



VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Story of Virginia

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Woman's Club of Petersburg Deposits Organizational Records at Virginia Historical Society During Women's History Month 100+ Documents Date to 1917 and Will Eventually Be Available for Research

Richmond, VA—On Tuesday, March 26, 2013, three representatives from The Woman's Club of Petersburg traveled to the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) in Richmond to deliver two medium-sized plastic boxes. The containers held more than 100 items dating back as early as 1917 that document meetings, activities, and leaders of the one-hundred-and-sixty-year-old organization.

Petersburg resident Kay Freeman, the current Woman's Club president, Chester resident Marylou Cumby, a current member and a past president, and Colonial Heights resident Mary Ellen Anderson, a current member and the immediate past president, pulled minutes, yearbooks, newspaper clippings, reports, and other materials from the containers to show VHS Vice President for Collections Lee Shepard what documents would be deposited at the society.

"Until now, the organization's records have bounced from house to house as presidents changed," said Freeman. "We are an aging club. We didn't want all of the history and documents of the group to get lost in someone's attic or basement."

According to Freeman, The Woman's Club of Petersburg, established in 1897, is one of the oldest woman's clubs in Virginia that still regularly meets. It was established to "enrich minds" by "promoting the social, educational and cultural advancement of its members." According to a document in the collection, club programs have centered on literature, travel, art, music, international and national affairs, and "timely and timeless subjects."

In the early 20th century, the group helped establish the Petersburg Library, the Study Club, and The Petersburg Garden Club. Today The Woman's Club of Petersburg has more than twenty-five active and honorary members.

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In April 2012, the Petersburg club contacted the VHS about housing its collection of documents.

“The records of this club join records of a number of women’s organizations from across the commonwealth,” said Shepard. “This material will help to fill in stories of the intellectual and social lives of women in the 20th century. The delivery and deposit couldn’t have come at a more appropriate time than during Women’s History Month.”

Once VHS archivists have processed the collection, the documents will be made available for research in the society’s library.

“We know that these papers will be preserved and safe within the VHS walls,” said Freeman. “But when we were looking for a keeper for the materials, we also wanted to be sure that our members, past and current, as well as the community could have access to the records.”

“The oldest yearbook we could find was 1917,” Cumby added. “Hopefully letting the community know that the materials are now at the VHS will get people looking for documents related to The Woman’s Club of Petersburg that family members might have put in boxes. If we find new items to add to this collection, it could fill in some holes from those earlier years.”

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For more than 180 years, the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) has been connecting people to America’s past through the unparalleled story of Virginia. The VHS—a history museum and research library—features award-winning exhibitions that are entertaining and educational for visitors of all ages. The Society is the only museum with all of Virginia’s history under one roof—all centuries, all regions, and all topics are covered. Although designated the Official State Historical Society, the VHS is a privately funded non-profit organization that relies on contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations to sustain its operations. The VHS is located at 428 North Boulevard in Richmond’s Museum District. Admission is free. Museum hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m.–5 p.m. Library hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. For more information, call (804) 358-4901, visit www.vahistorical.org, or find the VHS on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

