

California VF
July 10, 1969

EBELL HIGHLIGHTS

The story of the building of a Clubhouse tells the character, the significance, the taste of a group of women, as a home expresses something of these things for the family that dwells therein.

In 1924 the present Clubhouse was started. Construction was finished in 1927 and in February the ceremony of laying the corner-stone occurred.

A former Ebell President, Mrs. Grantland Seaton Long, who so elegantly furnished the interior of the Clubhouse, when it was finished, paid such meticulous attention to details that even the hundreds of chairs which are still used daily were designed so that purses could be hung on the chair backs.

The artistic Clubhouse effects are remarkable. A world famous artist was brought from abroad to do the beautiful ceilings. It seems a miracle that 42 years after the Clubhouse was completed it is still spacious and perfectly arranged for modern usage. The tremendous vision of Mrs. William Read, the building President, relative to the future growth of Los Angeles can easily be realized in the choice of property "out in the Country" when there was as yet no Wilshire Boulevard plus the practical design of the building.

The architect for the magnificent Ebell edifice was Sumner P. Hunt, whose wife had been President of Ebell at a former location. A mortgage of \$750,000 plus \$360,000 in interest was paid off in a 20 year period of time by the enthusiastic work of members. Ebell was the only Southern California Club (and perhaps the only one in the State) which never defaulted on a mortgage payment during wars and depressions, never asked for concessions from bankers, extended time or waivers. When Ebell was purchasing an expensive lot on Wilshire Boulevard for parking purposes and Board members timidly visited the bank, the banker said "Ebell has the best credit of any Club in the State. No collateral is necessary." In the mid-forties one administration, in two years raised the \$100,000 due to erase all building debts. \$45,000 was paid the first year and \$55,000 the second. The Governor, Mayor, Bank President, President of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and other dignitaries attended the mortgage burning ceremony.

Ebell is often referred to as the largest Women's Club in the world. We members like to think of it as the most beautiful Club in the world. It is with some trepidation that we evaluate the future tax and financial pressures the Club is facing in order to continue to keep the doors open.

The Club motto is: "I will find a way or make one" and "I serve."

Ebell's objectives have always been the advancement of cultural, social and educational interests plus various philanthropies.

Every Monday in our auditorium which seats around 1,300 people we hold our Assembly membership meetings and over the years have presented the great personalities from all over the world, famous Statesmen, Ambassadors, Members of Royalty, great Authors, Corporation heads, etc.

Ever since the first meeting in 1894 tea has always been served following meetings. This traditional gesture continues to please members and contribute to the Club's charm.

Today, Ebell has 14 departments, namely: Applied Design, Art and Travel, Bible Literature, Book Chamber, California History, Choral, Creative Writing, French, Garden, Music, Poetry and Literature, Psychology, Public Affairs and Spanish, Plus three workshops: Creative Writing, Applied Design and the Artist's workshop.

The Club continues to contribute to all Civic fund raising drives, the "Juniors" (whose original membership stemmed from daughters or granddaughters of members) make tapes for the Junior Blind and give "Honor Parties" at Juvenile Hall for good behavior.

In 1917 Ebell established its Ebell Rest Cottage which is one of the two main Club philanthropies. In 1923 this project was moved to its current location where over the years thousands of career women have been invited guests during their period of rehabilitation, so that they may regain the strength in pleasant surroundings that will enable them to return to their employment.

Ebell maintains an average of 50 free annual Scholarships of \$750 each.

Ebell established the First Red Cross unit in Los Angeles, and the largest. In six years following World War I, records show that Ebell members contributed in excess of 300,000 hours to Red Cross production alone, in addition to maintaining the Needlework Guild, U. S.O. activities, Community Chest and other civic endeavors.

Ebell's war record was most impressive. In 1918 during the Liberty Loan drive, Ebell members subscribed to \$195,000 in government bonds and in four subsequent drives invested a total of \$555,700 in bonds. The Club itself also bought several thousand dollars worth of bonds.

On the 25th Anniversary, in 1919, Secretary of the Navy Daniels and Mrs. Daniels accompanied by top Officers of the Pacific Fleet came to Ebell to speak words of commendation. Ebell was the only Women's Club that contributed to the city's fund for its celebration and welcome to the Fleet which, for the first time, was sent to guard Pacific Coast defenses.

During the 50th Birthday Anniversary in 1944 Dr. Frederic Woellner, one of the distinguished speakers present said, "Ebell is the Oasis of Los Angeles."

Ebell was designated by the Los Angeles Civil Defense Department as the Air Raid Shelter for the Wilshire District, a few years ago, on the premise that it is the safest building and best constructed in the area.

Our current Clubhouse is our seventh location. In September of 1894 the Ebell of Los Angeles first organized in the parlor of Misses Emmie and Alice Parsons at 1025 S. Olive Street, Los Angeles. In two years the membership outgrew this parlor.

A move was made to the lower floor of Ex-Governor Downey's home opposite St. Vibiana's Cathedral on Main Street. This brick house was surrounded by a garden. The building was sold for a profit.

The members then moved the Club to a flat at Flower and Eleventh Streets which was soon deemed to be too far out of town. The building was sold.

Mrs. Robert J. Burdette, Ebell's second President financed a building located at 724 South Broadway which was the first building in Los Angeles to ever be used exclusively as a Women's Club.

In 1897 the Club moved to Cumnock Hall at 1500 South Figueroa Street.

From 1905 to 1927 Ebell's Clubhouse was located on property it purchased at 1719 S. Figueroa Street.

Ebell prospered each time real estate was sold and a move was made. In 1922, on the advise of Mrs. Grantland Seaton Long, then President and the former Chairman of the Building Committee which was established in 1902, a valuable lot on Wilshire Boulevard and Shatto Place was purchased. This, too, increased so rapidly in value that building was postponed, the lot sold and the present building site acquired.

In its 75 years of history Ebell continues to be a great credit to Los Angeles and California. Its numerous accomplishments would fill many books and the list of organizations which have received sizable donations both in time and money from Ebell is unbelievably large and outstanding.

It is with prayers in our hearts that we members dream that 25 years from now, our wonderful Club will still be an asset to Los Angeles and celebrating its 100th Anniversary.