

Littleton Garden Club History

Written by Lucy Magoon

Gardening was originally a branch of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. At a meeting of the Colonial Club at the Masonic Temple, the guest speaker, Mrs. William (Helen) Champlain of Rochester, NH, urged members to become interested in all branches of the Federation of Women's Clubs. During the social hour which followed, Mrs. Arthur (Anna) Pennock spoke to Mrs. Champlain about promoting gardening in Littleton. Mrs. Champlain told her to get a group of ladies together and she would come to Littleton and talk to them. She did that a week later.

The Littleton Garden Club was organized on June 7, 1938, at Anna Pennock's home, 40 School Street. There were 15 charter members: Beatrice Blasenak, Ann Copenhaver, Mrs. Philip Coyne, Helen Eastman, Minnie Eaton, Amy Hunt, Charlotte Jewel, Doris Knighton, Betty Lytle, Lillian Mathes, Dorothy Meakin, Ann Newell, Anna Pennock, Nancy Welch and Laura West. At this time, two charter members- Beatrice Blasenak and Ann Copenhaver are honorary members.

At the next meeting, six more ladies joined: Mrs. Mary Heald, Glennie Adams, Florence Blount, Mrs. Lawrence Collins, Glenn Noyes and Helen Bingham. Elected officers included President :Anna Pennock, Vice President: Minnie Eaton, Secretary: Doris Knigton, Treasurer: Betty Lytle, Publicity and scrapbook: Beatrice Blasenak. Amy Hunt made an angel cake which was served during the social hour.

In the meantime, The New Hampshire Federation of Garden Clubs was organized with Mrs. Champlain as president. Littleton Garden Club joined the Federation on July 12, 1938. The first State Federation projects were to establish a Lilac Arboretum at New Hampshire State University. Littleton Garden Club was assigned "President's Poincare" variety. At this second meeting, the roll call response from members was the subject of wildflowers. Several varieties of wildflowers were brought and information related to each one. Mrs. West told of cultivating wildflowers in her garden. This meeting was held at the home of Charlotte Jewel, Union Street. This house was later razed to make way for Lakeway Elementary School.

Anna Pennock was an avid gardener and her lectures on gardening in the North Country were well received. She served as president with distinction for five years. She presented the club with its gavel, made by her husband from an apple tree his father had planted in the Pennock Garden at 40 School Street. President Pennock's theme was "MAKE LITTLETON RARE WITH GARDEN'S FAIR"--more and better gardens was a goal set by Anna Pennock.

Early programs consisted of readings by members from the Radio Garden Club and the Garden Digest. Slide programs were presented by the Pennocks of their lovely gardens showing continuous bloom during the seasons. A local photographer, Charles Keyes, showed slides of local scenery. Anna stated that during her five years as President, with no funds to start with, "I often wondered about programs." It was through the courtesy of the Pennocks that members were able to attend the Federation meetings and receive information of available programs.

At the August 1938 meeting, the club was invited by the White Mountain Garden Club to hear an address by Governor George Aiken at Rock Pool Club. One summer program was given by a summer resident -Mae Rawson of Asbury Park, NJ. She presented an unusual program entitled: "Under Water Bouquets". Lovely arrangements were created in inverted jars of water. This type of flower arrangement is done today in flower shows.

Later, Littleton Garden Club was fortunate to have as speaker-the late Ruth Kistner. She was an internationally known authority on flower arranging. She was also a qualified judge and entertained members from her home in Sugar Hill. Ruth provided many programs on flower arranging. She co-authored a book, "Flower arranging for the American home".

On July 11, 1940, the two year-old club began its civic projects. During World War II years, victory gardens were encouraged. A 10 session course on family gardening was sponsored. Garden seeds were sent to England. At that time, a dollar packet of seeds provided a family of five with a year's supply of vegetables. Members were active in the *bundles for Britain* drive. Members met at the Community house in the fall and surplus vegetables were canned for winter consumption.

Littleton Garden Club sponsored a project to eradicate ragweed. It was unsightly and a threat to hay fever victims. With assistance of Littleton children, who were paid a penny a pound- 1800 pounds of ragweed were pulled up in three days. The club sponsored a "Litter bug poster contest". Three posters were sent to national competition.

On August 20, 1942, a first flower show was sponsored. There were 225 exhibits and the purple ribbon was awarded by the NH Federation of Garden Clubs.

LGC's next project was winter beautification of community buildings as well as the Veterans Hospital in White River Junction Vt. Greens and cones were gathered by Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Spencer and Bea Blasanak. Later, a Garden Club was organized in White River Junction and they took over the responsibility of decorations for the Veteran's Hospital.

Summer beautification was also done by members. Annuals were planted in window boxes. Each year, the Garden Club sent a student to a summer conservation camp sponsored by the Society for the Protection of NH Forests.

In November of 1959, the annual meeting was changed from September to May to correspond with the annual meeting schedule of the Federation group. At that time, \$5 was contributed to buy a log for the restoration of Fort Number Four, in Charlestown, NH. Floral arrangements were placed in Littleton Public Library each month by it's members.

In August 1961, Bea Blasanak, Charter member, was honored by having her name inscribed in the book of honor at the National home of Garden Clubs in Missouri. She'd served as Secretary of the LGC for 24 years. In May, 1982, Bea was awarded life membership of the National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc. , in recognition of years of dedicated service.

In 1967, always environmentally aware, the club vigorously protested roadside spraying of powerful weed killers. These were a threat to wildflowers, trees, bushes and small animals. The club was successful in it's efforts as spraying was discontinued.

In 1969, Littleton Garden Club won the Sears Roebuck award for the project of landscaping the Littleton Public Library grounds.

In July of 1975- The Anna Pennock Memorial Garden originated at the Opera House and Town Hall building parking area. This project, under the leadership of President Dorothy Craigie, was awarded the Tempie F. Dahlgren trophy. Lilacs , flowering shrubs and perennials were planted in memory of club members. Later, this was moved to the Community house, its present location.

Over the years, plantings were made at the High School, Elementary School and expensive plantings were made at the Littleton Hospital. All were destroyed in the wake of progress. Plantings at the junction of Maple & Main St and at Littleton Public Library are enjoyed by residents and visitors. On Sept. 26, 1987, Littleton Library Mini park was dedicated. Littleton Rotary Club supported the project and landscaping was provided by LGC.

Littleton Garden Club had 6 qualified flower show judges in its membership. Ruth Kistner, Jean Williams, Mrs. Arthur Gray Jr., Ruth Dodge, Mary Winn Foss and Mrs. Georgia McHugh were the distinguished judges. Some were members of both the White Mountain Garden Club and the Littleton Garden Club.

Dedication and hard work of officers and members have made all these accomplishments possible.
To **MAKE LITTLETON RARE WITH GARDENS FAIR ...More and better gardens.**