitable organizations and in scholarships. Clubwomen just love to get right down to the penny, don't they?

Did you know, that in 2000 Lee district decided to recognize some of its leading ladies by establishing Lee's Legends (like a hall of fame) Names were nominated and one woman was selected each year as a Lee's Legend. Sadly, the award was discontinued. Doesn't it sound very much like another award in GFWC which recognizes one member every 2 yrs from each Region? Maybe the reporting of Lee's Legends

caught the attention of someone at GFWC and they decided to establish the Jenny Award in 2006 – so a Lee’s Legends was maybe like a “mini” Jenny?

Several beautiful items adorn our headquarters in Richmond that were given in honor or memory of various members. A brass floor lamp was donated in honor of Vickie Marks of **Dunlora WC** who faithfully served as Executive Secretary of the Virginia Federation for many years. A coffee urn was given by **WC of Powhatan Co** honoring Mrs. James Shelton. A much-needed conference table was given by **Tri Club WC** in honor of Fran Minor and also a silver tray. A lovely floral arrangement was donated by **Old Dominion WC**.