

CHAPTER X

WOMEN IDENTIFIED WITH COMMUNITY SERVICE

WOMEN have been identified with Miami's material and spiritual progress from the day of its birth. As a matter of fact, a woman is responsible for the existence of Miami as a city. If it were not for the late Mrs. Julia D. Tuttle's generous spirit and business acumen which characterized her negotiations with the late Henry M. Flagler, relative to the extension of the Florida East Coast Railway to what was then known as Biscayne Bay country, there would be no city of Miami today. Unfortunately, Mrs. Tuttle died before her vision of a great city on the shores of Biscayne Bay and the Miami River had materialized.

Women have distinguished themselves in all of Miami's civic activities of a creative character. It is chiefly due to a small band of public-spirited women that this city is noted for its magnificent churches and school buildings. Women have taken the initiative in the establishment of many

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of Miami's public institutions and aided in the creation of the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A. and the City Hospital.

The abolition of the open saloon in this city, long before the introduction of national prohibition, is chiefly due to the efforts of a group of church women led by one of Miami's earliest pioneers, Mrs. Edwin Nelson, who is the organizer of the local branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and for many years its honored president. She also took a leading part in the establishment of one of Miami's first churches, namely, the Northern Methodist church (now known as the White Temple).

The writer recalls four other women pioneers who rendered similar service to the community in the early establishment of the Southern Methodist, Baptist and Catholic churches, namely, Mrs. T. N. Gautier, Mrs. E. H. Padgett, Mrs. G. A. Mills and the late Mrs. Joseph A. McDonald. The first three of this group are still active supporters of their respective churches. Mrs. Gautier enjoys the distinction of having operated one of the first popular boarding houses in the city. In this connection it is gratifying to note that the longevity of Miami's surviving

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pioneers is, in a large measure, due to her motherly interest in the well-being of every one of her numerous boarders (a tribute in which her former boarders will eagerly join). A wholesome meal in those days was more desirable than a Flagler Street corner lot.

Another woman who has given, and is still giving, the community faithful and consistent service, and who is noted for her social service idealism, is Mrs. Isidor Cohen. Prior to the advent of Miami's Jewish population, Mrs. Cohen had devoted her energies to all movements tending to the welfare of the general community. While she is still prominently identified with general community activities, she has, in the past few years, been preoccupied with Jewish communal problems requiring her leadership. With a small band of Jewish women she has succeeded in organizing several societies which are contributing to the welfare of her co-religionists, as well as to that of the general community. Mrs. Cohen is a loyal supporter of Miami's pioneer synagogue (Congregation Beth David), and is superintendent of its Sunday School, without, however, detaching herself from her former associations, which have been cemented through her

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long residence in this city preceding the settlement of the present Jewish population.

Among the women who have achieved distinction in non-sectarian activities, none deserves more credit than Mrs. Dr. A. J. Myers. This good Christian woman has dedicated her life to the protection of animals. She is the president of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The numerous beautiful and imposing school buildings throughout Dade County, which arrest the attention and captivate the admiration of visitors to Miami, are the results, in a large measure, of the intensive activities of Miami's progressive women who stimulated interest in better schoolhouses through their successful efforts in bringing about the erection of the magnificent Central Grammar School building in this city. This building was erected in 1911. Upon its site formerly stood two large frame buildings, in one of which was housed the grammar and in the other the high school. The first was removed to the south side, and has been for some years utilized as a lower-grade school, and the second was moved across the line of the school site, fronting on Northeast Third Street, between

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Miami and First avenues, and converted into a hotel.

Credit for the substitution of a modern, fire-proof building in place of the said frame buildings is due to a group of public-spirited women, led by Mrs. John Sewell, who had associated themselves in an organization that was known as "The Women's School Improvement Association," with the following officers: Mrs. John Sewell, president; Mrs. T. V. Moore, first vice-president; Mrs. J. E. Lummus, second vice-president; Mrs. Isidor Cohen, treasurer; Mrs. Dr. Edwin Pugh, secretary. Miss Hattie Carpenter, who was then serving her ninth year as high-school principal, favored the segregation of the grammar and high schools against the judgment of the said organization. Her idea on the subject, however, eventually bore fruit in the form of a fine high-school building which had been erected on Northwest Third Avenue, opposite the city park. Two additional high-school buildings have recently been erected, one in Riverside, the other in the northwestern section of the city, and others are being planned by the present school board, of which one of Miami's earliest and youngest pioneers, Henry H. Filer,

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is chairman. (The new high school in Riverside has been named the "Ada Merritt Junior High School," in memory of the late Miss Ada F. Merritt who, for nearly half a century, has dedicated her life to the education of the youth of Dade County. She died in 1923.) In this constructive work, the Board has the valuable coöperation of Dade County's School Superintendent, C. M. Fisher, and Principal A. C. Alleshouse. In this connection, it should be noted that the School Board has the whole-hearted cooperation of Miami's Kiwanis Club, in its efforts to meet the rapidly increasing demands for school facilities, created by the tremendous influx of new residents and winter visitors with children of school age. The Kiwanis Club favors the increase in teachers' salaries and the elimination of double sessions. At this writing, a Kiwanis Club committee is assiduously engaged in solving Dade County's school problems. After much deliberation, this committee arrived at the conclusion that no permanent solution could be effected without a moderate increase in taxable property valuation and a more rigid equalization.

Another group of public-spirited women, composed of the late Mrs. Dr. A. Leight Munroe, Mrs.

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T. V. Moore and Mrs. Clare Mullet (the latter passed out of Miami's history some years ago), assisted by the late Rev. Dr. John N. McGonigle, Henry M. Flagler's spiritual adviser and intimate friend, succeeded in securing a very valuable site, at the corner of East Flagler Street and Second Avenue, for Miami's Woman's Club and library, as a gift from Mr. Flagler (who had also donated sites for several of the city's pioneer churches), upon which the club erected a building through public subscription. (This valuable property has recently been sold and a new site selected in the northeastern section of the city, near the bay. Shortly prior to its sale an addition was built, through the bounty of Mrs. George W. McGuire, for a children's department.) In 1913 the club raised a considerable sum of money through the acquisition of the plant of the *Miami Herald*, for one day, and the issuing of a very creditable special edition of that paper. In this enterprise the club members acted in the capacity of reporters, advertisement solicitors, editors, publishers and distributors. In raising the rest of the funds valuable assistance was given by Mrs. J. D. Godman and Mrs. C. M. Terrell. (Through the in-

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fluence of a member, Mrs. S. Rodmond Smith, the organization was named as one of the legatees in the will of her late husband.)

The Woman's Club, since its organization in 1900, has been closely identified with the progress of Miami and Dade County. Its numerous achievements include the foundation of the city's only free library, an institution that gave an impetus to the intellectual life of the community. (This library has been named "Flagler Memorial Free Library," in honor of the club's chief benefactor.) Its benevolent activities include the extension of travelers' aid to friendless girls and women landing in this city in search of employment, rescue work among the unfortunates, and other philanthropic endeavors. This club distinguished itself during the World War through its participation in all patriotic activities in which its individual members took leading parts. Its members were important factors in the numerous successful drives for the benefit of Miami's two notable institutions, namely, the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A., in many of which activities this enterprising organization is functioning with increasing vigor and effectiveness. Among its members are found noted essayists, lecturers,

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historians, music and art connoisseurs, prominent among whom are: Mrs. Kate C. Havens, Mrs. John Aplington, Mrs. R. M. Seymour, Miss Mary D. Merrit, Miss Bertha Foster, Mrs. W. V. Little, Mrs. Clifford H. Reeder, Mrs. Geo. F. Cook, Mrs. C. D. Benson, Mrs. N. L. Severson, Mrs. W. M. Brown, Mrs. T. V. Moore, Mrs. William Jennings Bryan, Mrs. Reginald Owen, Mrs. F. M. Hudson, Mrs. H. S. Jenison, Mrs. G. C. Frissell, Mrs. Harold H. Bailey, Mrs. Frank K. Ashworth, past president, Mrs. L. W. Crow, and Mrs. J. I. Conklin, its present president. Among the club's surviving organizers are: Mrs. E. C. McAllister, Mrs. W. H. McIntire, Mrs. Fred. Hand, Mrs. Med. Kellum and Mrs. Dr. J. M. Jackson. Its first four presidents were: the late Mrs. W. C. Gardner, the late Mrs. Antoinette Fredrick, the late Mrs. A. Leight Monroe, and Mrs. T. V. Moore.

This enterprising organization with the coöperation of the Daughters of the American Revolution is at present concentrating its efforts on the preservation of historic Fort Dallas, the old structure which survived innumerable attacks in the Seminole wars. This old landmark is said to have been erected in 1832. (This

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building has recently been removed to the City Park, overlooking the Miami River, where it has been restored and will be preserved for posterity. The money required for this laudable purpose has been raised by representatives of both organizations, among them Mesdames F. M. Hudson, Edwin Webb, L. W. Crow, E. G. Sewell and Harvey Jarrett.)

Another group of progressive women composed of Mrs. E. B. Douglas, Mrs. Dr. J. M. Jackson, Mrs. S. B. Dean, Mrs. J. I. Conklin, Mrs. T. V. Moore, Mrs. Harvey Jarret, Mrs. R. V. Atkisson, the late Mrs. J. F. Chaille, Mrs. J. D. McKenney, assisted by the Women's Business and Professional League and the following individual workers, Miss Lulu McLendon, Miss Vilona P. Cutler, Mrs. Kenneth Ashby, Mrs. A. H. Adams, Mrs. R. Marshal Price, Mrs. Van Dern, Mrs. G. C. Stembler, Miss Marion Manley, Miss Helen Jackson, Mrs. L. J. Pettus, Mrs. W. M. Arrington, Miss M. Owen, Mrs. H. J. Egger, Mrs. A. E. Lewis, Mrs. S. F. Jackson, Mrs. John Seybold and many other public-spirited women have rendered the community invaluable service, by their active participation in the establishment of Miami's Y.W.C.A. This in-

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stitution, like its prototype the Y.M.C.A., is non-sectarian in its administrative policies—Jews and Gentiles are equally welcome to its hospitality.

Credit for the successful community drives is, in a large measure, due to the group of enterprising women composed of Mrs. R. B. McLendon, Mrs. A. J. Cushman and Mrs. D. S. Carrington, who have been directing the work of the women volunteers from the various churches engaged in the preparation and serving of meals, at the Y.M.C.A., to the workers in these drives and to the civic clubs that meet weekly for the promotion of good fellowship and service to the community. These capable women, through efficient management, have succeeded in accumulating a considerable fund, derived from the profits of the meals, which is applied to diverse meritorious causes (one of which is the advancement of funds, in the form of loans without interest, to worthy boys deserving of a college education).

Women have also been instrumental in providing this community with two other indispensable institutions, namely, the city hospital and the day nursery. The former is being fostered by Mrs. Mamie Terrell and other philanthropic women, and the latter was brought into

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being by a group of progressive women composed of Mrs. John Sewell, Miss Sadie Kolb, Mrs. H. J. Egger, Mrs. P. T. Skaggs, Mrs. T. V. Moore, Mrs. Geo. McKinnon, Mrs. Isidor Cohen and other faithful community workers.

Of Miami's organizations formed and maintained exclusively by women, the Business and Professional Women's League has accomplished much in advancing the social and economic welfare of its members. This progressive league was organized in 1916. The first board of officers was composed of the following: President, Mrs. Marjory Stoneman Douglas; Vice-President, Mrs. Antoinette Fredrick; Recording Secretary, Miss Virginia Price; Treasurer, Miss Effie Price; Corresponding Secretary, Miss Laura Hauck. The organization meeting was held in the Southern Business College under the direction of Mrs. Ray Burlingame. The present (1925) board of officers is composed of the following: President, Miss Hazel Sheddan; First Vice-President, Miss Mary V. Marrs; Second Vice-President, Miss Effie Price; Recording Secretary, Miss Josephine Cleveland; Corresponding Secretary, Miss Margarett L. Riche; and Treasurer, Miss Mertel Loy.

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Its present membership is approximately one hundred. The object of the organization is to bring its members into relations of mutual helpfulness and coöperation by the exchange of ideas and information, to study social and economic problems and to promote interests of business women.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the league, it affiliated, on May 12th, 1919, with the State and National Federations. Through this connection it has been enabled to secure competent help for employers, and to provide employment for fellow-members, from sister organizations, planning to remove to Miami. Mrs. D. W. Whitman, a member of the local organization, represented the league in forming this coalition.

The Business and Professional Women's league has, during its career, participated in many civic movements, including the establishment of a local branch of the Children's Home of Florida.