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“IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH”: WOMEN’S CLUBS IN TAMPA DURING 1920s

by Mary Claire Crake

Founded in the early years of the new century, Tampa’s women’s clubs flourished during the city’s “boom” years of the 1920s. Not only did the number of clubs increase, but members’ activities expanded into areas previously reserved for men. During the 1920s, women’s organizations worked on numerous building projects including the completion of a new clubhouse, introducing many members to the male-dominated world of buying and selling real estate, applying for loans and preparing financial records. Also during the twenties, women entered the voting booth for the first time, breaking down another formerly all male bastion.

Although Tampa’s women’s clubs only belatedly supported the Nineteenth Amendment, with its passage, members consistently advocated greater female participation in electoral politics. In particular, female votes were used to push for educational improvements, which remained a legislative priority of local as well as state women’s organizations. Tampa’s clubs assisted in the formation of a teachers’ association and worked to provide school lunch programs and higher teacher salaries. In addition, school playgrounds and physical education programs received the attention of club members.

To increase their political clout, local members of the white women’s clubs formed a city and then a county-wide federation and joined state and national federations. Black clubwomen in Tampa had earlier formed a city-wide league, one of only eight such federations in the country. Through these various federations, large numbers of women worked toward the same goals and supported each other’s efforts in civic, social and political matters. During the 1920s, then, the activities of women’s clubs broadened, membership roles increased and members became extremely influential not only in their local communities, but throughout the state and country.

The decade began with women preparing to vote for the first time. Tampa’s clubwomen took this responsibility seriously, though black women found themselves disenfranchised on the basis of race once their sex no longer excluded them from voting. In August 1920, representatives from several local white clubs met at the home of Mrs. T.M. Shackleford, president of the Tampa Woman’s Club, to discuss their duties under the Nineteenth Amendment. Mrs. Shackleford proclaimed the importance of education for voters and showed why women needed to exercise this right. The study, entitled “An Open Forum on Our Government for Women Voters,” became the basis for a series of meetings designed to prepare the newly enfranchised woman to cast her first ballot.¹

The following week, the first of nine forums was held in the city courthouse. The subjects for discussion included the municipal form of government and women as voters. Judge Thomas M. Shackleford, husband of the initiator of these meetings, was the main speaker. The judge endorsed women’s participation in primaries* as well as in bond elections, provided they were

¹The white primary, an institution in Tampa as elsewhere in the South, denied participation in this important political process to blacks, male or female.
taxpayers. The judge also noted that women could seek office for mayor, council and police judge but not for the board of public works since the law specified that it should consist of five outstanding male citizens. Judge Shackleford, however, argued that women should not serve on juries. He questioned whether members of the audience, if selected as jurors, would agree to remain overnight in the courthouse with male members of the jury. The women, disapproving of such practices, agreed that Juries should remain a masculine preserve.  

The forum meetings continued as local women participated in their first election as voters. In October 1920, the question of changing Tampa’s aldermanic form of government to a board of commissioners came before the electorate. The latter form of municipal government became popular during the Progressive Era since voters directly elected the commissioners and, therefore, felt they would be more accountable for their actions. Hundreds of women registered to vote, and their ballots helped bring the commission form of government to Tampa. The election to fill the commission seats then presented the local citizens with the unprecedented opportunity of voting for a woman candidate.

Several months prior to the fall election, a Commission Government Club had been formed. This club favored a commission board and proceeded to select a slate of candidates. Several women were members of the club, and after debating the issue, they agreed not to present a woman candidate for the November 15 primary. Though all of the members apparently concurred with this decision, when nominations were made, Amos H. Norris submitted the name of his wife, Mrs. Amos Norris. The other women members of the organization protested Norris’s candidacy, stating that they had not changed their minds about endorsing a woman candidate. They were surprised then when Mr. Norris told a newspaperman he qualified his wife's candidacy through numerous endorsements from women members of the Commission Government Club. After doing so, he had talked with Mrs. Norris, who was in Asheville, North Carolina, attending a convention, and received her approval. The women members stressed that they did not have any personal opposition to Mrs. Norris, but felt that her entry into the race was an “unfortunate mistake.” Still, Mrs. Norris did not withdraw her name from consideration; she lost in the primary election, polling only 957 votes out of 22,339 cast.

It was in the midst of election excitement that Tampa’s white clubwomen focused on organizing their first city-wide league. In May 1920, a number of women met at the home of Mrs. W.F. Miller to discuss the formation of a city federation. No decision was reached, and due to the summer season and the attendant cessation of club activities, another meeting was not held until February 1921. At that time, representatives from several women’s clubs, including the Friday Morning Musicale, the Tampa Civic Association, the Students’ Art Club, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Tampa Woman's Club, approved a motion creating the Tampa League of Women’s Clubs. Officers for the first year included Mrs. W.F. Miller, president; Mrs. S.L. Lowry, Sr., first vice-president; Miss Elsie Hoyt, second vice-president; Mrs. C.J. Woodruff, third vice-president; Mrs. S.W. Jackson, recording secretary; Mrs. L.H. Lothridge, correspondence secretary; Miss Kate Jackson, treasurer; and Mrs. Albert Adams, auditor. Miller, Lowry, Mrs. Jackson, Miss Jackson and Adams all represented Tampa Civic. Hoyt was also a member of Tampa Teachers’ Club, and Woodruff and Lothridge represented the Tampa Woman’s Club.
Community welfare and cooperation became the keynotes of the League. Its stated purpose was to impart, encourage and promote the projects of all affiliated organizations without infringing on the work of individual clubs. The League worked to coordinate efforts of member clubs on questions vital to the home and the community, especially those affecting women and
children. League members agreed that unity through federation would not only benefit the clubs but also offer opportunities for expanding civic and social progress.  

The first project of Tampa’s League of Women’s Clubs reflected these ideals of civic and domestic improvement. Due to the prevalence of tuberculosis in Tampa during the 1920s, the League began a crusade to fight the disease. The League’s social welfare department researched the problem with the assistance of Dr. J.R. Harris, city health officer, and found a high percentage of tuberculosis among children, especially in poorer families. In 1922, 297 children attended the city tuberculosis clinic. The doctors informed the clubwomen that in order for the children to improve their strength, they needed nourishment provided by the intake of large quantities of milk. Dr. Harris recommended two quarts of milk per day for each child. The members of the League’s social welfare department calculated that providing one child with two quarts of milk daily would cost approximately $7.50 each month per child – an expense few poor families could afford. The League responded by starting a milk fund campaign.  

Clubwomen initially tried to raise the necessary funds through subscriptions. A subscriber either agreed to furnish the milk for a child until cured or provided a stipulated monthly amount to the League for the purchase and distribution of milk to needy children. The League’s chairperson for the milk fund, Mrs. C.A. Miles, assured the public that one hundred cents of every dollar contributed would go toward milk purchases. Members also distributed milk bottles as collection devices to local stores for voluntary contributions. Throughout the 1921-22 season, Tampa’s League also sponsored several plays and musical performances which raised over $2,000 for the milk fund.  

Various missions and charitable institutions distributed the milk paid for by League funds. Milk stations located at Red Cross headquarters, the United Charities, the Rosa Valdez Mission in West Tampa and the Wolff Mission of Ybor City dispensed over 38 quarts of milk daily. In 1924, additional milk stations – located at the Family Service Association, the West Tampa Americanization League, and the Urban League – received contributions from the Tampa League of Women’s Clubs.  

In addition to the milk fund, the women proposed construction of a tuberculosis preventorium. For this purpose, clubs raised $2,000 in cash and obtained another $3,000 from the sale of Christmas Seals. These funds were insufficient, however, for both the purchase of a site and the building itself. A committee of clubwomen, including Mrs. S.L. Lowry, wife of Commissioner Sumter Lowry, appealed to the county commissioners to donate the land. Although the commissioners gave an unofficial promise to the women’s committee, they indicated that they would have to investigate the availability of city property. Realizing delays would cost lives, the clubwomen turned to the Public Health Association for assistance. Through joint efforts, the Health Association and League secured a site at Laurel and Roosevelt Streets and used League funds to construct the institution. As a result, the Pine Health Preventorium opened in 1926 providing much needed care for children with tuberculosis.  

Members of local white women’s clubs also became involved in projects in the black community. In January 1923, Tampa’s Urban League requested support from the city’s white and black women’s clubs in securing an extension of the school year for black children. Black schools remained open only six months a year compared to eight months for white schools. Any
additions to the school term for blacks had to be provided for through the work of clubs and other welfare organizations which raised private funds to pay teachers’ salaries. Some blacks preferred to send their children to schools outside Tampa due to the shortness of the local term. In addition, teachers paid small salaries for only six months of the year could not afford to attend training schools to improve their standard of training.13

To change the situation, the executive secretary of the Urban League and first president of the Tampa Negro Women’s Clubs, Blanche Armwood Beatty, appeared with Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Norris before a special joint session of the county school board and district trustees. They appealed for at least an eight-month term for the three black schools in district four. Several male members of the Urban League also attended, assuring school officials of the willingness of blacks to do their part through taxation or other means to improve their children’s education. The school board considered extending district four’s school term the following year, and after further appeals from both black and white leaders, the board approved an eight-month term for black schools.14

The League also sought to improve education throughout the city through the promotion of a local teacher’s club. The League’s president, Mrs. W.F. Miller, assisted the teachers in banding
together for their own betterment and encouraged members to take a more active role in all civic and welfare work. In 1921, the Tampa Teachers Club (an all-white association) was organized, and the following year the teachers voted to become members of the League. The club aimed to raise the professional standard of local teachers, to secure among teachers an exchange of ideas and experiences, to keep informed on education bills coming before Florida’s legislature and to cooperate with other clubs in securing legislation beneficial to schools. The first officers of Tampa’s Teachers Club included Mrs. F.N. Clayton from Woodrow Wilson Junior High, president; Mrs. Nellie Ramsey of George Washington High School, vice-president; Miss Faith Stowall from Henderson, secretary; and Miss Laura Switzer, of Madison, treasurer.¹⁵

Concern for improving education also was evident in the formation of local Parent-Teachers Associations (PTA). Initially know as Mothers’ Clubs, many of these organizations had their roots in the educational programs of women’s clubs. PTAs encouraged closer cooperation between parents and teachers and worked with school boards in extending vocational and commercial education. These associations also promoted building improvements, lunch
programs and the advancement of the entire school system.\textsuperscript{16} Realizing the importance club-women placed on education, many of the local PTAs joined the League soon after its formation including those connected to the Buffalo Avenue School, Gorrie School, George Washington Junior High School, Henry Mitchell School and Seminole Heights School.\textsuperscript{17}

During the early 1920s, other Parent-Teacher Associations formed, and in 1921, the Florida State Congress of PTAs was organized. The Congress promoted a closer relationship between home and school, the training of children in good citizenship, and the endorsement of laws for children’s protection.\textsuperscript{18} By 1925, it became clear that PTAs could not function effectively if they bore double allegiance to a women’s league and a PTA Congress. Although the Congress acknowledged the excellent work of women’s organizations, especially in education, the fundamental purposes of the two associations were in conflict. Women's clubs would not accept fathers and male teachers as members while the PTA Congress concentrated exclusively on working with schools for the welfare of children.\textsuperscript{19} There was a natural reluctance on the part of women’s organizations to accept the division, but Tampa’s League of Women’s Clubs lost all but one of its PTA members by 1925.\textsuperscript{20} Some clubwomen feared that without the PTAs, the emphasis many clubs placed on improving education would wane. This did not occur, however, and cooperation continued to exist between women’s organizations and PTAs.\textsuperscript{21}

During the years that PTAs belonged to the League, Tampa played an important role in the state Congress movement. In 1924, the city hosted the fourth annual convention of the Florida Congress, the president of which was a Tampan, Mrs. Bertha Graham Anderson.\textsuperscript{22} As the daughter of Professor and Mrs. B.C. Graham, she provided the organization an entree into the offices of the educators of the state. Her father had been involved in the education field for many years serving as school teacher, high school principal, county superintendent and president of the Florida Education Association.\textsuperscript{23}

At the convention, A.B. Steuart, grand inspector general of the Scottish Rite (a Masonic organization) and a man concerned with school welfare, addressed the delegates. His main theme was the promotion of greater interest among parents in the welfare of the schools. He was also concerned about communities in which few parents were familiar with the American educational system, such as the Latin enclaves of Ybor City and West Tampa. According to Steuart, Tampa needed federal funding to assist in educating the many foreign-born illiterates among the city’s population. Solutions, Steuart explained, could only occur after enough citizens became interested in schools and worked for their improvement.\textsuperscript{24}

Although the number of local Parent Teacher Associations increased, a PTA had never been organized at the Ybor City School. The members of the Tampa Civic Association, however, had appointed a committee to investigate the possibility of a school lunchroom there. The committee members reported on the overcrowded conditions at the school and discussed plans for both a lunchroom and other improvements to the schoolhouse. Upon further investigation, members found the school building could not accommodate a lunchroom, and the project was deferred until either the crowded conditions in the school had been eliminated or a new building erected. The Civic Association notified the school superintendent of poor conditions at the Ybor City School, but according to school officials, no funds were available for necessary improvements.\textsuperscript{25}
The Civic Association established playgrounds at several local schools, but within a few years they became rundown due to a lack of money for repairs. In 1923, a committee composed of Kate Jackson, Mrs. Amos Norris and Mrs. C.C. Worthington, petitioned the city commission requesting funding for municipal playgrounds. The commission promised to consider a playground appropriation in the next year's budget but refused to commit to any long range plans. Even after Kate Jackson drove several commissioners to view the deserted playgrounds, they offered concern but no funds. Jackson then requested all association members to attend commission meetings and urge the funding of playgrounds, demonstrating how strongly they felt about city-funded recreational facilities and educating the commissioners on public needs in this area.

The League proceeded to launch an active campaign to obtain several municipally owned playgrounds and recreation centers. Members hired a field representative from the National Playground and Recreation Association for a ten-week survey to evaluate local needs for recreational facilities. A temporary organization for the promotion of the campaign was formed with Mrs. S.W. Jackson, president of the League, as chairperson. Following the survey and a recommendation that the city repair existing playgrounds and add others, the commission appropriated $10,500 to a newly organized Tampa Community Recreation Association. The Recreation Association set up five playgrounds, including one for black children, and hired a trained staff of playground supervisors to work under a public recreation director. Attendance records indicated the usefulness and need for Tampa's playgrounds. From September 1924 to April 1925, 81,587 white children and 12,540 black youths used the playgrounds.

In addition, the Recreation Association inaugurated physical fitness classes in local elementary schools. The program consisted of forty-minute instructions in baseball, basketball, tennis, running and volleyball. Supervisors emphasized the rules and conduct of each game so that children could play in groups at any time. The physical education work in the elementary schools reached 6,827 boys and girls during the 1924-25 school year alone.

The success of the recreation program was largely due to the efforts of the executive board, but many local organizations also contributed to its success. The Civic Association donated $1,000 for equipment, and one of the city playgrounds was named “Tampa Civic Association Playground” as a token of appreciation for the association’s long-term interest in developing local recreation programs. The League of Women’s Clubs contributed $50 to help defray the cost of the recreation survey, and the Gorrie School PTA turned over its well-equipped playground to the Association, making it part of the city's recreation system.

As Tampa Civic worked for city playgrounds, the Friday Morning Musicale concentrated on building a clubhouse. With an expanding membership and no permanent “home” in which to hold its activities, the need for a clubhouse increasingly became a necessity rather than a luxury. Although numerous women’s organizations desired a clubhouse, the Musicale’s needs were probably greatest. In their more than twenty-year history, the association had met at nine different locations including the Crescent Club, the German Club, Pythian Hall, the DeSoto Hotel’s ballroom, the Methodist Church and the Tampa Bay Casino. In addition, the Musicale’s activities usually required a commodious area for orchestra or chorus performances which could
be difficult to locate and expensive to rent. Its members, therefore, resolved to direct most of their activities and funds toward the construction of a clubhouse.32

In October 1922, the effort to secure a clubhouse began in earnest when delegates from sixteen local women’s clubs met to discuss a land purchase. The representatives unanimously voted to purchase a lot located at the corner of Jackson and Jefferson Streets. Mrs. W.F. Miller, president of the Tampa League, donated the first payment of $100 for the land with the balance loaned by the Civic Association. Although the land seemed suitable for League needs, its prime location brought numerous offers from Tampa businessmen interested in purchasing the property from the League. Noting that the sale of their investment could bring the League a sizable profit, members decided to sell the land, netting $1,000 but temporarily suspending the clubhouse project.33

Within a few months, however, Musicale members decided to proceed with the project and purchased a lot on the corner of Brevard and Horatio Streets for $4,000. The club then established three new committees – finance, building, and ways and means – to assist in the project.34 The ways and means committee divided the membership into groups with each group committed to raising $100 for the building fund during the 1924-25 season. At the end of the club year, these groups added over $600 to the building fund. In May 1925, however, Mrs. Carlton, chairperson of the finance committee, reported that in order to borrow money for construction, the Musicale had to be free from debt and functioning on a sound financial basis. For this purpose, the finance committee recommended raising the regular dues from $5 to $10 and adding new clubhouse dues of $15 per year. The finance committee also proposed a patron's list composed of citizens who contributed at least $50 per year toward the clubhouse fund. In addition, the committee recommended that members solicit donations from Tampa’s business community. According to Mrs. Carlton, when the building fund reached $10,000 the club could secure a mortgage and proceed with clubhouse construction.35

By October 1925, the Musicale’s building fund account showed a balance of over $14,000. Several months later, members accepted a bid of $48,000 from Logan Brothers Construction Company to proceed with construction. In May 1926, the finance committee attempted to secure a loan. After consultations with a half dozen financial advisors, the committee advised club members that a loan with a reasonable interest rate could not be secured for at least six months. As the six months passed, building costs escalated, delaying construction once again.36

While working for their own clubhouse, the Musicale women met in the Tampa Bay Casino. In the summer of 1927, the League, from whom the Musicale rented space at the Casino, received notice that the entire building had been leased to the American Legion as a clubhouse, forcing both women’s organizations to locate a new meeting place. The city commissioners offered to lease the old Gordon Keller Hospital located at the fairgrounds to the clubs, which then discussed the possibility of remodeling that building into a clubhouse. A few weeks later, however, the Fair Association objected to the lease, stating that the fair needed the building for expansion. The women stood firm claiming the commissioners’ offer took priority over the Fair Association’s protest.37
The Fair Association offered the League $10,000 in cash if they would surrender all claims to the lease. League members accepted the offer and met with the Musicale to discuss a possible partnership in constructing a jointly-owned clubhouse. After several meetings of both boards, the members decided to form a corporation to build a clubhouse on the lot owned by the Musicale. The building was erected with $20,000 contributed by the Musicale ($15,000 in cash with the lot and taxes valued at $5,000), and the League’s $10,000 from the Fair Association plus furnishings valued at $2,000 and $1,000 cash raised from assessments to clubs. The balance was financed with a $7,000 mortgage. The clubhouse opened in October 1927 at 809 Horatio Street and is presently used by the Friday Morning Musicale as well as by other local organizations, such as WMNF radio, for concerts and benefits.\(^{38}\)

Prior to completion of the clubhouse, the Tampa League joined the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs. At the time of affiliation, March 1925, members voted to change the name of their local organization to the Hillsborough County Federation of Women’s Clubs since federation members now included both city and county organizations. The state was divided into twelve sections with a vice-president of the Federation selected from each section. The twelve vice-presidents formed a committee which assisted in organizing new associations. The vice-presidents were also responsible for yearly visits to each federated club in their section. Hillsborough County’s Federation was appointed to Section Eight which also included the clubs of Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas and Polk counties. Members of the state federation carried out their work through four departments: civic and social service, which advocated cooperation with juvenile courts and city and county authorities; education, which supported closer cooperation among parents, children and teachers; music, literature and art, which encouraged appreciation of the arts; and American Homes, which sought to raise the moral and material standards of the home.\(^{39}\)

Black women’s clubs formed a regional federation at about the same time. The Southeastern Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs was created when women leaders of the South decided that a council could assist in solving some of the problems peculiar to their race. In 1923, Mary McLeod Bethune of Daytona, presided over the organization. Three of Tampa’s black clubs joined the association, including the Harriet Tubman Mothers’ Club, the Eastern Star Community Club and the Busy Merrymakers Club.\(^{40}\)

In 1923, Miss Hallie Q. Brown of Ohio, president of the National Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs, visited Tampa and addressed an audience at St. Paul’s A.M.E. Church. A powerful orator, Brown had spoken in principal cities in the U.S. and Europe. For two years she travelled in Europe promoting the interest of black education and raising funds for Wilberforce University with which she was affiliated. She also worked with Susan B. Anthony and other pioneers for woman’s suffrage.\(^{41}\) Brown’s address at St. Paul’s centered on the important and constructive work of black women throughout the United States. She pointed to Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper as pioneers in abolition, suffrage and temperance. Miss Brown also took the opportunity to promote scholarship and loan funds to provide educational opportunities for worthy black women.\(^{42}\)

One of the local members of the black women’s federation was the Busy Merrymakers Club. The club was organized in 1923 with sixteen charter members. The Merrymakers was composed
of black businesswomen who aimed to provide service to the community. Members proposed that the club act as a black YWCA to provide a temporary residence in a respectable environment for women who recently arrived in Tampa seeking employment.\(^43\) The first officers elected included Gertrude R. Chambers, president; Preston Murray, vice-president; Emma D. Mance, secretary; Annie B. House Mance, assistant secretary; Lessie Blackshear, correspondence secretary; Achilles Robinson, treasurer; and Mercedes McCormick, chairperson of the board of directors.\(^44\)

As black women broadened their activities locally and regionally, white women also increased their activities through the state and county federations. In a rare case of common cause, the white women’s legislative committe endorsed a bill in 1925 that included the establishment of a state home for delinquent black girls. Tampa club leader, Mrs. Amos Norris, chaired the state federation's department of institutional relations and initially thought her department would have to work for passage of a special bill permitting the home.\(^45\) After further investigation, Mrs. W.S. (May Mann) Jennings, chairperson of the State Legislative Council and wife of ex-Governor Sherman Jennings, discovered that the previously approved bill providing a school for white girls was sufficient for the program now advocated for blacks.\(^46\) Although additional legislation was not required, clubwomen battled for the $25,000 appropriation to build the facility.\(^47\)

While awaiting the funds for a new facility, the Florida Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs attempted to care for a number of girls in temporary quarters at the old Marion County jail. Blanche Armwood Beatty, a Tampa resident and chairperson of the committee on industrial relations for the state associations, joined forces with the white women’s federation. She mailed hundreds of letters to individuals and organizations in the black community asking them to send correspondence and resolutions to the governor, state senators and representatives asking for their assistance in securing an appropriation for the institution.\(^48\)

The members of both state federations initially thought it advisable to work toward placing the building for black girls on the same land as the home for whites and yet not have white and black girls in close contact. However, sentiment against building both homes on the same property crystallized among some leaders in both organizations. When the Florida legislature finally approved the appropriation in 1937, the black federation decided not to build on the same property but to locate another site.\(^49\) This dispute ended cooperative activities between the associations for the time being.

The white women’s state federation continued to hold a yearly convention, hosted by one of the member clubs, for which delegates were selected by their own association. They elected state officers, endorsed or rejected resolutions, and acquired information concerning other club activities.\(^50\) At the 1925 Ft. Lauderdale convention, education was the keynote. The convention delegates voted to assist in reducing adult illiteracy in the state, endorsed physical exams for all students, and recommended that each county represented by a federated club send a young man and woman to the university and women’s college for teacher training. They also recommended to the state legislature that an appointed state board of education replace the existing ex officio board.\(^51\)
The resolution endorsing an appointive board called for an amendment to Florida’s constitution. On the proposed board only the governor and commissioner of agriculture would be ex officio members with the governor appointing the other five members, who should represent the various geographical regions of the state. The present board, consisting of the governor, the secretary of state, attorney general, treasurer and superintendent of public instruction, was composed of those burdened with responsibilities of other offices, providing them with little time for public education matters. State federation members also contended that the present law excluded women from serving on the board, a service, the clubwomen argued, for which they were eminently fitted.52

In the state legislature, the resolution received a favorable report in the house and senate committees. The senate committee, however, reserved its decision after considering its effects on the sale of state school property. Senators argued that board members living in various areas of Florida would impair the timeliness of voting on the purchase of land. Reformers advocated that a committee of two ex officio members and the superintendent of public instruction be appointed to handle such situations. Endorsing that proposal, the senate committee submitted the bill to the full senate. The session closed, however, prior to final approval.53 The legislature did enact a law authorizing the appointment of an educational survey commission, but this halted the question of further legislative action until the five commission members reported their findings.54

At the 1926 Deland convention of the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs, the agenda included a broad range of issues. Several south Florida clubwomen reported that a recent hurricane had ravaged a large part of Royal Palm Park located near Miami. The park was not a state owned facility, and, therefore, funds for its rehabilitation would have to come from private contributions. Convention delegates, realizing the park could lay in waste for years without assistance, voted to form a Royal Palm Park committee and to loan the committee $2,000 from the federation’s treasury to begin clean-up work.55

The concern over Royal Palm Park was part of a growing concern with environmental issues among clubwomen. In December 1927, Mrs. C.A. Miles, a member of the Hillsborough County Federation, received a request from Mrs. Katherine B. Tippets, president of the state federation, to provide an account of the method her conservation committee used in Tampa to enforce the law protecting holly and other trees. As outlined by Mrs. Miles, the committee members visited editors of both Tampa newspapers, showed them a copy of the state law prohibiting the sale of holly and asked their cooperation through editorials and news articles. Both papers editorialized in favor of the club’s efforts. The clubwomen proceeded to call on city commissioners and asked their assistance in preventing sales of the restricted plants. The mayor instructed the city attorney to draw up an ordinance which conformed to the new state law; and every wholesale produce house, florist and chain store was visited and asked not to sell holly. The chief of police promised to instruct his men to report all violations immediately. The process required weeks of work by the clubwomen but succeeded in stopping the commercialization of some of Florida’s most beautiful natural attractions.56

Not all local problems became part of the state agenda, however. One such issue, brought to the attention of the Tampa Woman’s Club in 1928, was dancing in public schools. The president of the Hillsborough High PTA, Mrs. John T. Adams, requested that the school board permit the
use of the school for a student dance with PTA members as chaperones. The board, however, upheld a long standing rule against dancing in school buildings.\textsuperscript{57}

Following this initial rejection, the PTA solicited assistance from the Tampa Woman’s Club, which adopted a resolution supporting the request of the PTA and presented it to the board. Club members argued that students needed wholesome outlets for their youthful energies and parents needed knowledge of their children’s whereabouts. The Woman’s Club viewed dancing as an educational opportunity, through which the PTA would be “elevating the moral and social standards of the community’s future citizens” by providing the proper surroundings under the right conditions and with the “supervision of parents and teachers at a social gathering of students.” It urged the members of the school board to grant the request of the PTA and permit the use of the high school for student dances.\textsuperscript{58}

The Women’s Club’s resolution was opposed by Dr. Claude W. Duke of the Tampa Minister’s Association. This organization supported the school authorities and urged the board of education to stand firm against efforts to divert “our tax supported buildings from the purposes for which they were erected.”\textsuperscript{59} Mrs. Amos Norris responded to Dr. Duke by stating the the school building belonged to the taxpayers and not to the school board and, therefore, the trustees were presumptuous in denying the use of the building to the PTA which was composed of property owners as well as parents.\textsuperscript{60} After reviewing both arguments, the school board still refused to permit student dancing in school buildings.\textsuperscript{61}

Requests such as this one reflected the ever increasing demands presented to clubwomen by citizens and other civic associations. In a report submitted at the 1929 state meeting, Mrs. Robert Brodie, vice-president of section eight, presented the varying activities of her section’s membership. The Alpha Sorosis of Dade City contributed toward keeping the grammar school open an extra month. The Brooksville Woman’s Club enlarged its clubhouse and organized a junior club. The Ozone Village Improvement Society added numerous books to the local library and financed city street lights. Pinellas County’s federation worked for the health and welfare of school children, assisted in improving the Naval Landing Park and planned to build a clubhouse on Snell Island. The Sunshine Society of Pinellas Park sponsored a public library. Tampa’s Woman’s Club sponsored journalism and literature classes, and Tampa Civic supported a scholarship at Tallahassee. The Hillsborough County Federation’s activities included storm relief, juvenile court work and citizenship schools.\textsuperscript{62} And this report excluded the activities of black women’s clubs which supported day nurseries, health clinics, educational improvements and a host of other civic efforts.

The decade of the 1920s, therefore, presented Tampa’s women’s clubs with opportunities and demands seldom envisioned earlier in the century. Receiving the franchise provided women with an additional impetus and vehicle for community involvement. Clubs successfully fought for a preventorium, detention home and playgrounds even though few lawmakers supported initial requests for these institutions. Educational matters continued to hold a premiere place among the members of local as well as state women’s organizations, black as well as white. Members proposed numerous changes in the educational system and worked with PTAs to foster the passage of reform legislation at the local and state level.
Although members of local women’s clubs extended their work into Latin and black neighborhoods, no blacks and few Latins were accepted as members’ of white clubs. In response to racism and to their own community’s needs, black women organized separate associations. Cooperation between black and white women’s organizations did provide some educational and social benefits, to blacks and encouraged increased contact between the races, at least among women.

During the greater part of the twenties, local women’s clubs benefited from the generosity of local citizens which enabled members to extend their efforts to effect civic and social improvements. By the end of the decade, however, as financial crisis deepened into depression, women’s clubs began to feel the pinch. The Friday Morning Musicale, for example, lost all funds in it’s general account due to a bank failure, and the county federation was forced to borrow from the milk fund in order to meet expenses. The decade of the thirties would, provide women’s club members with new challenges, challenges they were better able to face because of the growth and experience gained in the previous decade.
Julia Harrison Norris (Mrs. Amos H.) was the only daughter of Anna E. Givens and Judge Charles E. Harrison. She was the sixth generation of her family born in Tampa. A member of the First Methodist Church, she taught Sunday school and was the organist. Mrs. Norris and her husband lost their only son in infancy. She held membership in the Tampa Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) serving two terms as president of the local organization, president of the Florida division of the UDC and treasurer general of the national UDC. Norris also was a member of the Tampa Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, served as president of the Tampa Civic Association and recording secretary and parliamentarian of Tampa’s Woman's Club. In addition, she was the first treasurer of the Tampa League of Women's Clubs and president of the Hillsborough County Federation of Women’s Clubs. Amos H. Norris owned the Amos H. Norris Co., a mill supplier. Eloise N. Cozens, *Florida Women of Distinction* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Publishing Company, 1956), pp. 43-44.

Tampa Morning Tribune, September 4, 1920.

Ibid., September 10, 1920.

Ibid., October 18, 1920.

Tampa Morning Tribune, November 10, 1920.

Ibid., November 14, 1920.

Hillsborough County Federation of Women’s Clubs Scrapbook, 1920-1935, Hillsborough County Federation of Women’s Clubs Papers, Special Collections Department, University of South Florida Library, Tampa, Florida. (Hereafter cited as HCFWCP).

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Tampa Morning Tribune, January 21, 1923.

Ibid., March 4, 1923.

Hillsborough County Federation of Women's Clubs Scrapbook, 1920-1935, HCFWCP.


Tampa League of Women’s Club Yearbook, 1922-23, HCFWCP.

Griffin, *Lest We Forget*, p. 173.

Ibid., p. 48.

Hillsborough County Federation of Women’s Clubs Yearbook, 1926-1927, HCFWCP.

Griffin, *Lest We Forget*, p. 48.
Mrs. Bertha Graham was active in PTA work for over fifteen years while her three children attended school. She worked in four Tampa units, serving as second vice-president of Henry Mitchell PTA after serving as state treasurer of the Congress prior to becoming its president. Griffin, *Lest We Forget*, p. 31.

Griffin, *Lest We Forget*, p. 31.

*Tampa Morning Tribune*, April 21, 1924.

Tampa Civic Association Minute Book, 1916-1923, HCFWCP.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Hillsborough County Federation of Women’s Clubs Scrapbook, 1920-1935, HCFWCP.

Ibid.

Tampa Civic Association Miscellaneous Papers, HCFWCP.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Friday Morning Musicale History, 1902-1943, HCFWCP.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

The Friday Morning Musicale is presently pursuing a historic preservation grant-in-aid for the clubhouse. The Musicale requested over $188,000 for repairs. The structure is listed in the Hyde Park National Register District. Through the efforts of Mrs. John W. Rodgers, president of the Musicale and Mrs. Irene Bradley, treasurer, numerous fund raising activities have been inaugurated. Interview with Mrs. Irene Bradley.

Hillsborough County Federation of Women's Clubs Scrapbook, 1920-1935, HCFWCP.

*Tampa Morning Tribune*, January 12, 1923.

Ibid., January 28, 1923.

Ibid.

Ibid., January 21, 1923.

Gertrude R. Chambers was a hairdresser and partner in Robinson and Chamber Hairdressers and resided at 1303 Jefferson; Mrs. Preston Murray, lived with Alice Murray who was a cook; Emma D. Mance was employed as a teacher at the West Tampa School and resided at 212 W. Ross Ave.; Annie B. House Mance worked as a hairdresser at Robinson and Chambers and her address was 1506 Lamar St.; Lessie Blacksheer resided at 405 E. Scott and Achilles Robinson and Mercedes McCormick, were not listed. *Tampa City Directory, 1923.*
The Florida Legislative Council lobbied Tallahassee legislators for six Florida organizations including: the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union of Florida, the Florida League of Women voters, the Florida Audubon Society, the Business and Professional Women’s Clubs of Florida and the Florida Congress of Mother’s Clubs and Parent-Teacher Associations. Ibid., September 6, 1923.

Ibid., April 8, 1923.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Hillsborough County Federation of Women’s Clubs Scrapbook, 1920-1935, HCFWCP.

Tampa Morning Tribune, November 15, 1925.

Ibid., April 5, 1925.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., November 21, 1926.

Ibid., December 18, 1927.

Ibid., December 7, 1928.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., May 12, 1929.

Hillsborough County Federation of Women’s Clubs Miscellaneous Papers, HCFWCP.