The Delphian Society
By Lee Beach

In the early days of Klamath Falls, the lumber barons, lumberjacks and city fathers may have built the town, but the women helped build the community and foster education.

The Women’s Library Club was prominent in encouraging reading and community service in its activities. It is often mentioned in the early editions of the Evening Herald, but it wasn’t the only such group.

The Delphian Society was formed in Chicago around 1910 to promote education in the arts, literature and history in a format especially designed for women’s interests. In some background given by Derek Dahlsad on the website http://collectorsquest.com/blog/2008/06/02/the-delphian-course/, he described the Delphian Course as “a combination of book club and correspondence course, involving a condensed library/encyclopedia and course guides for running a meeting and how to discuss their scheduled readings:

“The meetings were deliberately non-scholarly; while the members were required to present what they’d learned during their assigned readings, prepared notes and outlines were discouraged to speak briefly from direct knowledge and understanding rather than reciting a prepared speech.”

At the time Otis E. Randall retired as dean of Brown University in 1935 to become adviser to the organization, membership was stated to be 300,000 American women, according to the website HYPERLINK "http://www.brown.edu" http://www.brown.edu. In its heyday, the Society had chapters in all but two states.
Some local history of the Delphians

Rachel Applegate Good refers to the Delphian Society in her “History of Klamath County” 1941, p. 155: “Organized at the City Library clubroom in the summer of 1925 by Mrs. J. D. Goble, Northwest organizer, it (Delphian Society) has completed 15 years of systematized study – two 6-year courses, one classical and one modern, and a 3-year course on basic trends of civilization. The Society encourages not only study but individual and original thinking.”

A fairly complete set of the study books, which had belonged to Alice McCourt Lamm, was donated to the Klamath County Historical Society. Alice was married to Wilfred Elliott Lamm, who owned the Lamm Lumber Company in Modoc Point (“History of Klamath County, Klamath Historical Society.”)

Alice’s daughter, Winifred Favel Hood, who now lives in Medford, remembers when she was a child, her mother attending the meetings. From calendars taped into the front of one of the books, Mrs. Lamm was participating during the 1930s, which Winifred confirmed. A list of national chapters in handbooks showed that Klamath Falls had one chapter in 1936 and two chapters in 1945.

“My mother was not able to go to college,” Winifred recalled. “She had one of the common childhood diseases when she was 17 and was in a coma for six weeks. She had to learn to walk again, and her father died about the same time, so college was out of the question.”

Alice attended secretarial school and worked for Klamath Development Co., living with her sister and working until she got married, according to Winifred.

“Education was very important to her,” she said. “She read to me a lot. I remember being in the fifth or sixth grade – when I was sick at home, I always wanted her to read to me. She would say, ‘Now, you are old enough to read to yourself, Winifred.’”

Other Klamath women also belong

Other familiar names of earlier time Klamath area women who also sought knowledge and self-improvement through the course are mentioned in Rachel Applegate Good’s history and in the issues of the Evening Herald.

“Mrs. Don J. Zumwalt has been city supervisor during the whole period, and it is largely due to her wise and kind leadership that Klamath Falls chapter holds the coast record for staying qualities. At least 10 women have been active during the entire 15-year course,” wrote Good.

On Tuesday, April 14, 1936 in the calendar section of the Evening Herald, a meeting notice was printed:

“The Delta Gamma chapter of Delphians to meet in the home of Mrs. A.M. Collier at Third and Pine Streets, at 1:45 o’clock. Topic of the afternoon will be “Period Revivals Through Mass Production.”

Again, on Tuesday, May 12, notice the last meeting of the year was published, a luncheon “at the home of Mrs. Twyla Ferguson. Topics of study to be: ‘The New American Home,’ and ‘Landscape Gardening.’ Election of officers will follow.”
How long the Delphians continued as a viable organization in the Klamath County area wasn't discovered in the search for information about it. It is known that a few chapters still exist elsewhere. In e-mail correspondence with a chapter in Houston, Texas, they provided the information that the national Society closed in 1980, but they have 13 chapters in Houston that are still active fundraising for scholarships. They are aware that there is another chapter in Galveston.

In Oregon, in the observance of the 100th birthday of Barbara Peck, a Forest Grove resident, a story by Ryan Frank was published in The Oregonian Feb. 22, 2009, citing her many accomplishments. One of those feats was leading the Delphian Society women's group to raise $100,000 to save the Pittock Mansion, an important Portland landmark, in 1964.

Google searches did not reveal any chapters still active in this state.

Other groups that advance the knowledge and education of women probably supplanted this early effort. Nevertheless, a debt of gratitude is owed to those women who broadened the scope of the knowledge their world beyond the rough-and-tumble early days of Klamath country.

The Klamath County Historical Society wishes to thank the Shaw Library, Klamath County Library, and the Klamath County Museum for their assistance in this research.

Special thanks to our guest writer, Lee Beach, for her story on The Delphian Society. While KCHS officers were going through our old files at the museum, we discovered records and books from that Society. Since none of us knew about it, Lee graciously did the research and wrote the above article.

Upcoming Events

June 20: Tour of Tulelake Segregation Camp and Camp Tulelake

June 21: Living History Day at Collier State Park

July 17 & 18: Malin Centennial

July 23: Annual Society Pot-luck Picnic

September 17: KCHS meeting; Richard Smith: The History of Klamath Brick and Tile

October 22: KCHS meeting; Cliff Ambers: The Travels of John C. Fremont

November: Holiday Pot Luck, TBA
Annual KCHS Tour

June 20: Tour to Tulelake Segregation Center and Camp Tulelake

The annual KCHS tour will be addressing the segregation of West Coast Japanese people during WWII starting at Camp Tulelake, the old CCC Camp, followed by a Power-point presentation at the Tulelake-Butte Valley Fairgrounds and a tour of the jail at the Tulelake Segregation Center at Newell. This tour will be led by an interpreter from the National Park Service.

Transportation for the tour will be by bus provided by Pelican Charters. Bus tour participants must be signed up at the Klamath County Museum and pay a fee of $5.00, no others will be allowed on the bus. Private vehicles may follow the bus. We will meet at 9:00 AM in the parking area of the Klamath County Fairgrounds near the Senior Center. Bring your own lunch and extra water; wear comfortable shoes for walking and appropriate clothing for the day.

Gayle Yamasaki, who spoke at our April meeting, will be joining us on the tour. Gayle is looking for contacts with people who may have had any connection with the camps, be it living or working there or any other association. Her contact e-mail is americawestfoundation@gmail.com

Annual KCHS Picnic

July 23: The annual pot-luck picnic will be held at 6:00PM at Phyllis and Paul Goebel’s cabin on the Williamson River. KCHS will provide a ham and drinks. Bring a dish of your choice to share. Bring your own chairs and table service, mosquito repellent and a jacket.

Directions to the picnic: Take Hwy 97 north to end of lake, turn left on to Modoc Point Rd. for 5.4 miles to Williamson River Store. Turn right onto the gravel road, River Drive, across from the store. At the T in the road turn left toward the river. The house is gold with a carport and pickup camper in the yard, 32604 Rivers Drive, there will be balloons by the gate. Feel free to come early and bring your fishing pole. Call 541-892-7828 if you have any problems or need further information.
Klamath County Historical Society

Meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of the month, with some exceptions. See schedule or call 883-4208. We meet at the Klamath County Museum meeting room, 1451 Main St., Klamath Falls, Spring St. entrance. For more information call the museum.

2009
Meetings
June Tour
July Potluck
September 17 - 7 PM
October 22 - 7 PM
November Potluck

KCHS Officers
Co-Presidents: Sue Fortune & Carol Mattos
Secretary: Phyllis Goebel
Treasurer: Avis Kielsmeier
Board Members:
Mae Rutherford
Gary Mattos
John Fortune, Past Pres.

Dues
Dues are due at the end of each year. If you look on your mailing label, you will see an entry above your name. A date entered indicates you are paid through that year. Initials indicate you are receiving a complimentary issue or are a Life Member. If there is no entry, you either haven’t paid for a while or we are sending you a complimentary issue, hoping you will become a member.

Membership Information
Individual Member: $10.00/yr.
Supporting Member: $25.00/yr.
Life Member: $100.00

Make dues payable to: Klamath County Historical Society and mail to or drop off at:
Klamath County Museum
1451 Main Street
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

If you would like to be notified of meetings and other happenings by email, please send your address to klochiso@yahoo.com

If you would like to be on the Klamath County Museum's email list to receive the newsletter "The Midge", send your request to: midge@co.klamath.or.us