

West Newbury Woman's Clubhouse

Over most of the 20th century, said the [Boston Globe](#), the unassuming structure at 277 Main Street was the “heart and home of the West Newbury Woman’s Club—and a meeting place for the community—for the Girl Scouts, Brownies, Foster Parents, Vacation Bible class, and garden clubs, to mention a few.” The building also functioned as nerve center for the Town’s well-being: the corps of women who owned the place went forth, determined to serve schoolchildren, shut-ins, the war effort, the environment, and more.

For almost a century, only women held title to this property in Post Office Square. Lizzie A. Perley, who acquired the place in 1896, sold it in 1908 to Florence N. Poore, whose husband Hiram operated it as a general store (and the [post office](#)). She in turn sold it in 1922 to Ethel M. Bond, whose husband William [continued shop keeping](#) there. Three years later, Mrs. Bond offered the dilapidated store to the [Woman’s Club for \\$3,000](#). “With Yankee foresight and extreme caution it was purchased for \$1,250 which left some money in the treasury for restoration.”

[Woman’s Clubs](#) developed in the latter part of the 1800s as a means for women (usually confined to work in the home) to gather to “[undertake serious study of intellectual topics and current events, and organize for social reforms](#).” West Newbury’s club organized on October 23, 1914, with [Alice Dodge](#) and [Hazel Albertson](#) among the founding members. The Club held twice-monthly meetings in [members’ homes](#), then a blacksmith shop, churches, and school buildings. In 1919, as membership had grown, the group determined to [purchase its own clubhouse](#). This they accomplished in 1925, the year the Club incorporated.

Unlike some organizations of its era, the Woman’s Club offered unlimited membership to any woman who “[sympathizes with the objects of the Club and is willing to aid in promoting them](#).” At the start, Club founders advocated women’s suffrage, a [divisive and contested topic](#) up to passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Hazel Albertson was quoted, “So many discussions were given on Woman’s Suffrage that [we were called Suffragettes](#).”

Over the decades that followed, the Club amply fulfilled its [mission](#) “to promote the culture and entertainment of its members and for civic

betterment.” A partial listing of Woman’s Club committees in [1929-30](#) included American Home, Community and Volunteer Service, Art and Drama, International Relations, Literature, Legislation, Education, Public Health, and Radio News. Meetings featured plays, concerts, costume events, and picnics as entertainment. Members educated each other with presentations about literature and current events. They also invited prominent speakers such as the State Library Commissioner to discuss “New Books of the Season” and the Chairman of the State Board of Health to address “Cleaning Up the Merrimac[k].”

The women’s abiding dedication to civic betterment, both expansive and deep, provided an important social safety net in Town. They sewed clothes for the poor and took baskets to shut-ins. They bought playground equipment, taught home economics, supported scholarships, and delivered hot food to the Central School at lunchtime. When that school burned in 1938, their building served as 5th and 6th grade classrooms. The clubhouse also [hosted free classes](#) in sewing, furniture repair, rug hooking, and more. During the World Wars, the women sent clothes and blankets abroad and sold war bonds from the clubhouse.

The women’s beloved clubhouse grew and changed, adding a new kitchen in the mid-1930s. On a bitterly cold February night in 1961, [the structure burned](#), leaving a charred and frozen hulk. Days later, the women resolved to rebuild, provided they could raise the money without borrowing. Countless fundraisers later, the clubhouse (looking as it does today) [reopened in 1964](#), in time for the Club’s 50th anniversary.

Lifestyle changes in the second half of the 20th century proved a challenge, particularly as women [won the right to join previously all-male organizations](#). By the 1980s, the Woman’s Club membership had aged and declined in numbers, making it difficult to maintain the clubhouse. In [1983-84](#), the committees had been pared down and meetings were no longer scheduled for July or December, much less every two weeks.

The clubhouse was sold in 1987 to buyers submitting the highest among three competing bids. True to form, the Club [donated the proceeds](#) to worthy local causes, leaving a legacy not just in the clubhouse building, but also the fabric of the Town.

West Newbury Woman's Clubhouse



Florence & Hiram Poore's Store in 1915 *Source: Boston Globe*



Woman's Clubhouse in Early Days *Source: Jean & Scott Berkenbush*



Woman's Clubhouse after 1961 Fire *Source: Boston Globe*



PAST PRESIDENTS at the 40th anniversary meeting of the West Newbury Women's Club held yesterday afternoon in their club room. Seated, (left to right): Mrs. Hazel H. Albertson, Mrs. Parker H. Nason, first secretary; Mrs. Louis H. Flook, Mrs. Samuel G. Ordway, president; and Mrs. Laurence G. Dodge. Standing: Mrs. Charles D. King, Mrs. Horace W. Brown, Mrs. Kenneth J. Berkenbush, Mrs. Sidney B. Culliford, Mrs. Frank G. Pratt Sr., Mrs. Edward L. Smith, Mrs. George E. Hale, Mrs. Robert J. Murphy and Mrs. Herbert S. Basley. In the front row, all are charter members except Mrs. Ordway. (Gazette Staff Photo)

**West Newbury
Woman's Club Members
Mark 40th Anniversary**

Sixty Woman's Club members, by Mrs. Stanford Spofford, yesterday celebrated the organization's 40th anniversary at the club hall. Main at. The hall was decorated with autumn leaves and a birthday cake was presented.

with corsages. They were: Mrs. Hazel Albertson, Mrs. Parker H. Nason, Mrs. Eva Flook, Mrs. Laurence G. Dodge, Mrs. Charles King, Mrs. Eunice Brown, Mrs. Kenneth Berkenbush, Mrs. Sydney Culliford, Mrs. Frank Pratt, Mrs. Agnes Smith, Mrs. Etta Hale, Mrs. Robert J. Murphy, Mrs. Herbert S. Basley and Mrs. Ordway. Costumes of 40 years ago were worn by Mrs. Dodge and Mrs. Albertson who described the organization's early years. The first

Lawrence Daily Eagle 10/20/1954 Source: G.A.R. Library Files



Woman's Clubhouse Rebuilt *Source: G.A.R. Library Susan Follansbee Photo Collection*



Woman's Club Building March 2021