

Linda Beatty -GFWC Virginia Historian – 2024-26 – Blue Ridge District

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

During its history Blue Ridge has provided 8 state presidents and at least 4 Director of Juniors. They also are proud of being one of only three districts to have provided an International President, our beloved Shelby Hamlet 2000-2002

You have probably heard this before but it is worth repeating:

State presidents for ALL of our major anniversaries were from BR:

50th Corinne Murray 75th Shelby Hamlet 100th Kathryn Sowers.

What does the crystal ball say for our 125th – will our leader then be from Blue Ridge also and will we return to the Hotel Roanoke to celebrate as we did for all the others?

This district can claim membership in the federation at its organization stage due to several clubs being a part of the charter clubs even though there was not yet a Blue Ridge district. Quite a bit of work was done by clubs from the Blue Ridge area under several numbered names like first or second or such, but in 1952 the 8th district became Blue Ridge.

Reports of 1958-59 reflect that many of the clubs in this district focused on the “exceptional” child and did some of the same things we are doing today for early childhood education and advocates for children.

Records show that at that time there were 18 general clubs in BR and every single one of them sent in reports. In 2026 there are 6 General clubs and 1 JWC with a total membership of 157.

In 1960 **Bent Mountain WC** reported entering floats in the Dogwood Festival parade, the Homecoming Parade and the Christmas parade.

In 1960 there was a club named **In Hoc Signo Vincens** which had organized in 1912 – no longer with us.

From time to time when a group of Blacksburg girls got together someone would remark “we really ought to have some kind of club here. We never see each other and we ought to do something worthwhile for the community” From that remark came a club of 11 members organized in 1935 as **Blacksburg JWC** and are still active today. They held a “Kiddie Karnival” and also made 27 baby dresses that were sent to the Belgian Congo.

This same Junior club along with the **Blacksburg WC** raised \$7000 to establish a speech and hearing clinic in Montgomery County.

While a part of the first district the **Floyd WC** assembled a “Friendship Scrapbook” of their community which they sent to Europe

The **Roanoke County WC** organized in 1923 and in 1927 their dream came true when they built a clubhouse on one acre of land which consisted of a large auditorium, dressing rooms, lounges, kitchen and pantry. I wonder if that dream still exists today?

In 1962 the **Botetourt Town & Country WC** held a Jr Miss Contest.

The **Bedford WC** when only 5 years into Federation held a giant-all-day-long Flea market and raised \$2000 - enough to replace the curtains in Bedford Elementary School.

I will end my history report on this District with this tidbit found in the annual report of 1963 which still rings true today:

Mrs. Frances Holden, **Vinton WC** president wrote:

“Pride in being a woman interested in the world in which we live has given a new value to club membership”

This same club in the 50s charged their members a nickel if they lost their membership card and a nickel if they failed to turn in their nametag at the close of the meeting. Guess that is equivalent of state credentials chairmen warning clubwomen that if they don't turn in their clear plastic name badges, they will explode and catch on fire when they get in their cars.