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Contributions of Women to Clark County's History

Lisa K. Speer

Excerpted from a lecture given for the Clark County bicentennial, this article focuses on contributions of Clark County women to the community during the major movements and events of the late 19th and 20th centuries.

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One of the earliest organized movements involving Clark County women was the temperance crusade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Organized temperance reform first began in Arkansas in the 1830s, with men and women participating together in temperance organizations. Such was the case in the Arkadelphia Temperance Reform Council No. 63, which was active as early as 1871.<sup>1</sup> The group's leadership consisted of both men and women, with at least thirteen women actively participating in the council in the mid-1870s. In late 1873, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union formed in Hillsboro, Ohio, and by 1874 had become a national organization. Before long, women formed the heart of the temperance crusade across America.

While it appears that a chapter of the WCTU was not established in Clark County until 1880,<sup>2</sup> news of the growing female presence within the temperance movement had certainly reached the county and appeared to be ruffling feathers in some sectors of the male community. A contributor to the *Southern Standard* writing of the success of Okolona's robust temperance society in 1874 noted, "Several who were wont to take their regular [toddlies] have joined and are quite enthusiastic members, and all this without the aid of the women crusaders. Let every woman select her man and bend her efforts to reform him and she will succeed."<sup>3</sup> To paraphrase, ladies could wield their influence at home to best effect.

Despite reservations like these, women ultimately came to form the heart of the prohibition movement in Arkansas, establishing over 100 temperance and anti-saloon leagues across the state. In 1880 alone, six Christian Temperance Unions formed in Clark County at Arkadelphia, Curtis, Mt. Zion, New Hope, Oakland, and Unity. Perhaps to distance themselves from any radicalism associated with the national movement, none of the Clark county organizations identified as "Woman's" organizations and all included both male and female members. The leadership structure of the local unions was, in all but one case,

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<sup>1</sup> "Temperance Reform," *Southern Standard*, July 8, 1871, 2; *Southern Standard*, April 19, 1873, 3; "Temperance," *Southern Standard*, September 26, 1874, 1; and "Temperance," *Southern Standard*, March 13, 1875, 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Temperance Officers Elected," *Southern Standard*, April 10, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> *Southern Standard*, April 11, 1874.

dominated by men. If women held leadership positions, they were corresponding secretaries or board members.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, Clark County women appear to have taken on a more assertive role in the war on drink. At last adopting the WCTU moniker as well as the “white ribbon” symbol of the movement, the Arkadelphia WCTU members hoped that the everyday evidence of the demon drink “at work in the walls of our little city” would catapult women into joining the movement to save their loved ones from “an awful fate.”<sup>5</sup> Unlike earlier temperance movements, the WCTU relied on female leadership at all levels. Mrs. C. C. Henderson and Mrs. J. H. Hinemon were early leaders in the Arkadelphia WCTU, both serving as president in the first years of the organization.

The Arkadelphia WCTU presented programs on themes like “Medical Temperance,” “Percentages of Alcohol in Popular Medicines,” and “Our Battle Cry – Arkansas Dry.”<sup>6</sup> At these meetings, members sang songs like the “Temperance Doxology” (“Praise God from whom all blessing flow/Praise Him who heals the drunkard’s woe/Praise Him who leads the temperance host/Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost”) and “The Lips that Touch Liquor Will Never Touch Mine.” The Arkadelphia union was also clearly tapped into the larger temperance movement as demonstrated by several national WCTU organizers who spoke in Arkadelphia and the hosting of the 1913 WCTU district convention in Arkadelphia’s Methodist Church.<sup>7</sup>

Many women involved in the temperance movement ultimately found themselves also fighting for woman’s suffrage. Temperance crusaders blamed alcohol for societal ills and pressed for legislative reform to ban its sale and consumption. Temperance crusaders, concerned about the effects of alcohol on the family, saw their potential power as bloc voters if they could win the right to vote. I have not established any causal link between temperance and suffrage activities in Clark County. Like most of Arkansas aside from Pulaski and the few larger towns, Clark County does not appear to have been a hub of suffrage activity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>4</sup> “Another Christian Temperance Union Organized,” *Southern Standard*, March 20, 1880, 3; “Temperance Officers Elected,” *Southern Standard*, *Southern Standard*, April 10, 1880, 3; “Temperance News Items,” *Southern Standard*, June 26, 1880, 2; “Temperance Talk,” *Southern Standard*, July 10, 1880, 2; “Curtis Christian Temperance Union,” *Southern Standard*, September 11, 1880, 5; and “Personal,” *Southern Standard*, October 30, 1880, 3.

<sup>5</sup> “W. C. T. U.,” *Southern Standard*, March 1, 1906, 3; and “W. C. T. U. Notes,” *Southern Standard*, May 7, 1908, 3.

<sup>6</sup> “W. C. T. U. Notes,” *Southern Standard*, March 26, 1908, 3; and “WCTU,” *Southern Standard*, May 3, 1906, 3.

<sup>7</sup> “Series of Temperance Addresses,” *Southern Standard*, February 6, 1913, 1; “Big Attendance is Looked For,” *Southern Standard*, March 27, 1913, 1; and “W. C. T. U. Adopts Important Plan,” *Southern Standard*, July 10, 1913, 1.

This situation is unfortunately ironic, considering that when Arkansas rewrote its state constitution in 1868 a Clark County delegate, Miles Ledford Langley proposed enfranchising women in the new document. In defense of his suggestion, Langley said he believed that a woman did not “differ from man in any particular [way] that disqualified her from exercising the same political and legal rights” as he did. Langley’s proposal was met with derision and ridicule from fellow delegates. A White County delegate, J. N. Cypert suggested amending Langley’s proposal to provide that “no man who has a wife shall be allowed to vote when the right is exercised by his wife.”<sup>8</sup>

One possible explanation for the lack of suffrage activity in Clark County in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is perhaps the priority placed on service work during the First World War. Even prior to US entry into the war in April 1917, women’s volunteer efforts were in demand by organizations like the Red Cross. Organizations like the National League for Women’s Service and later the woman’s committee of the Council of National Defense, created by Congress in 1916, began attempts to identify and categorize work that women could perform in support of the war effort. Both of the latter organizations, the National Service League and the woman’s committee of the Council of National Defense held registration drives in Clark County to enumerate women and identify what categories of war work they might perform – the League in May 1917 and the Council of Defense in early 1918.<sup>9</sup>

The woman’s committee of the Council of Defense, established by Governor Brough in July 1917, supported the war effort through campaigns to promote food production and conservation, child welfare, morality, and patriotic programs among the citizenry. Mrs. H. C. Anderson was chair of the Clark County Committee, and Mrs. Dougald McMillan Vice-President. To maximize efforts, locals councils were established in communities throughout Clark County under a chair designated by the Clark County Council.<sup>10</sup> These committees coordinated much of the wartime service activity of women in the county.

One of the most important wartime activities of Clark County women was sewing and knitting work for the Red Cross. The Red Cross supplied the yarn and

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<sup>8</sup> A. Elizabeth Taylor, “The Woman Suffrage Movement in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 15, 1 (Spring 1956), 18.

<sup>9</sup> “Women to Enlist for Emergencies,” *Southern Standard*, April 26, 1917, 1; “Blanks Received for Women’s League,” *Southern Standard*, May 10, 1917, 1; “Registration Day for Women is 28<sup>th</sup>,” *Southern Standard*, July 26, 1917, 1; “Clark Women to Register Later,” *Southern Standard*, August 2, 1917, 1; “Registration Notes,” *Southern Standard*, August 2, 1917, 1; “Women Responding for Registration,” *Southern Standard*, February 21, 1918, 1; and “Women’s Committee National Defense,” *Southern Standard*, March 28, 1918, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Clark County chairwomen included: Mrs. W. H. Langston, Alpine; Mrs. Belle Studdard, Amity; Mrs. Luther Smith, Anderson; Mrs. Jack Ross, Antoine; Mrs. J. B. Nunn, Beech Creek; Mrs. George Clark, Bierne; Mrs. Neill Sloan, Caddo; Mrs. T. H. Hughes, Elkins; Miss Nellie Jordan, Greenville; Mrs. Ed Fortson, Leard; Mrs. J. R. Shepherd, Long Creek; Mrs. Alex Hunter, Manchester; Mrs. Bob Stephens, Missouri; Miss Mart Doby, South Fork; and Mrs. T. C. Dawson, Terre Noir.

local women produced countless sweaters, helmets, wristlets, mufflers and socks according to specifications also provided by the Red Cross.<sup>11</sup> Knitters were advised to take care that socks should be “free from knots and ridges and be exactly 11” in the foot.”<sup>12</sup> Bandages and knitted items were collected from women around Clark County at the Red Cross workroom in Arkadelphia and shipped to headquarters in St. Louis, which distributed them as needed to military hospitals and troops.<sup>13</sup>

Shipments leaving Arkadelphia were reported regularly in the local news. In early April 1918, the *Standard* reported that Clark County had made its fourth shipment since November 1917 for a total of 664 garments knitted.<sup>14</sup> In July 1918, the newspaper chastised the women of Clark County for lackluster support of the war work – only 107 women had reported to the workroom in June and 136 garments shipped to St. Louis for that month.<sup>15</sup> That same month – July 1918 -- women from the Bierne community alone sewed and knitted 74 separate garments for the troops, while two Arkadelphia grandmothers knitted 25 pairs of socks and another woman completed her nineteenth sweater.<sup>16</sup> According to estimates provided by the Red Cross, 25 pairs of socks equals about 600 service hours, while 19 sweaters would take about 570 hours to complete.<sup>17</sup> In September, two months before Armistice, the Arkadelphia unit sent another shipment of 385 garments to the Red Cross headquarters.<sup>18</sup>

Clark County women also served the war effort through the sale of Liberty Bonds.<sup>19</sup> Wars are expensive and are generally financed through a combination of taxes, borrowing, or printing money. The First World War relied on a mix of one-third new taxes and two-thirds borrowing from the general population. The borrowing effort was called the “Liberty Loan” and put into effect through the sale of loans issued by the U.S. Treasury. Four Liberty Loan drives were conducted during the war, and a fifth “Victory Loan” announced after armistice. According to the Federal Reserve Bank, the Liberty Loan drives were the subject of the greatest

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<sup>11</sup> “Red Cross Work Progressing Nicely,” *Southern Standard*, October 4, 1917, 1.

<sup>12</sup> “Women of County Urged to Knit Sox,” *Southern Standard*, April 11, 1918, 1.

<sup>13</sup> “R. C. Executive Officers,” *Southern Standard*, December 5, 1918, 1. Red Cross officers for Clark County were: Mrs. W. E. Barkman, chair, women’s work; Mrs. J. C. Wallis, chair, work room; Miss Gilberta Harris, chair, surgical dressings; Miss Kate Heard, chair, knitters; Miss C. C. Jackson, chair, purchasing committee; and Mrs. T. N. Wilson, chair, supplies. Executive committee members included: Mrs. R. W. Osborne, Okolona; Mrs. J. J. Young, Okolona; Mrs. N. A. Peters, Graysonia; Mrs. Jno. Ward, Amity; Mrs. H. S. Nelson, Bierne; and Mrs. J. B. Nunn, Whelen Springs.

<sup>14</sup> *Southern Standard*, April 4, 1918, 7.

<sup>15</sup> “Question Loyalty Arkadelphia Women,” *Southern Standard*, July 18, 1918, 1.

<sup>16</sup> “The Call is Made for More Knitting,” *Southern Standard*, August 1, 1918, 1.

<sup>17</sup> “Anxious to Give Credit,” *Southern Standard*, March 6, 1919, 1. Red Cross service hour estimates for knitted garments included: 30 hours for one sweater; 24 hours for one pair of socks; 12 hours for one helmet; 8 hours for one wristlet; and 24 hours for one muffler.

<sup>18</sup> *Southern Standard*, September 12, 1918, 5.

<sup>19</sup> “Women Organized for Liberty Bonds,” *Southern Standard*, October 4, 1917, 1.

advertising effort ever conducted<sup>20</sup>. 60,000 US women were recruited to sell bonds during the second Liberty Loan drive.<sup>21</sup>

The Second Liberty Loan drive was announced for Clark County in early October 1917 and concluded on November 15. Mrs. Dougald McMillan and Mrs. J. S. Cargile coordinated the drive in Clark County, with each township having a chairwoman to conduct local fundraising, very much like the structure of the woman's committee of the Council of Defense.<sup>22</sup> The goal of the campaign was to sell a bond into every home in the land, and America's women very nearly succeeded. By war's end, 20 million individuals, out of the 24 million households in the US, had bought bonds. More than \$17 billion had been raised. In addition, the taxes collected amounted to \$8.8 billion. In Clark County, the names of subscribers (and in many cases the amount of bonds purchased) were published faithfully each week in the local newspaper in an "Honor Roll," undoubtedly an effective technique to encourage non-subscribers to get on the bandwagon.<sup>23</sup> Clark County's quota for the second drive was \$137,000 in bond sales. Total subscriptions reached \$139,400 from 480 subscribers – the population of Clark County would have been between 23,000 and 25,000 during this era.

For the Third Liberty Loan drive, which started in April 1918, McMillan and Cargile resumed their roles as coordinators for Clark County. The county's quota of the \$3 million drive was \$198,550 -- \$129,000 to come from Arkadelphia; \$25,000 from Gurdon; \$16,500 from Gurdon, and \$28,000 from Amity.<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Cargile instructed Clark County residents, "New homes, new cars, new jewelry, new pianos, new victrolas, fashionable furnishings and clothing must all be resolutely put behind us if we win this war."<sup>25</sup> As in the previous drive, the third Liberty Loan drive was oversubscribed in Clark County, exceeding the quota by \$6,900 (\$205,450) with several individuals subscribing at the \$10,000 level.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The Committee on Public Information managed an aggressive publicity campaign that enlisted film stars of the day like Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks to travel around the country to promote the sale of bonds. Additionally, the CPI sponsored 11,000 billboards and streetcar ads in over 3,000 cities around the United States encouraging patriotic Americans to do their duty and buy bonds.

<sup>21</sup> "Liberty Bonds," Federal Reserve History, accessed November 24, 2018, [https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/liberty\\_bonds](https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/liberty_bonds).

<sup>22</sup> "Appointed District and County Chairmen," *Southern Standard*, March 7, 1918, 1. Township chairwomen were: Mrs. Neill Sloan, Caddo; Mrs. Alex Hunter, Manchester; Mrs. Luther Smith, Anderson; Mrs. Bob Stevens, Missouri; Mrs. B. S. Martin, Beech Creek; Mrs. Ollie Robinson, Bierne; Mrs. T. N. Hughes, Elkins; Miss Mart Doby, South Fork; Miss Nellie Jordan, Greenville; Mrs. J. R. Shepherd, Long Creek; Mrs. Ed Fortson, Leard; Mrs. W. H. Langston, Alpine; Mrs. A. J. Hunter, Amity; Mrs. Jack Ross, Antoine; and Mrs. T. C. Ross, Terre Noir.

<sup>23</sup> "Our Honor Roll," *Southern Standard*, September 20, 1917, 5; "Our Honor Roll," *Southern Standard*, October 4, 1917, 4; "Our Honor Roll," *Southern Standard*, October 11, 1917, 4; "Roll of Honor," *Southern Standard*, November 1, 1917, 4; "Our Honor Roll," *Southern Standard*, November 8, 1917, 5; and "Our Honor Roll," *Southern Standard*, November 22, 1917, 8.

<sup>24</sup> "Eye of the Nation is on Your County," *Southern Standard*, April 4, 1918, 1.

<sup>25</sup> "Lend Your Money to Uncle Samuel," *Southern Standard*, March 28, 1918, 1.

<sup>26</sup> "Our County Quota Goes Over the Top," *Southern Standard*, May 2, 1918, 1.

Another area of wartime service in which Clark County women distinguished themselves was food conservation.<sup>27</sup> Rural Clark County women, in particular, were prepared for this effort thanks to the introduction of home demonstration clubs in Arkansas in the early 1910s. The US Department of Agriculture established cooperative extension services in 1914 through the Smith-Lever Act to inform people about current developments in agriculture, home economics and other related subjects. Arkansas historian Elizabeth Griffin Hill has written that home demonstration clubs, “taught farm women improved methods for accomplishing their household responsibilities and encouraged them to better their families’ living conditions through home improvements and labor-saving devices.”<sup>28</sup>

Home demonstration clubs began in Arkansas in Pulaski County in 1912, and Clark County in 1915.<sup>29</sup> In November, the county court appropriated \$900 for a male farm demonstrator and less than half of that amount, \$400, for a female canning club agent. Still, the \$400 was more than the amount the court appropriated for roads and bridges (\$300) or for upkeep of public buildings (\$200), so they must have considered the need for rural education agents somewhat of a priority. Not all of the county justices voted in favor of the appropriations, however. Five voted against an appropriation for the farm demonstrator and two against the canning club agent. Surprisingly, the appropriation for the canning club agent received more support from the county justices than the erection of a Confederate monument.

Miss Mamie Weaver of Gravette, Arkansas, was selected as Clark County’s first canning club agent. Weaver had organized canning and domestic clubs in other parts of Arkansas and was considered “one of the best in the state.”<sup>30</sup> She arrived in Clark County for her 10-month tenure sometime in late spring 1916 and was at work organizing clubs by April. Newspaper reports over the course of the next year show Weaver travelling in various parts of the county organizing women and girls in clubs and teaching classes on various domestic subjects.<sup>31</sup>

The citizens of Clark County, and the justices on the levying court, were so happy with the work of Weaver and farm demonstrator A. E. Ferguson that during

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<sup>27</sup> “United Effort for Food Conservation,” *Southern Standard*, October 11, 1917, 1; and “Food Conservation Campaign Next Week,” *Southern Standard*, October 25, 1917, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Griffin Hill, “Home Demonstration Clubs,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, accessed November 24, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=5387>.

<sup>29</sup> “Annual Meeting of the Levying Court,” *Southern Standard*, November 4, 1915, 1.

<sup>30</sup> “Farm Demonstrator for Clark County,” *Southern Standard*, January 6, 1916, 1; and “Canning Clubs,” *Southern Standard*, March 9, 1916, 1.

<sup>31</sup> “Farm Demonstrator Addresses Farmers,” *Southern Standard*, January 13, 1916, 1; *Southern Standard*, January 27, 1916, 2; “Information About Canning Clubs,” *Southern Standard*, April 6, 1916, 1; “Unity,” *Southern Standard*, April 27, 1916, 8; [Report by Weaver], *Southern Standard*, May 25, 1916, 8; “Halfway,” *Southern Standard*, March 22, 1917, 8; and “Vital Subjects Discussed Here,” *Southern Standard*, June 14, 1917, 1.

the 1916 court session they unanimously adopted a resolution praising the work of the agents, and increased the appropriations for their positions to \$1,080 for Ferguson and \$750 for Weaver – almost doubling the amount set aside for Weaver.<sup>32</sup>

Whereas, Mr. A. E. Ferguson, the Farm Demonstrator, and Miss Mamie Weaver, the Canning Club Agent, came among the people of Clark county absolute strangers the first of this year, and by their Christian conduct and upright demeanor, coupled with their energy and educated efforts, have demonstrated to the people of Clark county the necessity of retaining their valuable services in their respective phases for the ensuing year; therefore be it

Resolved by the Clark County Levying Court at the 1916 session that it recommend that the citizens of this county use these two in every way connected with their calling, and that they be received into the homes and hearts of the citizenship of this county to the extent that when they depart they can realize that it was good for them to have come among us.

*Southern Standard*, November 2, 1916

Although by 1917 Weaver had left her position as home demonstration agent in Clark County, the levying court continued to see the value in providing funding for these services.<sup>33</sup> Appropriations for both a farm and a home demonstrator were raised again in 1917 and 1919 – by 1919 the canning club agent appropriation was \$1000. In 1917, the court added an appropriation for a colored canning club agent.<sup>34</sup> The appropriation was ruefully small in comparison to those for the farm demonstrator and the white canning club agent -- \$120 for the colored agent and \$750 for the white female agent. In 1919, the court raised the colored canning agent's appropriation to \$300, not even a third of what was allocated for the white agent.<sup>35</sup>

So, what did a home demonstration agent do? Much of an agent's work involved travelling to rural communities in their county, and organizing interested girls and women into canning clubs and providing instruction on various domestic sciences, such as food production, preparation and conservation, poultry raising, bread making, home and yard improvement, and child nutrition. But their work involved a social service element that often went beyond a merely educational role in rural Arkansas communities. During the deadly 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic, Arkansas extension service agents organized diet and soup kitchens to

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<sup>32</sup> "Farm Demonstrator Retained in County," *Southern Standard*, November 2, 1916, 1, 10.

<sup>33</sup> "New Canning Club Agent," *Southern Standard*, February 21, 1918, 1.

<sup>34</sup> "New Appropriations by Quorum Court," *Southern Standard*, November 1, 1917, 1.

<sup>35</sup> "Another Bridge for the Little Missouri," *Southern Standard*, October 30, 1919, 1.



provide nourishment for individuals and sometimes entire families stricken with the illness. Home demonstration women provided hot lunches to children in rural Arkansas schools in the 1920s. And the food production and preservation skills that women learned through home demonstration allowed them to provide a better existence for their families, friends and neighbors during the years of hardship and economic depression that Arkansas experienced until changes brought about by the second World War ameliorated some of the state's grinding poverty.

When the United States entered World War II following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Clark County women were called upon again to assist the war effort in many of the same ways they had during the First World War. During "Women at War Week" in November 1942, women's organizations in Arkadelphia coordinated to assist in the sale of Clark County's \$36,000 quota of war bonds. Each day of the week a different group of women managed the sales, with days being divided between the American Legion Auxiliary, the Women's Library Association, the Colerean Club, the Philharmonic and Music clubs, and women of all the churches. Mrs. Clarence Hardin coordinated Clark County's "Women at War" week.<sup>36</sup>

In 1944, seven Clark County home demonstration clubs in Okolona, Cedar Grove, Curtis, Stickey, Sycamore, Hammond's Chapel, Gurdon and Manchester collected more than 10,190 pounds of waste paper for the purpose of purchasing a \$50 war bond. The Stickey club, under the leadership of Mrs. Clarence Rickett, led the effort by collecting 3,800 pounds.

Women also employed the skills they had acquired through home extension work to manage household diets during wartime rationing, which affected access to goods including sugar, coffee, meat, cheese, canned fish, canned milk and other processed foods. Clark County women were encouraged to plant "Victory Gardens" to increase local food supply to offset wartime shortages. 800 Clark County farm families (more than half the number in the county) enlisted in the "Food-for-Victory" campaign, in which farmers and farm wives pledged to assist with food production for the war effort. Housewives, town and city, were encouraged to help save steel, which could be used for making machine guns or B-17 bombers, by cutting down on the use of canned goods and substituting fresh or home-packed fruit and produce instead.

While the Second World War offered service opportunities for women within familiar domestic arenas, it also afforded them chances to step outside the traditional roles of wife, mother and caregivers. World War II was the first conflict to provide American women with an opportunity for active military service in a capacity beyond that of nurse with the creation of divisions of the U.S. Army and

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<sup>36</sup>"Women-at-War Week Planned in This City," *Daily Siftings Herald*, November 18, 1942, 1.

the Naval Reserve especially for women. In May 1942, Congress created the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, otherwise known as the WAC, converted to an active duty status in July 1943. The WAVES, or Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, a branch of the US Naval Reserve, was established in July 1942.

Congress initially set as the recruitment goal for the WAC 25,000 women, which was exceeded within a short time, so Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson increased the limit by authorizing the enlistment of 150,000 volunteers. WACs were initially trained in three areas: as switchboard operators, mechanics and bakers. These categories were later expanded to include dozens of specialties including postal clerks, drivers, stenographers, clerk-typists, armorers, and seamstresses. From its beginning in 1942, the Women's Army Corps accepted black and white women. When the first WACs arrived at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, there were 400 white and 40 black women. The recruitment of black women was limited to ten percent of the total WAC population—matching the black proportion of the national population. Enlisted women served in segregated units, participated in segregated training, lived in separate quarters, ate at separate tables in mess halls, and used segregated recreation facilities. Officers received their officer candidate training in integrated units, but lived under segregated conditions. Specialist and technical training schools were integrated in 1943. During the war, 6,520 black women served in the Women's Army Corps.

The WAVES accepted women as commissioned officers and at the enlisted level, effective for the duration of the war, plus six months. The purpose of WAVES was to release male officers and enlisted men for sea duty and replace them with women in shore establishments. The eligible age for female officer candidates was between 20-49 with a college degree or two years of college or equivalent professional or business experience. For enlisted women, the eligible age was between 20 and 35 with a high school or business diploma or equivalent experience. The WAVES were primarily white, but 74 African American women did serve as WAVES during the war.

Clark County women began joining the WAC and WAVES shortly after the units were created in 1942. By late August 1942, the *Southern Standard* reported that the county's fourth young lady, Miss Martha Jane Villa, had joined the Women's Army Corps. Villa was presently working at the Arkansas Ordnance Plant in Jacksonville. Miss Villa joined Doris Cooper and Mary Sue Hill of Arkadelphia, and Marie Hill of Gurdon in the WAC. Miss Eunice Watson and Miss Dorothy Wood were the first Clark County women to join the WAVES in early 1943. Ironically, both were business women employed in haircare. Miss Watson was co-owner of the Triplette Beauty Shop, and Miss Wood a stylist at the Glendean Beauty Shop. As two of the first 100 women to enlist from Arkansas, they belonged to the Arkansas Traveler squadron. Miss Dorothy Laster of Arkadelphia was the first Clark County woman to receive a commission in the

WAVES. Laster, who was commissioned an ensign, was a graduate of both Henderson and Columbia Universities in New York.

Both WAC and WAVES recruiters visited Clark County on numerous occasions, and newspaper notices of local women who signed up for active duty attest to the effectiveness of their efforts and to the aggressive propaganda campaign carried out at local, state and national levels.<sup>37</sup> Clark County established a WAC recruiting committee under the directorship of Mrs. Cecil Cupp. Committee members included women representatives from Ouachita and Henderson, Arkadelphia High School, the county home demonstration agent, and the American Legion Auxiliary. The committee was tasked with contacting prospective recruits and giving them information about the WAC in order to meet a monthly recruiting quota. The Arkadelphia Chamber of Commerce provided space for an office that was staffed every Friday by a WAC recruiter from the regional headquarters in Texarkana. WAC recruiters spoke to local civic and patriotic organizations in Clark County, and for a time hosted a recruiting program on KTHS radio (Hot Springs) which was broadcast in Arkadelphia between 10:45 and 11:00 daily.<sup>38</sup>

The years following the end of the Second World War presented a dichotomy in the experience of women. Women had proven quite capable of performing work outside the home in support of the war effort; yet their work was encouraged only so long as the country was at war. In his 1972 work *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970*, historian William Chafe wrote, "Despite the changes engendered by war . . . traditional ideas of woman's place retained a strong following. Female workers had been assiduously cultivated in the midst of the military crisis. But now the courtship appeared to be over."<sup>39</sup> Federal and civilian employers quickly replaced women workers with men.

The replacement of women in the workforce was also coupled with a dramatic increase in the rise of marriages and births in the United States. In her work *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Elaine Tyler May writes that Americans turned to the family as a bastion of "security in an insecure world."<sup>40</sup> Gender imagery of the 1950s seems comical today. Advertisements, educational films and television shows depict stay-at-home mothers cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children, all while they are dressed and coiffed immaculately and usually wearing heels and pearls. Many women felt

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<sup>37</sup> "Dorothy S. Lee becomes WAAC," *Arkadelphia Siftings-Herald*, June 19, 1943; "Mrs. Jimmie Modlin Joins WACS," *Arkadelphia Siftings Herald*, June 22, 1944; and "Pvt Margaret Gill Assigned to Chaffee," *Arkadelphia Siftings Herald*, September 7, 1944.

<sup>38</sup> "WAC Recruiter Here Friday," *Arkadelphia Siftings Herald*, February 2, 1943; "WAC Officers Boost Recruiting," *Arkadelphia Siftings Herald*, September 2, 1943; and "Women of County Asked to Join Women's Corps," *Arkadelphia Siftings Herald*, June 8, 1944.

<sup>39</sup> Chafe, *The American Woman* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 178.

<sup>40</sup> May, *Homeward Bound* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 3.

disenfranchised by this new enforced domesticity, and popular culture's depiction of them as helpless and submissive.

Club work offered an arena where women could temporarily escape the confines of the home, associate with other adults, while still performing work within traditional spheres of female activity. A key organization for women's activity in Clark County in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is still in existence today -- the Woman's Library Association, founded in 1897 and responsible for raising funds to build the public library building in Arkadelphia -- the same building still in use today. The WLA may be one of the oldest secular women's organizations in continuous existence in Clark County today.

Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Americans had increased time for leisure as greater numbers of them moved from field to factory and office work. Thanks to reformers like Horace Mann, the concept of universal public education had gained wider acceptance, and by 1900 more than half of the states had adopted compulsory school laws. Although these changes were slow in coming to the American South and Arkansas, the development of institutions like public libraries met a growing demand for entertainment and knowledge.

In Clark County, the movement for a free, public library took root in 1897. The Women's Library Association, composed of some 30-40 women, met on November 11, and adopted the goal of establishing a public library in Arkadelphia. Over the next several years, the Association hosted many fundraising events, including an "old-time spelling bee," dinners, an ice cream and strawberry supper, recitals, a "world's fair," lectures, carnival, flower show, and masquerade party.<sup>41</sup> All of these events raised funds that moved the WLA ever closer to realizing its dream of a public library for the county.

By 1903, the Association had raised sufficient funds to begin construction on a building. In 1901, Dr. and Mrs. John Dale had donated a lot on Caddo Street to the WLA, and subsequently, the association had acquired additional adjacent land on which to build. Little Rock architect Charles Thompson designed the building plans at no cost; and the Association employed contractor James Pullen to construct the facility at a cost of \$3,850.<sup>42</sup> On December 11, 1903, the Association held a public ceremony to commemorate the new building.

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<sup>41</sup> "Old Fashioned Spelling Bee," *Southern Standard*, December 14, 1899, 2; "The Spelling Bee," *Southern Standard*, January 4, 1900, 3; "Old Maid's Convention," *Southern Standard*, February 8, 1900, 3; "The Ladies' Dinner," *Southern Standard*, March 14, 1901, 3; "The Ladies Festival," *Southern Standard*, May 9, 1901, 3; "An Arkadelphia World's Fair," *Southern Standard*, September 11, 1902, 3; "World's Fair," *Southern Standard*, October 16, 1902, 3; "The World's Fair," *Southern Standard*, October 23, 1902, 3; [Receipts from World's Fair], *Southern Standard*, November 6, 1902, 3; "A Cruise through the West Indies," *Southern Standard*, May 14, 1903, 3; "A Fall Carnival," *Southern Standard*, October 8, 1903, 3; and "Attention! Please," *Southern Standard*, October 29, 1903, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Wendy Richter, ed., *Clark County, Arkansas: Past and Present* (Arkadelphia, AR: Clark County Historical Association, 1992), 33.

Hundreds of Clark County citizens reportedly attended the event, which received a long write-up in the *Standard*. “Arkadelphia has long enjoyed the distinction of being the Athens of Arkansas,” the *Standard* writer intoned, “and this [building] is proof that she has a right to that title.” The library, the writer noted, would “stand as a monument to the . . . noble women of our city.”<sup>43</sup>

While the opening of the Clark County Library in 1903 was a “triumphant occasion,” the work of the WLA was not yet over. The Association had borrowed \$3000 to complete the building. So for the next decade, they continued to hold fundraisers until they finally retired the debt in 1913. When that day arrived on May 16, Arkadelphia declared a day of jubilee. Businesses closed and Mayor Sloan led a parade stretching a mile-long through the city streets. Following a ceremonial burning of the bank note, the WLA held a picnic on the lawn of the debt-free library with a concert in the new library’s assembly hall.<sup>44</sup> The Clark County Library stands today as a reminder of the work of the Women’s Library Association.<sup>45</sup>

Church-based organizations also provided Clark County women with avenues for exercising their abilities to the benefit of their communities. The major denominations in Clark County – Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian -- all had active women’s organizations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the current era. Most of these groups began as Ladies Aid Societies in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century assistance to Civil War soldiers and the poor. Their members raised money, made quilts, and provided sanitary supplies to soldiers. An added benefit for the women involved was developing organizational skills, learning to manage financial accounts and to run meetings.

After the Civil War, the Ladies Aid Societies turned their attention to charitable causes within their communities. In 1896 alone, over thirty notices or reports regarding Ladies Aid Society meetings for Clark County alone appear in the *Southern Standard*. Ladies Aid Societies in Clark County hosted lectures, dinners, quilt raffles, boxed lunch parties, oyster suppers, concerts, literary entertainments, lawn parties, auctions, and ice cream and strawberry socials – the latter were especially popular – all three major denominations hosted them at some point.<sup>46</sup> While the goal of the events was not always clear from the information provided about them in published notices, a goodly number of them were fundraisers for charitable causes undertaken by the denominations.<sup>47</sup>

The Methodist Ladies Society, formed in 1887 in Arkadelphia, hosted several interesting events to raise funds for Henderson-Brown College, including

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<sup>43</sup> *Southern Standard*, December 17, 1903, 3.

<sup>44</sup> “Thousands See ‘Jubilee Parade,’” *Southern Standard*, May 22, 1913, 1, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Women’s Library Association records, Special Collections and Archives, Riley-Hickingbotham Library, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, AR.

<sup>46</sup> *Southern Standard*, May 15, 1891, 3; “Strawberry Social,” *Southern Standard*, April 14, 1893, 3.

<sup>47</sup> “Card of Thanks,” *Southern Standard*, 18 May 1905, 3.

boxed lunch parties at which eligible young gentlemen purchased picnic lunches with young ladies of the church who packed the lunches, secreting their names on slips of paper inside the boxes. So the gentleman didn't know with whom they would be dining until the meal was purchased.<sup>48</sup> The Methodist ladies also sponsored an "Old Maids Auction" in 1891, which raised \$51 for the college, at which masked women were sold to some of Arkadelphia's "best and handsomest young men." The women wore masks, according to the report, because they "refused to be bid on for the mere beauty of their faces."<sup>49</sup> In my opinion, the Methodist Ladies win for most interesting activities, also sponsoring a "Leap Year Party" at which young ladies escorted young men out to dinner and paid all the bills (1892); and an exhibition of Chinese customs, music, and wedding ceremony put on by Chinese students, with tea prepared "in the genuine Chinese style" (1888).<sup>50</sup>

Not to be outdone by the Methodists, the Baptist ladies hosted an equal number of socials, raffles, festivals, and bazaars to raise funds for their projects through the decades. The work of the Baptist Ladies Aid Society, later known as the Women's Missionary Union, of the First Baptist Church in Arkadelphia, is documented in the archival collections at OBU beginning in 1873 with the recording of their first meeting minutes and progressing forward in time, and also in several histories written by Dr. Ray Granade. Granade notes in his work *An Enlarged Tent*, that the Arkadelphia Baptist Ladies Aid Society raised money for budget and non-budget items through entertainments open to the whole community.<sup>51</sup>

Baptist ladies were instrumental in raising funds to repair the church sanctuary in Arkadelphia in 1874; and in 1876, the church appointed a committee of five women to furnish a room for the new pastor, W. A. Forbes and his wife. In 1880, the church granted the Ladies Aid Society the privilege of appointing one representative to the building committee; and in 1890, they initiated the hiring of a paid organist for the church. In just one year -- 1909 -- funds raised by the women of the church included monies for: the pastor's salary, general church expenses, the building fund, the organ fund, the orphan's home, and foreign, home and state missions.<sup>52</sup> First Baptist Church usually contributed \$1,650 to all missions, Granade notes, and the women's contributions accounted for 90% of that total.<sup>53</sup>

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Baptist Ladies Aid Societies had adopted the moniker Women's Missionary Union, in keeping with the national organization

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<sup>48</sup>*Southern Standard*, December 20, 1889, 2.

<sup>49</sup> "A Unique Sale," *Southern Standard*, October 2, 1891, 3.

<sup>50</sup> "Leap Year Party," *Southern Standard*, January 8, 1892, 3; "Chinese Students," *Southern Standard*, March 23, 1888, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Ray Granade, *A Covenanted People: History of the First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 1851-1976* (s.n., 1976), 112-113.

<sup>52</sup> "The Dime Social A Unique Society," *Southern Standard*, January 12, 1911, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Granade, 61-62.

established in 1888 in Baltimore, Maryland.<sup>54</sup> While the WMU of First Baptist Church Arkadelphia historically was the largest in Clark County in terms of membership, other WMU's were active in Clark County throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and continue to be active today). The annual minutes of the Red River Baptist Association provides reports of the WMUs work and has since about 1910.<sup>55</sup> From these reports, we can glean an idea of the numbers of women who participated in WMUs, the number of active WMUs in Clark County, and the work in which members were most active through the years.

Women's Missionary Unions were active in Arkadelphia at First, Second and Third Baptist Churches, at Mt. Bethel, Mt. Zion, Park Hill, Richwoods, Sweet Hill, and Unity, and in the county at Antoine, Beech Street (Gurdon), Bierne, Caddo Valley, Center Point (Gurdon), Curtis, DeGray, Hollywood, Shiloh, and South Fork (Gurdon). Collectively, the women were united in their aims of "individual and united prayer, Bible study, mission study, soul winning, organized personal service, and systematic giving." Through the years, the WMU has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for mission work, church buildings, orphans, hospitals, Baptist schools and other worthy causes in and outside of Clark County.<sup>56</sup>



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<sup>54</sup> "Woman's Missionary Union," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, accessed November 24, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1356>.

<sup>55</sup> Red River Baptist Association minutes, 1910-1920, accessed November 24, 2018, <https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/arbaptrec/2/>; and RRBA minutes, 1921-present, Special Collections and Archives, Riley-Hickingbotham Library, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, AR.

<sup>56</sup> "New Baptist Church to be Erected in Arkadelphia," *Southern Standard*, February 14, 1880, 3; and *Southern Standard*, December 8, 1904, 3.