

# History of the Mountwaybia Club

Mrs. B. Frank Eshleman

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On the Western border of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania there functions a small literary club which has been enjoyed by a succession of women for almost fifty years. Known as the Mountwaybia Club, it was founded in 1924 on the principles of friendship, culture and service. Primarily, as one of the early members said, "the club was organized for a pleasant, informative afternoon, not as a 'do-gooders' club. Most of us had enough of that at home and in other community organizations."

The organization began when Mrs. W. P. Breneman moved to Lancaster County from Auburn, Maine. A graduate of Colby College, in Waterville, Maine, and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, she had been an active member of the Auburn Art and Literature Club. When she moved into a house about a mile East of Mountville, on the Lincoln Highway, she looked for a club similar to the one she had left—"a cozy little literary club."

The following excerpt from a letter written by Mrs. Breneman in 1931, after she had moved to North Carolina, gives a pleasant account of "the beginning of it all."

"Coming out of church," she writes, "I was walking with a new acquaintance, Mrs. White . . . We spoke of clubs. I said that I wished there were a small literary club. Instantly she said she did too . . . Another thing that happened during those early weeks was that good Mrs. Zehring called on me . . . I later returned her call, and, that club matter being in my mind, I spoke to her about it. Just like Mrs. White, she said she wanted such a club. But she said she was in a delicate position—that being a minister's wife—she couldn't start a club, selecting certain persons to invite, without giving offense. But if I should start a club she would work with me. As a stranger I would hurt no one's feelings.

"So, we decided to have a preliminary meeting at my house. She knew a few women who would be interested in talking it over. I do remember going to Columbia about that time to enlist Mrs.

White in the undertaking. Through some mistake in hearing over the telephone I got directed to Mrs. Wike. When Mrs. Wike opened the door I saw that a mistake had been made and was going to apologize and leave, but 'No, come in anyway,' she said. Although she had seen me at her church and was dear and cordial, I doubt that I talked club to her on that occasion. I wanted to see Mrs. White first. But of course both ladies came in very soon.

"My recollection is that the few of us at the preliminary meeting felt courageous and planned another meeting to really get started. The women present were to get others who would be interested and remember a very early meeting at Mrs. Gable's, and how funny it seemed to me, being from Maine, to be introducing Columbia women to Mountville folks."

According to a sketch read by Mr. H. King Kendig at the fortieth anniversary of the club, Mrs. J. W. Zehring followed her talk with Mrs. Breneman by inviting Mrs. Kendig, Mrs. C. H. Gable and Mrs. A. J. Greenleaf to her home. They were enthusiastic about starting a new club and a few days later were invited to meet with Mrs. Breneman, who described the Auburn Art and Literature Club, and the benefits and pleasure derived from membership in such a group.

At a later meeting seven or eight interested women were present. Mrs. Breneman assumed the responsibility of finding other Columbia women who were interested, while the Mountville women promised to do the same in their community.

At the first formal meeting of the club, held in Mrs. Gable's home, Mrs. Breneman declined the presidency feeling that she would be more useful to the club on the Program Committee. Mrs. Zehring was elected President; Mrs. M. Rorabaugh, Vice President; Mrs. Walter Kendig, Secretary; and Mrs. O. M. Fridy, Treasurer.

Mrs. Breneman suggested the name Mountwaybia — "Mount" representing *Mountville*, "way" the *Lincoln Highway* and "bia" *Columbia*. Some other members added "Friendly" and the name "The Mountwaybia Friendly Club" was adopted at the third meeting. This was shortened to "The Mountwaybia Club" in 1932 but the friendly spirit is still strong.

The constitution was written by Mrs. Breneman who said later she thought it might have been based on the constitution of a club in Chambersburg to which Mrs. White had once belonged.

There were 15 charter members: Mrs. William P. Breneman, Mrs. H. S. Fridy, Miss Luella Fridy, Mrs. O. M. Fridy, Mrs. C. H. Gable, Mrs. A. J. Greenleaf, Mrs. H. King Kendig, Mrs. Walter Kendig, Mrs. J. B. Kennedy, Mrs. Elinore White Ritz, Mrs. M. Rorabaugh, Miss Estelle Stehman, Miss Elizabeth Weaver, Mrs. George Wike, Mrs. J. W. Zehring.

Mrs. C. A. Groff became a member in 1925; Mrs. James Cleland and Mrs. P. H. Bletz, Jr. joined in 1929, Mrs. P. H. Bletz currently being an active member.



**MRS. W. P. BRENEMAN**

The first program was presented by Mrs. Breneman. She read a biography of Helen Hunt Jackson, and a short story by her—"My Naughty Day", which depicted a true incident in her life. Two selections were played on the victrola.

This meeting was adjourned to meet two weeks later, and the Mountwaybia Friendly Club was launched. At the second meeting, the constitution was read and adopted.

During the first two years, the program committee met at the close of each meeting to plan the program for the following meeting. Any member had the privilege of selecting a book to review, or a subject she wished to present. Current events were discussed at every meeting, and in the earlier days of the club, a legislative committee reported on bills under consideration by local, state or national bodies. The legislative committee no longer exists, but reports on current events are still frequently given.

In the beginning hostesses were members who volunteered at previous meetings, but later hostesses were assigned in alphabetical order, this plan continuing today.

The social activities of the first year included a picnic at Long Park, with bathing at Brookside, games, contests, and a picnic supper on the green. A spring social was held in the Social Room of the Reformed Church in Mountville, where music and readings were featured.

During the first year programs of the Mountwaybia Friendly Club included the study of six New England authors—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Harriet Beecher Stowe; two contemporary writers—Edgar A. Guest and Margaret Slattery; five book reviews—*The Americanization of Edward Bok* by Edward Bok, *The Story of Mankind* by Hendrik Van Loon, *The Cardinal* by Gene Stratton Porter, *The Re-Creation of Bryon Kent* by Harold Bell Wright, *My Garden of Memories* by Kate Douglas Wiggin; two original papers—"Colonial Times" and "How A Newspaper Is Compiled"; and a report on a world-wide missionary conference held in Washington, D. C.

There was music at every meeting, usually victrola selections, and occasionally a vocal or piano solo. The club has included a number of talented singers and pianists, and those members who could not perform were appreciative listeners or enthusiastic participants in the group singing which has been a part of many meetings.

Throughout the years, programs of the club have included topics current at the time. For instance, in 1931-1932, a few years after Col. Charles A. Lindbergh's historic flight across the Atlantic, *The Development of Aviation* and *Outstanding Aviators* were discussed.

As women were beginning to enter politics, a paper entitled "Women in the Administration" was read. In 1943-1944, a round table discussion was presented on *Problems of Peace*.

Plastics were discussed twice; once in 1943-1944 when they were first coming into use, and again in 1964-1965, after twenty years of increased research, development and use of these fascinating materials.

In the post-World War II years, there were papers on "Russia, Pro and Con" and "Socialism, Communism, Capitalism." By the early fifties such topics were presented as *Atomic Energy—To Use or To Abuse, What is Social Security?, The Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, The United Nations, Guided Missiles*, and a review of the book *The Taft Story* by William S. White. In 1956-1957, the Geodetic Survey inspired a paper on "Polar Expedition—Past and Present." On the one hundredth anniversary of Canada, in 1967, the topic *Canada—One Hundredth Anniversary* was discussed. Andrew Wyeth and his paintings were the subject of a paper read shortly before the exhibit of his work in Philadelphia.

In recent years programs have been confined to a single subject for review or discussion, but have from time to time included a role call to which each member responded with an item of interest, a quotation or a sentiment pertinent to the season or to the topic of the day. Frequently, reports on current events, special music, and group singing are also included.

Planned by a Program Committee prior to the first meeting of the club year, topics for review or discussion now include history, politics, education, art, travel, biography, science, religion, music, and reviews of both new books and classics. Except for musicales which sometimes feature "outside" talent, these presentations are made entirely by the club members. Although the programs are prepared strictly for presentation at club meetings, many papers have been read later to other organizations such as Churches, Rotary Clubs, Women's Clubs, and Farm Women's Societies.

The two hour meetings are held bi-weekly on Wednesday afternoons from October through April, in the homes of the women, in the warmth of their family living rooms. After adjournment all gather around a beautifully arrayed tea table in an atmosphere of friendship and sociability.

Various phases of club activity are carried out through committees; program, social, flower and welfare, and through press reporters, a club historian, a current events chairman, and a music chairman. The social committee plans a special Christmas party which is held at the last meeting before Christmas, and an annual luncheon in May, the finale to the year's activities.

The motto of the club is "Culture, Friendship, Service." Culture develops from the study and preparation of the year's work as outlined by the program committee. Friendship is embodied in

the spirit of good fellowship fostered by association and sharing interests with fellow members. Service is performed within the club, and in contributions made annually to the Columbia Hospital and to the public libraries of Mountville and Columbia.

Members of Mountwaybia take this motto seriously; they work on their programs and listen with interested attention to the presentations of others; they make a conscientious effort to avoid any criticism of other members and by tradition no member refuses any assignment or office given her.

The very existence of the Mountwaybia Club for almost a half century is sufficient proof of its value to the women who have been a part of it. The club and its members serve each other, and in turn, the community of which they are a part.

(The material in this sketch has been drawn from a letter written by Mrs. Breneman in 1931, a history of the club written by Mrs. H. King Kendig in 1964, a letter from Mrs. Gardiner Criswell written in 1968, and the first minute book of the club)

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#### *Charter Members*

Mrs. Wm. P. Breneman  
Mrs. H. S. Fridy  
Miss Luella Fridy  
Mrs. O. M. Fridy  
Mrs. C. H. Gable  
Mrs. A. J. Greenleaf  
Mrs. H. King Kendig  
Mrs. Walter Kendig  
Mrs. J. B. Kennedy  
Mrs. Elinore White Ritz  
Mrs. M. Rorabaugh  
Miss Estelle Stehman  
Miss Elizabeth Weaver  
Mrs. George Wike  
Mrs. J. W. Zehring

#### 1924-25

Mrs. Edward Edgerly  
Mrs. Guy Ferguson  
Miss Elizabeth Fridy  
Mrs. G. W. Richardson  
Miss Emma Wisler

#### 1925-26

Mrs. C. A. Groff  
Mrs. Martin Davis  
Mrs. S. T. Dundore  
Mrs. A. G. Hess  
Mrs. Mary MacDougal  
Mrs. H. C. Zeamer

#### 1928-29

Mrs. Guy Carruthers  
1929-30  
Mrs. Paul Bletz, Jr.  
Mrs. James Cleland  
Mrs. Calvin M. Kendig

#### 1932-33

Mrs. Nelson Johnson  
Mrs. Christian Senft  
1933-34  
Mrs. F. B. Hege  
Mrs. D. L. Shellenberger

#### 1934-35

Mrs. William Shaw  
1935-36  
Mrs. Robert Burns  
Mrs. Earl Copeland  
Mrs. S. W. Hinkle  
Mrs. Raymond Lynch

#### 1936-37

Miss Ada M. Forry  
1937-38

Mrs. J. C. Heater

#### 1938-39

Mrs. Paul Nagy, Jr.

1939-40

Mrs. B. F. Eshleman  
Mrs. R. C. McCachren  
Mrs. T. P. Smith

1940-41

Mrs. Galen Martin

1942-43

Mrs. Joseph Fopeano  
Mrs. C. Ivan Herr  
Mrs. K. L. Preisler

1944-35

Mrs. Frank Adler  
Mrs. Paul Gregory  
Mrs. James Kunkel

1945-46

Mrs. Eugene Kalkbrenner  
1947-48

Mrs. E. Witmer Gerth  
Mrs. Leroy Walters

1948-49

Mrs. Gardiner Criswell  
1951-52

Mrs. Charles Shellenberger  
Mrs. Robert Shellenberger

1953-54

Mrs. Lloyd Kline  
Mrs. Herbert Krone  
Mrs. Ralph Greenawalt, Jr.

1954-55

Mrs. Raymond Koch  
Mrs. Charles Schlitzer

1955-56

Mrs. S. W. McNeal

1956-57

Mrs. Martin Greider  
Mrs. Robert Herr  
Mrs. Harry W. Smoker  
Mrs. E. B. Woodbridge

1957-58

Mrs. John Denney, Jr.  
Miss Jeanie Lee  
Mrs. Sydney Levy

1958-59

Mrs. Herbert Davis  
Mrs. Harry Himmelberger  
1959-60

Mrs. Gardiner Mummaw  
Mrs. Harold H. Wilkinson  
1961-62

Mrs. R. S. Pierson  
Mrs. W. W. Wallace  
1962-63

Mrs. John D. Denney, Sr.  
Mrs. W. D. Linkous  
Mrs. H. P. Snyder  
Mrs. R. Stepanchak  
1963-64

Mrs. Lewis Bechtold  
Mrs. Paul M. Metzger  
1964-65

Mrs. Harold Rodman  
1965-66

Mrs. I. Milton Frank  
Mrs. Samuel Stair  
1966-67

Mrs. Kenneth Greider  
Mrs. Brentwood Shunk  
1967-68

Miss Ella King