

The Early Years

The Paducah Garden Club was organized on Friday afternoon, April 22, 1921, when a group of twenty-four friends, interested in growing flowers, landscape gardening, and beautifying their home grounds, met at Lo Lo Mai, the summer home of Mr. and Mrs. George Flournoy, which was located on the north side of Pines Road (formerly Boswell Lane) west of 40th Street. As stated in *The Sun-Democrat* of December 31, 1939, Mrs. Flournoy was motivated to form the club by Mrs. Willis Martin of Philadelphia, the first president of the Garden Club of America, and by Mrs. Charles Taft, a GCA member from Cincinnati, Ohio.

According to *The News-Democrat*, forerunner of *The Paducah Sun*, the second meeting of the club occurred on Friday, April 29, when organization was completed and officers were chosen. Mrs. Flournoy was elected as the first president, a position in which she continued to serve until 1928. Weekly meetings were held every Friday or Saturday in 1921 in May, June, and July and bi-weekly in September, October, and November, mostly at Mrs. Flournoy's home. The program of the summer meetings was social with men often invited; the spring and fall meetings were devoted to study.

The original members were Mesdames E. G. Boone (Mattie Vaughn), Frank Boyd (Flora Styer), Charles DeWerthern (Jeanette Petter), George Flournoy (Anita Patterson), Saunders Fowler (Martha Elizabeth Leech), Armour Gardner (Irene Leech), George Goodman (Margery), Walter J. Hills (Elizabeth Ferris Weatherald), John Keiler (Blanche Friedman), Blaine Kilgore (Carrie Paine), Fain King (Lula Reed), Charles Q. C. Leigh (Effie Gardner), Stanley Miller (Anne), Maidee Bradshaw Murray, Elbridge Palmer, R. B. Phillips (Kate Webb), Edmund Post (Josephine Fowler), H. G. Reynolds (Florence), James A. Rudy (Katie Sanders), James Peterson Smith (Helen Elizabeth Rose), Phillip Henry Stewart (Lula Belle Brown), John Q. Taylor (Adine Morton), James Utterback (Lena Yancy). *

Garden clubs rose in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as part of the women's club movement. The founding of PGC was no exception. Of the charter members, most if not all were involved in a variety of clubs, political organizations, and civic endeavors throughout the community and state. These included The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs, The Daughters of the American Revolution, The Daughters of the Confederacy, Delphic Club, Carnegie Public Library, The McCracken County Equal Rights Association, and The National Women's Suffrage Association. They were a progressive, dynamic, and impressive group. Many lived in homes with intriguing and interesting

*The list above contains the names of those members cited in *The News-Democrat* of April 1921 with the exception of Mrs. E. P. Noble, who may have been a charter member, and the deletion of Mrs. Elbridge Palmer, whose name may have been an error. Histories written from members' recollections years later omit several of those named above and list others. *The News-Democrat* list seems to be the most accurate based on committee assignments and later articles reported in *The News-Democrat*.

names such as Plum Nearly, Lo Lo Mai, Angles, Bide-A-Wee, Flower Patch, Windy Top, West Terrace, Homewood, Sunny Crest, Leighwood, Grundy's Hill, The Ferns, and Edgewood. Several of these homes were profiled in the 1939 publication, Old Kentucky Homes and Gardens, written by Elizabeth Patterson Thomas, sister of Anita Flournoy, and reviewed in *The Sun-Democrat* in April 1939 as "a magnificent book, of great value now and destined to become a priceless treasure to anyone interested in the old state."

The first president of PGC, Anita Patterson Flournoy, was born in Kentucky in 1872. Much of her childhood had been spent in Mexico with her parents, William M. Patterson, D. D. and Delia Morrison Patterson, where her father served as a Methodist missionary. As a young woman, she attended Nashville College for Young Ladies, which later became the site of Vanderbilt University's dentistry school. After graduating with an A.B. degree in 1890, Anita married George Flournoy on October 12, 1892 and moved to Paducah.

She quickly became an active participant in the life of her new city and was a charter member of the Paducah Woman's Club, which was organized in 1906, a member of the Delphic Club, a generous donor to Carnegie Public Library, chairman of the Kentucky Library Commission, and chairman of the Library Committee of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs. She traveled the world and even drove a Red Cross ambulance during World War I, where she was based in France at a chateau previously belonging to Jerome Bonapart, younger brother of Napoleon.

Lo Lo Mai, the country home of the Flournoys, featured six acres of extensive gardens, both formal and informal, with clipped hornbeams and hemlocks, peonies, French lilacs, roses, ascension lilies, white fringe trees, crab apples, dogwoods, and more. It was a favorite community meeting place for lovers of flowers and gardens where "crowds of interested visitors come annually when the narcissus, the iris, the thousands of peonies, or the fine collection of French hybrid lilacs are in bloom". An article in the March 1922 issue of *House and Garden* magazine described Lo Lo Mai's gardens where "Mrs. Flournoy has developed her own country place ...to test the adaptability of various forms of vegetation to the climatic conditions of Kentucky."

Under Mrs. Flournoy's leadership, PGC flourished. Within three weeks of the club's founding, it arranged a peony show featuring 65 entries in the windows of a downtown department store. On Mothers' Day the club sold flowers for the benefit of a day nursery, and in July a bird bath competition was held with prizes awarded. An article in *The News-Democrat* on July 13, 1921, highlighted the "first season" of the club's activities which stated the club "has done splendid foundation work and is planning for fall planting activities during September and October." The article focused on the July 9 meeting held at Mrs. Phillip Stewart's home at which a resolution was passed by the members endorsing "five flowers (peony, iris, chrysanthemums, Dorothy Perkins climbing roses, and daffodils) of hardy variety and easy to grow as official flowers for the beautifying of Paducah."

In November 1921 the club held a competition among local school children to create interest in trees. Children made books of pressed leaves with prizes awarded for those containing the greatest variety, neatness and beauty. Carnegie Library displayed the eighty books. Assistants stated that "there had seldom been a day since the offer that children had not come to them in search of books about leaves and trees." Mesdames James Utterback, Saunders Fowlers, Charles DeWerthern, and James Rudy were in charge of the event.

Meetings resumed on March 4, 1922, with a lecture on landscape design. A *News-Democrat* article by Mrs. Fournoy later in the month offered advice on how to get ready for spring planting. April included opening the gardens at Lo Lo Mai to the public and the declaration of April 20 as "Iris Sunday." On May 15, another peony contest was held in the windows of a downtown department store. Two hundred fifty peonies were displayed and all three awards were won by Mrs. J. P. Smith. The flowers were sold and money given to the Mother's Club for the Day Nursery.

May and June 1922 meetings included a discussion of dahlias and "Inspection Day," an event held on June 3 with twelve members' gardens on tour. All members were invited to observe the progress that half the membership had made in improving their properties.

The last event of the summer season was held on July 29 at Bide-A-Wee, the country home of Mr. and Mrs. James P. Smith, on "the Broadway Road." The evening, "one of the most delightful of the club's summer events," featured exhibits of cut zinnias, roses, hardy phlox, cannas, marigolds, and gladiolus, as well as floral table decorations and "artistic baskets of flowers." Entries were open to garden club members and non-members with prizes awarded for the most outstanding displays. The event concluded with a musical program and dinner in the garden for members, husbands, and out-of-town guests.

Mrs. Fournoy continued as president in 1923 assisted by Mrs. George Langstaff (Ina Quigley) as vice-president and Mrs. Phil Stewart as secretary/treasurer. Meetings, held March through November, focused on landscape design and a study of Paducah's earliest homes. Citizens were urged to clean up the city and to plant a variety of jonquils, iris, peonies, roses and chrysanthemums to "make Paducah more attractive than ever before." "Peony Day" was held in the spring with proceeds going to support the Paducah Day Nursery, and a Chrysanthemum Show and garden accessories sale was held in November at the Arcade Building to support the Settlement House. The final event of the year on November 17 was a review of various garden journals at Carnegie Library.

The year was a busy and important one in the history of PGC since it was the beginning of its association with The Garden Club of America. In April of 1915, GCA created the associate membership category to expand GCA's footprint beyond its 30 clubs and "to pursue its destiny beyond its own borders." Associate memberships, also known as members-at-large, were available to women who lived in areas of the country where no GCA clubs existed. Sometime between 1915 and 1923, Mrs. Fournoy was chosen to be a member-at-large. By the latter date the organization had grown to 58

clubs throughout the country and 158 associates. She also became a member of one of GCA's earliest committees, the Color Chart Committee, which the 1921 *Bulletin* highlighted as a method of planting flowers based on the color wheel.

In June 1923 Mrs. Flournoy and Mrs. Jeanette DeWerthern traveled to Newport, Rhode Island to attend the Tenth Annual Meeting of GCA. Not only did they intend to enjoy the events of the meeting and the "privilege of visiting some of the most artistic and extensive gardens in America," but they planned to propose the Paducah Garden Club for membership. On August 18 they reported on the trip at a picnic dinner at Lo Lo Mai to which husbands were invited.

Although not successful in the initial application for membership in GCA, Mrs. Flournoy was undeterred and led PGC with enthusiasm and energy for the next four and a half years. She spoke to the Frankfort Garden Club about the GCA, donated daffodil bulbs to the University of Kentucky and Noble Park, opened her gardens to delegates at the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs Convention in Paducah in 1927, and traveled extensively in Europe. Programs covered a range of topics from care of trees, early seed planting, plant and flower life, improvement of public school grounds and parking spaces, and support for the beautification and care of Noble Park.

In 1926 the Garden Club of America designated April 19-26 as National Gardening Week and National Forestry Week. PGC cooperated with GCA in the national movement and was applauded in *The News-Democrat* of April 20, 1926, for its efforts to get citizens to improve their home grounds and gardens and to plant trees "for beauty and for memory's sake." The article described the work and object of the club "to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening among amateurs; to aid in the protection of native plants and birds, and to encourage civic planting." It further stated: "It is gratifying to feel that the club has had a far-reaching influence in gardening development in the community and still has more ambitious hopes for the future."

Members of the club were listed as: Mrs. George Flournoy, president; Mrs. R. B. Phillips, vice-president; Mrs. P. H. Stewart, secretary; Mesdames Muscoe Burnett, Charles DeWerthern, E. A. Fowler, John Fuller, Armour Gardner, W. J. Hills, Leo Keiler, Ramsey Martin, Blaine Kilgore, E. P. Noble, K. G. McConnell, George Langstaff, Stanley Petter, E. M. Post, J. A. Rudy; Misses Mattie Fowler, Frances Gould, Phillippa Hughes; Mesdames J. Q. Taylor, J. P. Smith, and J. C. Utterback.

In May 1927, PGC, in conjunction with the garden department of the Woman's Club, arranged for a visit to Paducah by Dr. James H. Dodson, president of the National Audubon Society and one of the "most gifted naturalists in the United States." All school children were invited to attend the lecture on bird life free of charge; the general public was charged nominal fees.

Mrs. Flournoy continued to promote PGC for membership in GCA. In correspondence with Mrs. David Prewitt of Lexington, Kentucky, dated May 9, 1927 and preserved in PGC's Archives, her personality and determination to be accepted are evident. First she apologized for not being able to serve as a juror in an upcoming Lexington GC Flower Show. She then asked Mrs. Prewitt to:

“put in good words for the Paducah Garden Club with the women who are to be there from the Garden Club of America. They have held up admitting our club for nearly three years on the flimsy and absurd but perfectly effective assertion that they had (“graciously”) allowed me membership and that I “could impart the necessary information” and was asking an awful lot to want my club admitted also! Well, I have nearly worn myself out trying to “impart the information” and keep the whole end of this state up to date, and of course would gladly exchange my membership-at-large for the club’s membership any day. I have a really wonderful club every member of the twenty four doing beautiful work in all the lines they advocate but I do want them to have the privilege of visiting other gardens and profiting by it. We are three hundred miles from any other member club! A few discreet insistent words from you will help tremendously and Kentucky is entitled to a little more consideration, don’t you think so?”

In a telegram and an additional letter listing Spring 1927 programs, both dated May 22, 1927, Mrs. Flournoy again appealed to Mrs. Prewitt to do all she could to promote PGC for membership in GCA. She stated:

“After an interminable and harrowing delay we have the information that we have to start our application for membership all over (in the Garden Club of America). We are appealing to our nearest friends for help, hoping to get the papers in to the Admissions Committee so it may be discussed at the Directors’ meeting during the Annual Session.”

Mrs. Flournoy’s perseverance, influence, and dedication were critical. She wrote letters and she traveled to Annual Meetings in 1923 to Newport, in 1924 to Richmond, Virginia, and in 1927 to Westchester, Connecticut promoting Paducah Garden Club. Finally in early 1929, despite the fact that she had stepped down from the presidency the previous March, PGC was granted membership as one of the eighty-eight clubs in the GCA. A receipt, dated February 1929 and preserved in the Archives, acknowledges payment of the \$50 initiation fee plus annual dues for 24 members of \$4 each. The total fees for the inaugural year were \$146.

After retiring from the presidency in March 1928, Mrs. Flournoy continued her gardening affiliations. She attended the GCA’s Annual Meetings in Philadelphia in 1929, accompanied by Mrs. William F. Bradshaw (Rosena White), and in Chicago in 1933. Following the 1929 meeting, she sailed on the S.S. *Homeric* with ninety GCA members for a two-week “English Pilgrimage” tour of gardens and estates. She also traveled on a second GCA trip in 1929 to Japan and in 1937 to Mexico, again with GCA. She remained on the PGC active roster even as she spent more of her time in Frankfort with relatives following the premature death of her husband. In October 1944 she was PGC’s delegate to the Garden Clubs of Kentucky annual meeting. When the meeting of the Garden Clubs of Kentucky was held in Paducah in October 1950, she made a cash donation to defray the club’s general meeting expenses. A letter of October 9 thanking her for the donation is preserved in the 1950 minute book. In September 1951, almost a year prior to her death in July 1952, Mrs. Tom Paxton moved and Mrs. W. P.

Paxton seconded that Mrs. Flournoy be made an honorary member of PGC as a result of her generosity, leadership, dedication, and service to the club. The motion carried.

Mrs. John T. Fuller (Rebecca Thompson) succeeded Anita Flournoy as PGC's second president in March 1928. Other officers elected were Mrs. Alonzo R. Meyers (Helen Sinnott), first vice-president; Mrs. R. B. Phillips, second vice-president; Mrs. Stanley Petter, secretary; and Mrs. P. H. Stewart, treasurer. New committees, outlined in *The News-Democrat* of April 15, were the following:

Nominating - Mesdames Saunders Fowler, A. R. Meyers, and Miss Ethel Morrow;

General Park - Mesdames R. B. Phillips, P. H. Stewart, E. P. Noble, James A. Rudy, and
S. A. Fowler

Birds - Mesdames J. C. Utterback, James P. Smith, and Blaine Kilgore;

Publicity - Mesdames A. R. Meyers, James P. Smith, R. B. Phillips, and W. F. Bradshaw;

Program - Mesdames Stanley Petter, Mrs. Fuller, and Miss Philippa Hughes;

Roadside Planting - Mesdames P. H. Stewart, Ramsey Martin, Kenneth McConnell, and Stanley
Petter;

Wild Flower and Tree Conservation - Mesdames George Langstaff, Blaine Kilgore, and Miss
Mattie Fowler;

Bird Preserve - Mesdames Leo Keiler and Stephen H. Long;

Schools and Scouting - Mesdames E. M. Post and W. J. Hills;

Exhibition and Awards - Mesdames Muscoe Burnett, Armour Gardner, and Misses Philippa
Hughes and Ethel Morrow.

In the springs of 1928 and 1929, the club began a new project, "Over the Garden Wall," a weekly newspaper column published in the Sunday edition of *The News-Democrat* and written and edited by members. Articles ran for twelve weeks and featured discussions of berry-bearing shrubs and winter feeding of birds, dahlias, roses, lilies, gladioli, nature trees, and lawn making as well as a short weekly article authored by Mrs. Flournoy on "Studies in Seasonable Gardening." According to the newspaper, "Garden lovers in Paducah have been lavish in their comments" about the articles.

Lengthy columns on the activities, programs, and membership of PGC were regular features in *The News-Democrat*. The club was credited with "creating an atmosphere of beautifying the homes, city parks and playgrounds in the city" in February 1929. On June 30, 1929, the newspaper featured an article titled "What Society is Interested In." It highlighted Paducah's "most beautiful gardens" and included information on PGC and its organization in 1921 plus gardens of several PGC members. Among those were Mrs. James Wheeler's "attractive small garden," Mrs. P. H. Stewart's lilies that "dance in the sunlight," Mrs. Charles DeWerthern's wildflower garden and shady woodland, Mrs. John Fuller's new garden, and Mrs. Flournoy's garden, which was singled out as the "oldest and best known garden in Paducah. Its beauty and splendor is too well known to require special comment." (sic)

Mrs. Fuller continued as president in 1930 and launched an ambitious schedule of programs. Officers from 1928 remained except for Mrs. William F. Bradshaw who was elected the new first vice-president. Two flower shows, a concert by Miss Mary Wheeler, a lecture on trees for highway planting, and plans to beautify the city's approach from the Brookport Bridge to Burnett Street with an avenue of two hundred trees were scheduled. All of these activities were extensively covered and detailed in the newly renamed *The Sun-Democrat*.

The first flower show was held from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on May 13, 14, and 15 on North Second Street. Twelve booths featured artistic floral and conservation exhibits, locally grown peonies and flower displays, demonstrations of "the proper methods of cultivation and arrangement of the flower garden on fifteen square foot plots," a bird house making contest for boys, and a creative poster contest for junior and high school students. Refreshments and luncheon were served in the "Spanish" tea garden with "pretty girls in gay beach pajamas as waitresses." It was hoped that the show would become an annual event.

On July 10, a zinnia show was held with prizes of \$2.50 and \$2 awarded for best blooms and best arrangements. Free zinnia seeds had been donated by Yopp Seed Company two months earlier and were distributed by PGC members to encourage participation by Paducahans in the show.

The year ended in December with the planting of two memorial gingko trees dedicated to George Washington. The ceremony, held on North Eighth Street, was attended by city and county officials, including Mayor Ernest Lackey who "lifted the first spades of dirt." Mrs. Robert Phillips, chairman of the General Park Committee, spearheaded the effort, which complied with a request from the American Tree Association for communities to plant trees in honor of the nation's founder.

Another year of ambitious programs and flower shows followed in 1931. Officers remained in place with the exception of Mrs. A. R. Myers who reprised her office as first vice-president after Mrs. Bradshaw moved to Athens, Georgia. The new office of corresponding secretary was filled by Mrs. Ramsey Martin. Committees were consolidated and renamed with new chairmen: Nominations, Publicity, Program, Civic Planting, Conservation, Exhibitions and Awards, and State Parks.

In March Paducahans were encouraged to plant trees in honor of George Washington's 200th birthday, and in April PGC members planted a flower garden at the Joseph Friedman Settlement House.

Two flower shows were staged in the spring. The first, an all-day narcissus show held in honor of National Garden Week April 14-19, occurred at the Palmer House Hotel Shoppe. Chaired by Mrs. Flournoy and Mrs. James Utterback and assisted by Mrs. Stanley Petter, Mrs. James Wheeler, Mrs. Charles Leigh, and Mrs. Robert Phillips, the purpose of the show was "to enlarge our knowledge and appreciation of this most fascinating of all other spring flowers" and encourage "all who have flowering shrubs, bridal wreath and fruit blossoms" to participate.

A second spring flower show was held on May 16, chaired by Mrs. James Wheeler. This show aimed to showcase the large variety of iris growing in Paducah as a result of PGC's "unusual success" in

getting citizens to plant the bulbs. As *The Sun Democrat* stated, "The cultivation of iris is most fascinating and Paducah gardeners show preference to the cultivation of this lovely flower."

In addition to the two flower shows, Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. Muscoe Burnett travelled to Long Island, New York in May as delegates to the GCA Annual Meeting. Mrs. W. F. Bradshaw, a recent emigre to Georgia, joined them. The three women enjoyed multiple receptions, luncheons, teas, dinners, and private garden tours during their four-day visit.

Unfortunately the busy spring was followed by the tragic and untimely death of the PGC president, Mrs. Rebecca Thompson Fuller, age 50, on July 12. A native of Honesdale, Pennsylvania and resident of Paducah for only six years, she had become a respected member of the community. Her death was mourned by many. To quote *The Sun-Democrat* of July 14: "Mrs. Fuller possessed to a marked degree the characteristics of kindness and sympathy. She was charitable and unselfish, and her life left its imprint in the community...Especially she will be missed in the civic organizations and clubs that knew her as a devoted member and leader." She gave to the Paducah Garden Club "a wholehearted service."

Mrs. Robert Phillips (Kate Webb), who had been serving as acting president during Mrs. Fuller's illness, assumed the presidency. On July 26, the club passed a resolution expressing its "deep sorrow at the death of their beloved president and spoke of her splendid work in the club, her beautiful character, and of her leadership as president."

Finishing off the year was a two-day dahlia and zinnia show at the Irvin Cobb Hotel in October, chaired by Mrs. Muscoe Burnett. Awards in five judged categories were given: \$5 for best single dahlia bloom; \$5 for best collection of dahlia blooms; \$2.50 for best zinnia bloom; a year's subscription to *Garden Gossip* for best arrangement of zinnias; and a year's subscription to *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine for the second best arrangement of zinnias. The public was encouraged to bring arrangements of other flowers to the show although awards were given only for zinnias and dahlias.

Also in October the club staged Iris Week under the leadership of Mrs. Leo Keiler. According to an article in *The Sun Democrat* on October 15: "Paducah flower-lovers are expected to give their support to Iris Week... A city-wide planting of iris at this time would mean that the flowers will bloom all over Paducah next year...and will add much to the appearance of the city...Paducah may in time become an 'iris city,' members of the Garden club said."

The new year, 1932, welcomed PGC's fourth president, Mrs. Stanley D. Petter (Anna Webb Phillips), the daughter of the third PGC president, Mrs. Phillips. Mrs. Stephen H. Long of Metropolis, program chairman and enthusiastic gardener, outlined plans for the year in January. The spring season opened in February with a lecture to the memory of George Washington by Mrs. Josephine Post. Entitled "George Washington - A Great Lover of Trees and Flowers," it honored the George Washington bicentennial tree planting program conducted throughout the country by the American Tree Association.

On March 23, dedication ceremonies for the “Memorial Highway of Trees” were conducted. Ultimately two hundred and eight Chinese elms, purchased for \$2 each in memory of loved ones, were planted 30 feet apart on the west and east sides of the roadway from the Brookport Bridge down North Eighth Street into the city. Speakers included Mrs. Leo Keiler, PGC chairman of the dedication program, Richard Rudy, chairman of the Park Board, and Mayor E. G. Scott of Paducah. Mrs. Petter dedicated the first tree to the former beloved PGC president Mrs. Fuller, who proposed the project. A list of those honored with memorial trees is preserved in the PGC Archives.

In the midst of the depression in 1932, Paducah was faced with widespread unemployment and the threat of food shortages. A club project, implemented in March under the leadership of Mrs. Petter and the Civic Committee Chairman, Mrs. Alonzo Meyers, met with tremendous success. One hundred thirty lots in the city plus seven large tracts of land were obtained rent free from generous owners for cultivation by the unemployed as vegetable gardens. Free seed was furnished to families by the Red Cross so they could raise and can their own vegetables for use during the summer, fall, and winter. The club enlisted help from the county home demonstration agent to teach farming and canning techniques to those cultivating the gardens. Cash prizes of \$10, \$5, and \$2.50 for the most successful gardens were awarded by Mrs. Petter in July. An interesting article in *The Sun-Democrat* of July 3 highlighted the program which announced that one of the most successful gardens was grown by a 102-year old Black man and his wife who “does not know her age but remembers events which far preceded the Civil War.” An additional article on September 30 called the garden planting “an outstanding piece of work.”

The publicity and success of the garden plots for the unemployed coupled with the Memorial Highway of Trees received attention and praise in the January 1933 issue of GCA’s *Bulletin*. Quoting from the article, it began with the words “Paducah, te salutamus...Read for yourselves what Paducah has accomplished with her Community Gardens and we feel positive that you will every one of you do and say the same!” An extensive description of both projects followed: “...Food was thus supplied to about one thousand people for a period of five months. The estimates of the individual gardeners as to the value of their gardens was from \$100.00 to \$125.00. The cost to the club was eighty nine and two-thirds cents per garden...One reported that five families, comprising thirteen people, lived out of his garden all summer...The gratitude of the people was pathetic but sincere and the Club may be deeply gratified over the success of its efforts.” *

*The entire article can be read by accessing *The Bulletin* of 1933, pages 94-96, on the GCA website.

Mrs. Petter continued her busy schedule and generous leadership as president with a trip to Athens, Georgia in April to the GCA’s Annual Meeting. Accompanied by Mrs. James Wheeler, they toured “noted gardens in the South.” Their trip was followed in May by a judged rose show open to the public in the lobby of the Hotel Irvin Cobb. Prizes were awarded for garden-grown flowers in garden containers and best arrangement of roses in bowls or vases.

Yopp Seed Company and Sanders Nursery donated dahlia and gladiolus bulbs and mixed perennials for winners.

PGC closed the early summer season on May 31 with a program in observance of Poetry Week. Readings were given by Mesdames John MacDonald, Herbert Richardson, and Muscoe Burnett followed by "Songs of Out of Doors," by Mrs. James Wheeler and accompanist.

The club's activities continued in September with a dahlia show sponsored "to promote interest in dahlia raising and in the artistic arrangement of flowers in the home." More than five hundred blossoms were displayed in milk bottles as well as in arrangements and were glowingly described in *The Sun-Democrat* of the 26th. "The soft petals and splendid coloring of the plants convey a message to the understanding mind - a message that calms the soul and lifts up the heart...every single cluster of blossoms was a masterpiece of cultivation and arrangement."

Additional club meetings continued in October and November with the busy year ending at the annual business meeting.

Mrs. Petter served a second year as president in 1933. Plans included assisting the McCracken County Homemakers with the formation of a garden club and landscaping the grounds of Paducah Junior College. Additional memorial trees were added to North Eighth Street, and lectures on various topics such as birds and the planting of blooms and shrubs for the garden were held. The Club also protested the indiscriminate clearing by relief workers of "roadside thickets" of crabapple, sumac, wild plum, and honeysuckle, which provided blooms in the spring and fall, and suggested that a better use of time would be to remove trash heaps.

In April members attended an "interesting and entertaining meeting" at Mrs. Leo Keiler's home, West Terrace, "which was decorated with jonquils, narcissi, and lilacs." The meeting area was transformed into a courtroom and a skit, which was a parody of the club members, was presented. Mrs. Josephine Post served as judge and Mrs. James Wheeler acted as a 'spy' from the Garden Club of America. Each member of the club was called to the witness stand and stood trial for her "crimes in gardening."

The GCA Annual Meeting was held in Chicago in June with Mrs. Leo Keiler, Mrs. Herbert Richardson, and Mrs. Flournoy attending as delegates.

In December both Mrs. Keiler and Mrs. Phillips appealed to the public through articles in *The Sun Democrat* to stop the wholesale destruction of natural cedar trees. They encouraged citizens to buy live, balled trees for Christmas decorations rather than cutting

down trees found in woodland areas. Mrs. Phillips, a member of the Kentucky Committee on Conservation, urged residents to buy tagged trees that certified that “the dealer has grown his own Christmas greens...in a manner that will cause the supply to continue.” She further stated, “We urge every citizen to aid in this thoughtful effort to retain for our countryside the rich heritage of natural beauty to which it is rightful heir.”

New officers were elected in mid-December for 1934. They were: Mrs. Leo Keiler - President; Mrs. A. J. Campbell - Vice-president; Mrs. Stanley Petter - Secretary; Mrs. Ramsey Martin - Corresponding Secretary. Committee chairmen were: Mrs. James Wheeler - Admissions; Mrs. Stanley Petter - Exhibitions and Awards; Mrs. George Flournoy - State Parks; Mrs. J. K. MacDonald - Program; Mrs. R. B. Phillips - Bill Boards and Conservation; Mrs. A. R. Meyers - Roadside Planting; Mrs. A. J. Campbell - Publicity; Miss Mattie Fowler - GCA Bulletin; Mrs. J. R. Smith - Horticulture; Mrs. Jeanette DeWerthern - “In The Garden.”

The club began a busy new year in February. Additional trees on Memorial Highway on Eighth Street were planted: fifty redbuds and twenty-one elms, donated to the memory of friends and loved ones. Previously planted trees were pruned and replaced, if necessary, and Mrs. Keiler announced that PGC would sponsor permanent planting of shrubs in the triangle park space at the approach to the Brookport bridge.

Program topics in the spring focused on shamrocks, gladioli, and the origin of plant names plus the announcement of a competitive garden project. Each member of the club agreed to plant at least one dozen gladiolus bulbs. In an effort to enhance beautification of homes and gardens in the city, public participation was encouraged and prizes were awarded for the most beautiful blooms.

The club also participated in two activities in April. The first was a GCA conservation and preservation project compiling statistics on the location and inventory of local wildflowers. The second involved the weeklong Paducah Exposition of Progress, staged by Paducah’s Business and Professional Women, at Tenth and Harrison Streets. The event featured concerts, the crowning of Miss Paducah, a most beautiful baby contest, and a variety of civic club booths. PGC participated by staging two exhibits of floriculture, which had “wide appeal.”

The Club dealt with sadness and personal loss in May when its third president and charter member, Mrs. Kate Webb Phillips, died on May 1 at the age of 60. A joint resolution signed by PGC and five additional organizations with which she was involved was published in *The Sun-Democrat* on May 6 extolling “her brilliant intellect, her gracious charm and culture,

her efficiency in all she undertook, and her richness of heart"... Hers was a "well-spent life, a life lived to the fullest in every phase." In June the Club began plans to dedicate a lakeside iris memorial garden at Noble Park to Mrs. Phillips, "through whose untiring efforts much of the beautification of Paducah was accomplished." "She was to the Paducah Garden Club what Elizabeth Martin was to the GCA," according to PGC's Annual Report of 1934.

"Visiting Gardens Day" was held on Sunday, May 20. Funds raised from the \$.25 ticket price were to be used for civic planting of flowers to complement the previously planted twelve dogwoods in the cemeteries, the red buds on the Memorial Highway, a tulip poplar in Noble Park, and the flowers in the triangle at the Brookport Bridge. Seven gardens, described as "radiant" and "particularly beautiful", displayed a profusion of roses and other flowers. The gardens were those of Mesdames Jeanette DeWerthern, P. H. Stewart, W. P. Paxton, James P. Smith, J. R. Smith, James G. Wheeler, and Russell Shelton.

July brought Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace to Paducah in an effort to create support for a wild-fowl refuge in the lakes area of Ballard County and to urge him to have the area surveyed by the US Biological Survey. Interested persons from Paducah and Mayfield including Senator Alben Barkley and area politicians, plus Mrs. Flournoy and Mrs. A. R. Meyers as chairs of PGC's State Parks and Conservation committees, met with Secretary Wallace at the Irvin Cobb Hotel. Eventually the local effort was instrumental in the development of a year-round birding haven and waterfowl habitat within the tracts of bottomland hardwoods now know as Ballard Wildlife Management Area.

Club activities resumed on October 6 with a dahlia show at the Irvin Cobb. Ribbons were awarded for the best specimens of decorative, pompon and single dahlias as well as for flower and berry arrangements. A program on the planting and care of the lawn followed on the 18th.

Robert Sturtevant, noted landscape architect, author, and iris authority, visited Paducah in November for a PGC sponsored public lecture on garden landscaping. A large crowd of garden enthusiasts gathered at PJC for the Saturday afternoon talk which discussed both formal and naturalistic gardens. While in Paducah, the Club arranged for Mr. Sturtevant to landscape the memorial iris and peony garden for Mrs. Phillips at Noble Park and also to design a rose garden at Keiler Park using funds raised at a bridge party at Mrs. A. R. Meyers' home.

The year ended with citizens again encouraged to buy only accredited greens for Christmas decorating in an attempt to prevent the ruthless cutting of native cedars and hollies that was decimating the countryside.

Mrs. Keiler continued to serve as president for the next three years. Activities of the club included card parties and teas, decorating downtown store windows for Christmas, and lectures on a variety of horticulture topics such as trees of southwestern Kentucky, lilies, blue geraniums, suggestions for appropriate shrubbery for landscape planting, wildflowers and wildlife, care and protection of dogwoods, seed catalogue novelties, and the most successful plants, perennials, and annuals in local gardens.

The Garden Club of America sponsored Conservation Week April 8-12, 1935. PGC joined with other GCA clubs nationwide to present educational programs throughout the week. The Shamrock Building, 606 Broadway, served as conservation headquarters with exhibits on soil reclamation and agricultural conservation, wildflower protection, and floral arrangements. Programs were featured each afternoon on topics such as billboard legislation, soil and water conservation, and Kentucky forests. Through the cooperation of the Paducah Public School System, a paper was read to every school child on wildflowers. The public was encouraged to attend the free event. Members of PGC in charge of the week were Mesdames A. R. Meyers, Stanley Petter, E. B. Ferguson, W. P. Paxton, James Wheeler, Allen Ashcraft, Andrew Campbell, Jeanette DeWerthern, James R. Smith, Leo Keiler, Frank Boyd, Charles Q. C. Leigh, Herbert Richardson, P. H. Stewart, and Misses Philippa Hughes and Elizabeth Sinnott.

Five beautiful flower gardens were open to the public in May 1935 for Visiting Gardens Day. Gardens included Mrs. Stanley Petter's, "one of the prettiest small gardens in Paducah," Mrs. Jeanette DeWerthern's large formal garden, Mrs. James Rose Smith's "formal rose garden" on Lone Oak Road, Mrs. W. P. Paxton's "garden with a beautiful natural setting," and Mrs. A. R. Meyer's at Ninth and Monroe, "one of the finest plantings of specimen iris in western Kentucky." Over two hundred visitors attended the event which was covered extensively in *The Sun-Democrat*.

The next year PGC hosted a two-day iris show in May at Rhodes-Burford Company where approximately seventy-five varieties of iris and a number of flower arrangements and dining room vignettes were displayed. In conjunction with the flower show, five gardens of PGC members were also open for public inspection. The garden tours and flower show were again well covered by articles in *The Sun-Democrat*.

Mrs. Keiler's very successful and busy presidency ended in November 1937. "A rising vote of thanks was extended Mrs. Keiler for her splendid work and untiring efforts during her four-year term of office." New officers were elected to serve during the coming year:

President, Mrs. James G. Wheeler;
First vice-president, Miss Mattie Fowler;
Second vice-president, Mrs. Fred Lack;
Third vice-president, Mrs. E. B. Ferguson;
Recording secretary, Mrs. Herman Toof;
Corresponding secretary, Mrs. Leo F. Keiler;
Treasurer, Mrs. P. H. Stewart.

The club voted that the names of the new officers and all members of the club be published in the newspaper. Members were: Mesdames Frank Boyd, William F. Bradshaw, Jeanette DeWerthern, E. B. Ferguson, Anita Flournoy, C. C. Grassham; Misses Mattie Fowler and Philippa Hughes; Mesdames Leo Keiler, Fred Lack, Charles Q. C. Leigh, S. H. Long, W. P. Paxton, Stanley D. Petter, Josephine P. Post, Herbert L. Richardson, Russell Shelton, Allen Shemwell, James P. Smith, James Rose Smith, P. H. Stewart, Herman Toof, James G. Wheeler; Miss Ethel Morrow; Mesdames Ramsey Martin, John K. MacDonald, and Allen Ashcraft. Mesdames Muscoe Burnett, A. R. Meyers, and Miss Elizabeth Sinnott were listed as associates.

Three new members were also elected to membership at the November meeting: Mesdames H. Gilbert Reynolds, Alben W. Barkley, and Luther Carson.

PGC began a new era with Mrs. Wheeler's presidency. Beginning in 1937, membership rolls, programs, and/or minutes were preserved and are housed in the Archives. They make for interesting reading as the Club continued its efforts "to stimulate the knowledge of gardening among amateurs, to aid in the protection of native plants and to encourage civic planting."

Jeane Framptom, Nov. 2022