

HISTORY  
OF  
THE CHAMPAIGN SOCIAL SCIENCE CLUB

The history of the Champaign Social Science Club begins with the inspiration brought back by Mrs. H. H. Harris, delegate from the Art Club of Champaign, and Mrs. J. L. Ray, as visitor, after attendance at the first meeting of the National Council of Women of the United States in Washington, D.C. March 25 to April 1, 1888.

This date is a significant one for women, not only in the United States, but over the world. As early as in the 1880's, Elizabeth Cady Stanton had suggested that an International Council of Women be convened in the interest of Woman Suffrage. During the preparations for this meeting in Washington, in 1888, Mrs. May Wright Sewall of Indianapolis, Indiana, gave inspired leadership as member of the Committee of Arrangements. A commendation to her was read at Convention, stating that "from her thought carefully elaborated arose the permanent International Council of Women," which was organized as was the National Council of Women, and their boards of officers elected March 31, 1888. The suggestion of Elizabeth Cady Stanton was indirectly responsible for the conception of a world-wide organization. However, when the organization was formed, the plan embraced the full range of activities of organized womanhood, instead of the interests of suffrage alone.

The roster of officers of the National Council of Women of America, elected in 1888, contains the names of women who long continued to hold important places in the annals of the awakened



consciousness of women to their new world of interests and activities.

Frances E. Willard, Evanston, Illinois - President

Susan B. Anthony, Rochester, New York - Vice President

Mary F. Eastman, Tewksbury, Massachusetts - Recording  
Secretary

Mary W. Sewall, Indianapolis, Indiana - Corresponding  
Secretary

Promptly after the return of Mrs. H. H. Harris and Mrs. J. L. Ray from the memorable week in Washington, a group of ladies met in the home of Mrs. H. H. Harris to hear a report of the meeting. With enthusiastic response, and with confidence in the ability of women in Champaign and Urbana to keep pace with other women in advancement and progress, these women decided to organize a new club. Mrs. A. S. Clark was elected temporary chairman and Mrs. E. Snyder, temporary secretary. Mrs. J. L. Ray stated that the object of this meeting was to organize a club to study Social and Political Sciences and Law, especially as these relate to the interests of women and children; also current events of importance. Mrs. G. W. Gere suggested that they should know the laws of Illinois which govern the property rights of women and children. Mrs. Clark suggested that they should know the legal ways of doing business; also, that the club meetings should be carried on according to strict parliamentary rules. The chairman then appointed a committee consisting of Mesdames Edward Snyder, A. C. Burnham, and H. H. Harris to draw up a constitution.

On May 16, 1888, in the home of Mrs. H. H. Harris the "Woman's Social and Political Science Club" was organized, and a Constitution adopted. The Preamble stated, "We, the undersigned,



believing the study of social and political problems and legal conditions to be alike interesting and profitable, form ourselves into a club for the study of Social and Political Science and the consideration of Legislation, especially that affecting the interests of women and children; and we hereby adopt the following Constitution." (Constitution on file)

After the adoption of the Constitution, officers were elected as follows:

President - Mrs. J. L. Ray  
Vice President - Mrs. G. W. Gere  
Secretary - Mrs. Charles B. Hatch  
Treasurer - Miss Kate Weaver

The President then appointed Mrs. A. C. Burnham, Mrs. H. H. Harris, and Mrs. T. A. Parker, the Executive Committee.

On June 7, 1888, the Executive Committee presented a program plan, a study of the Constitution of the United States, recommending that each member provide herself with a book on Constitutional Law. Mrs. Harris made a motion that the club study first the history of the Constitution and continue with Article I, or as much as possible the first meeting. Mrs. Snyder moved that the meeting of the club begin at 2:30 p.m., and last two hours. Both motions passed; the latter was amended on October 24, to include the statement that Current Events be discussed the last half-hour. At the following meeting, December 5, 1888, the club voted that membership be limited to thirty-five.

Thus, an ambitious study program was launched, and records show that the Constitution was studied by these women for a whole year. Following this, their study turned to Civics and the



In September 1893, while Mrs. J. R. Stewart was president, the ladies expressed the feeling that with all of their zest for new knowledge, there was need for some project that would be of service to the community. There being no hospital in the area, this, as a project, was proposed for discussion by Mrs. A. C. Burnham. A committee was appointed, composed of Mrs. J. L. Ray, Mrs. Jerome Davidson, Mrs. S. A. Forbes, Mrs. H. H. Harris, and Mrs. Frank Wilcox. Mrs. Ray soon resigned from the committee, to be replaced by Mrs. J. R. Stewart.

In October 1893, this committee reported in favor of the club establishing a hospital as a project. The members of the club voted approval, and the committee was discharged. Following this, the President, with the help of the Executive Committee, was directed to appoint as many committees as necessary to advance the hospital project.

During this discussion, the following committees were suggested: Temporary Quarters, Incorporation, Location, Building, Solicitation, and Furnishings. Almost at once it was decided not to consider temporary quarters, so that all effort and money would go to the establishment of a permanent hospital.

Within a week a letter came to the club Secretary from Mr. A. C. Burnham, stating that in the name of his wife, and because of her intense interest in the hospital project, he would make a gift of \$10,000 to aid in the erection of a hospital. (Later this sum was increased to \$30,000.)

Mr. Burnham's letter was written October 30, 1893:



To Mrs. J. R. Stewart, President, and the ladies of  
the Social Science Club of Champaign, Illinois:

Learning that a movement has been made by your  
Society for the establishment of a hospital in our  
city, and appreciating the need of such an institution,  
I beg to offer in the name of my wife, Julia F. Burnham,  
the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) in aid of  
your beneficent work.

The only conditions imposed with the gift are:  
First; that the hospital shall be located within the  
corporate limits of the city of Champaign, Illinois,  
and shall be managed and controlled by a board of  
trustees or directors legally constituted for the  
purpose named, a majority of whom shall be residents  
of the city of Champaign, Illinois, and that Julia F.  
Burnham shall be a life member of said board, or as  
long as it shall be her pleasure to serve.  
Second; that the privileges of the hospital shall be  
available to all the people of the County of Champaign,  
Illinois, upon the same conditions as govern the  
admission of the people of the City of Champaign, Illinois.  
Third; that the ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) above  
offered shall be used exclusively for the erection of  
a suitable building for the purpose above contemplated,  
which amount shall be placed to the credit of the  
Hospital Fund with Burnham, Trevett and Mattis of  
Champaign, Illinois, to be paid out on builders' or  
architects' certificates as the building progresses.

(signed) A. C. Burnham

Deed of Gift

This writing witnesseth that, whereas, the undersigned,  
A. C. Burnham, did on the 30th day of October, 1893, offer in  
the name of Julia F. Burnham, \$10,000, to aid in the erection of  
a hospital to be located within the corporate limits of the City  
of Champaign, Illinois, and to be managed and controlled by a  
board of trustees, or directors, legally constituted for the  
purpose named, and --  
Whereas, a charter has been obtained under the laws of the State  
of Illinois, legally incorporating the Julia F. Burnham Hospital  
in accordance with the terms of said proposed donation of  
\$10,000 as aforesaid, a copy of which charter is hereto attached,  
and made a part of this writing; therefore,

I, A. C. Burnham, of the City of Champaign, County of  
Champaign, and State of Illinois, do hereby give, in the name of  
Julia F. Burnham, the sum of \$10,000 to the Julia F. Burnham  
Hospital as incorporated on the 19th day of December, 1893,  
subject, however, to the following conditions, which are, and must  
always remain the consideration for the gift of the \$10,000 aforesaid.



Almost simultaneously with the project of the hospital for Champaign county came the idea of establishing a public library in Champaign. On their journey to New York in 1894, Mr. and Mrs. Burnham had discussed the need for such a library. Upon his return, Mr. A. C. Burnham donated the site and provided all of the money for a free public library for the city of Champaign. The Burnham Athenæum was built in 1895.

One room on the second floor of the Athenæum was designated by Mr. Burnham as a club room for meetings of the Champaign Social Science Club. Until 1911, all meetings of the club were held there. From 1911 to 1916, half were held in this club room and half in the residences of members. In 1916, the library was pressed for more space and requested the club room, so meetings of the Champaign Social Science Club were no longer held at the Burnham Athenæum.

The programs of the club continued to be given by the members themselves, covering literature, art, music, and the varied subjects which hold the interest of intelligent women. Each year there was included the theme of service to others.

On November 13, 1913, the club celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding with a Silver Anniversary Dinner. The toastmistress was Mrs. J. W. Porter. "The Club of Yesterday" was described by Mrs. Thomas Naughton, and "The Club of Today" by Mrs. W. W. Earnest. Other speakers at the banquet were Mrs. R. D. Burnham whose subject was "Help or Hindrance?" and Professor Forbes who presented "A Side View."

As World War I made its impact on this area, club members emphasized the conservation of food for soldiers, the buying of War Savings Stamps and Certificates, and the development of War