

## Lotos Club Through the Years

On November 12, 1880 a group of seventeen ladies who had been meeting for three years in small groups in different parts of Lincoln, organized a club. Because their intent was to study Shakespeare, they named their group the "Avon Club" in his honor. The charter members were presided over by a Mrs. John L. McConnell who held that office until 1902.

A Professor George Woodberry, who was a teacher of English literature at the University, was the leader of the group. For two years a Shakespearean play was studied at each meeting. After that they studied poetry and French. Several moved away and several tired of French so the club number dropped to five.

In 1884 three new members were acquired and Mrs. Benton, who was the wife of the first chancellor of the University, assisted the club. At her suggestion they renamed the club the "History Club" and took up the study of French history and literature. A constitution was drawn up to govern the group. Article II states: "The aim of the History Club shall be the intellectual and social development of its members." Other articles dealt with meetings, officers and election of new members.

The History Club went on to a four year study of Egypt which led to the name of Lotos for the club. A Lotos is a blossom of a waterlily. The blue and white blossom was honored and worshipped by the Egyptians while the pink Lotos blossom was connected with mythology. The seeds and roots were edible and were said to cause indolence and dreamy contentment.

This excerpt was taken from the minutes of February 27, 1890:

"Mrs. Wing read Wilson's account of the wonderful temple on the Island of Philae and an essay of Victor Hugo's on Egyptian Architecture. Mrs. Richards followed with a number of newspaper articles reviewing Miss Amelia Edward's lectures just delivered in Chicago and her book on her Egyptian Explorations. The ladies became quite enthusiastic over Miss Edwards and her work and it was at once decided that her "A Thousand Miles up the Nile" should be begun at the next meeting and read entire if found to be as instructive as it promised. While reading sketches of Miss Edward's lectures, the Lotos flower and leaf used in Architecture suggested a new name for the club. All applauded the idea and as the ladies were reminded that this name had once been suggested by our dear absent president - Mrs. McConnell - it made it double easy to settle the matter at once. The club had formed the habit of changing its name with each new work adopted. When reading Shakespeare they named themselves the Avon Club. When reading French and Spanish History - the name of the History Circle was used and now when studying the architecture of Egypt what could be more appropriate than the Lotos Club?"

Over the years Lotos has not changed a great deal. For many years the number of members was twelve. In 1899 the club voted to raise its membership to seventeen. The number was raised to twenty in 1908 and in 1921, twenty-two was decided to be the perfect size for the club. A 1977 by-law change again raised the number - this time to twenty-five. There were ladies who were proposed for membership who were turned down. There were also ladies who resigned and the club decided not to accept their resignation. There was a period of time in which Lotos had a waiting list of prospective members. Names would be proposed to the club, voted on and then put on this list if the number in the club was at its limit. Then if someone moved or resigned, the top person from the list was asked to become a member. Over a period of 108 years there have been only 135 women who have had the good fortune to become Lotos members.

The by-laws stated that the hours for the meetings should be from 2:00 to 5:00 and this was closely followed for many years. The three hour period included

intensive study of the topic chosen for the year, a business meeting and a social hour from 4:00 until 5:00. Greece was studied for several years and topics included art, literature, history, architecture, music and so on. Studies were in depth and often times each member contributed to the study. There were years in which topics were assigned and the member would prepare a paper to present to the group. One year the club decided that each member should be responsible for a month of the Greek calendar. These were kept in a scrapbook along with other momentos such as letters, postcards, yearbooks and newspaper clipping. Other topics studied in the early years were Italy, Spain, the Iliad and the history of the United States. This topic didn't last long because so many other clubs were studying it. Music was an important part of their meetings. On many occasions one of the group would favor them with a selection during the social hour. Members were always wanting to broaden their knowledge so they added current events to their studies and opened each meeting with discussion of the week's happenings. In 1895 they voted to allow each member to choose her own topic so there was a great deal of variety. One afternoon Miss Bishop sang fifteen selections for the group. Another member, Mrs. Dales, had quite a talented family. On several occasions they presented concerts at the meeting. In 1916 an evening play was presented at the Hainer Theatre with eight of the ladies in the cast. Other members brought guests and, of course, delightful refreshments were enjoyed by all.

As the years went by the topics of study became more involved with the things around them. 1903 topics included landscape gardening, decorative glass in the home and trips taken by members of the club. The ladies also started bringing in others to present their programs. 1932 started a tradition that was to last for over fifty years - the Summer Memories program.

The ladies of Lotos were also involved in other endeavors. As early as 1893 they started voicing their opinions and concerns. One of the first recorded incidences was of their sending to England for an eye chart to be used in the public schools. Then in 1894 they joined the Federation of Womens Clubs of Lincoln. A representative from Lotos Club attended their local, state and national meetings, and they also lent monetary support. This association lasted until 1912 when they withdrew. Over the years these are some of the things that Lotos has supported:

In 1900 they got involved with the City Improvement Society. They voted on the street names in Lincoln and also helped furnish a room for transient girls at the YWCA.

Since they were members in the Federation of Womens Clubs, a lot of groups asked for their support and for money. They donated to the Public Schools Playground Fund and supported legislation on the library movement. The war years, both WW I and WW II were busy years for Lotos members. In 1914 they sent \$50 to Belgium to aid the women and children in the war zone. During their meetings they wrapped bandages for soldiers and in 1917 they dispensed with their meetings to meet with the bandage circle at the Congregational Church. They took charge of a French orphan - a little four year old girl named Anna Seguin and for several years sent money to help with her support. They collected dues in advance to help with this. In May of one of the war years they decided to eliminate their social hour and each member donated \$2.00 to send to the War Relief Fund. When the next fall arrived, the weekly meetings were just not complete without the social hour so light refreshments were voted back in. Their hands were always busy in making pajamas or surgical dressings for the Red Cross and dresses for Anna.

After WW I other projects received their attention. These are some of the recipients of their money or support:

The Literary Digest Child Feeding Fund  
American Humane Association

School Milk Fund  
Clothing for poor children

A needy family in University Place  
The Social Welfare League

Goodwill  
Infantile Paralysis Drive

Then WW II broke out and Lotos was again involved. This time they tied comforters, folded bandages, hemmed diapers, made mittens and shirts, and sent money to the British War Relief. In 1945 Lotos was still folding bandages for the Medical School in Omaha. Cedars Home, KFOR Operation Santa Claus, the Children's Zoo and Friendship Home have been the most recent benefactors.

Article II states that one of the aims of Lotos is the social development of the members. The social hour was such an important part of the afternoon and refreshments were always looked forward to. Some of the adjectives used in the minutes to describe these refreshments are: dainty, elaborate, toothsome, enjoyable, delightful, delicious, appetizing, excellent, delectable, bountiful, artistic, splendid, scrumptious and lovely.

Lotos celebrated her anniversary in different ways and sometimes in grand style. For the second anniversary of the History Club in 1886, a brass bell was presented by Mrs. McConnell. These words are taken from the minutes of November 24:

"Upon arriving at the house a dimutive lady was observed posed upon the table. Beside her lay the following note from the donor: (Mrs. McConnell) 'I send this guest - all unbidden, but I hope the History Circle may be pleased to welcome her and give her a place at their future meetings. You will find her not at all aggressive in her manners. She will never interrupt, she will always be silent unless compelled to "Chime in", but should any ceremony of "Book, Bell, or Candle" be necessary, she will be ready to take her part. May this Tintinnabulunce be to this History Circle a Nola or a Campanella, a curfew or a Sanctus, but never a Squilla, a Corinnacula or a Passing Bell. With best wishes for the prosperity of the History Circle during the coming year.'

This bell was lost, but in 1926 a new brass bell from Milan was presented to the club.

For the third anniversary Mrs. McConnell gave each member a "costly and unique imported gold spoon". On their tenth they included the husbands who were referred to as the "Owls" and the children or "Lotos Buds". The twentieth anniversary was an elaborate celebration at Mrs. Gere's home which included a ten course meal consisting of: Raw oysters, Cream of celery soup, Escalloped salmon, Brown bread sandwiches, Individual croustades of sweet breads and mushrooms, Roast turkey with chestnut dressing, Brownd potato balls, peas, celery, Cranberry jelly, pickled peaches, Cherry sherbet, Salad, Tomato aspic, Toasted crackers, Plum pudding with brandy hard sauce, Frozen pudding and coconut balls, Coffee, Crackers with Neufchatel cheese. By 1903 banquet costs were not to exceed \$1.50 per plate.

Guests were always in attendance at Lotos meetings, and each spring a picnic was planned for the families.

In the early years the meetings were always in Member's homes. The first deviation of this that I found was in 1906 when the group met at the Kappa Alpha Theta house. In the 20's members started having 1:00 luncheons instead of the usual 2:00 meeting even though no by-law changes were ever made. The University Club was mentioned as one of the first locations to be used for entertaining, but that wasn't until 1924. After that other sites for Lotos luncheons have been the YWCA, Hotel Lincoln, Hotel Cornhusker, The Lincoln Country Club, Student Union, the Colonial Cup in Piedmont, Steinhart Lodge in Nebraska City, the Carson House in Brownville, the Nebraska Center, Gateway Manor, the Alpha Phi House, Sheldon, and a picnic at Automobile Park. By 1931 all of the meetings were luncheons, but many of these were Dutch Treat.

Dues have fluctuated over the years. In the beginning they were 25¢ and even as late as 1942 they were 50¢ after having gone up and down several times. The war put a halt to fancy refreshments and the collection of money.

The minutes have also changed a great deal. Some were detailed pages about the program, table settings for refreshments and the business of the day. Others were brief accountings.

The following is a complete list of Lotos Members and the year they joined:

<u>1880</u>	<u>1899</u>	<u>1908</u>	<u>1920</u>	<u>1944</u>	<u>1962</u>	<u>1984</u>
Baum	Brooks	Powers	Krause	Beechner	Donovan	P. Nolte
Clark	Dorr	Dorris	<u>1921</u>	<u>1946</u>	Kenagy	Lewis
Church	Easin	E. Gere	Carson	Beutel	Hazen	Andersen
Cropsey	Garrus	F. Gere	Edmiston	Aldrich	Patterson	<u>1986</u>
Delayey	Lyons	Stuart	<u>1925</u>	Roberts	Wekesser	Mengshol
Dundy	Ogden	Sherman	Kirshman	<u>1948</u>	<u>1963</u>	<u>1987</u>
Edwards	Taylor	Brisbine	<u>1929</u>	Gustavsen	Bentley	White
Fox	Wing	Fling	Burnett	<u>1949</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1992</u>
Gere	Wing	<u>1910</u>	<u>1930</u>	Taylor	F. Schorr	Spanier
Harris	<u>1900</u>	Avery	Aperson	Struble	B. Nolte	Spurrier
Koon	Andrews	Hardy	Burgitt	Miles	<u>1966</u>	<u>1994</u>
Marshall	<u>1903</u>	Hayes	Taylor	<u>1951</u>	Waterbury	Kennedy
McConnell	Ross	Barber	<u>1937</u>	Dvoracek	<u>1968</u>	<u>1995</u>
Phillips	Rhodes	<u>1911</u>	Morgan	<u>1953</u>	Dudgeon	Dowty
Richards	Brace	Calvert	Curtiss	Kees	<u>1970</u>	Sipple
Rouse	Hayden	<u>1912</u>	Haecker	<u>1954</u>	Varner	<u>1996</u>
Struve	Conklin	Frye	<u>1940</u>	Jobst	<u>1972</u>	Hoppe
<u>1884</u>	Waite	Teeters	Boncher	<u>1955</u>	Adams	<u>1997</u>
Dales	<u>1906</u>	<u>1913</u>	Sickel	Lesserhop	<u>1975</u>	Acklie
Harwood	Bishop	Apperson	Wadsworth	Girard	Young	Duncan
Stewart	Ayers	<u>1916</u>	Jenness	Hellwig	<u>1977</u>	Moeser
Bessey	Hainer	Klose	<u>1941</u>	Van Pelt	D. Leland	415
Manatt	Jewett	Heivers	Stebbins	Hardin	<u>1978</u>	
Lewis	<u>1907</u>	Leland	Latch	<u>1959</u>	Roskins	
<u>1890</u>	Watkins	<u>1917</u>	Gere	Watkins	J. Schorr	
Weeks	Wheeler	Hurtz	<u>1943</u>	Swanson	Sidles	
Wing	French	<u>1919</u>	McCarthy	Weaver	<u>1981</u>	
	Rogers	LeRossignol	Overholster	Orwig	Massengale	
	Costigan	Webster				
		Carson				

BY-LAWS of LOTOS CLUB

Membership

1. The membership of this Club shall be limited to 22. (may be less)
2. Names of candidates for membership shall be presented in writing to the Secretary who shall propose them at the following regular meeting of the Club.
3. Names shall be voted upon at the meeting following their proposal., by a secret ballot, prepared by the Secretary. (Ballots should be written "Yes" or "No") Two negatives (or blanks) shall defeat election.
4. If more than one name be proposed there shall be taken an informal ballot. The candidate having the greatest number of votes shall be voted upon first. There shall be as many informal ballots as there are members to be elected.
5. Each member shall be entitled to propose one name only, in a Club year.

My interpretation of # 4

If candidate having greatest number of votes on informal ballot, should, on the secret ballot (balloting on her alone) be defeated, another informal ballot is taken & highest is then voted upon, alone, etc. etc. -

Of course, if the highest of the first informal ballot receives all (or all but one vote) in the secret ballot, the election on April 20 is over. We have but one vacancy to fill.

Susanna J.