

Woman's Club of Kensington

April 2001

(Kensington has the distinction of being home to two longstanding women's organizations that bring community members together for friendship, learning, and community service. In past newsletters, we featured one of these clubs, the Woman's Community Club of Kensington. In this issue, we are pleased to share some of the history of the club that is now in its second century and, even more remarkably, is Montgomery County's first women's club. On the Community Activities page of Gary Ditto's Web site, you'll find more, as well as photos of beautiful quilts created by club members.)

In October 1999, celebration and memories filled the Kensington Community Center as members and friends of the Woman's Club of Kensington honored the organization's first 100 years. On display were a spectacular quilt commemorating women's history and accomplishments in Maryland, as well as photos and writings recalling the many people and service activities of Montgomery County's first women's club.

Known to many as "the little club," the Woman's Club of Kensington is also the second oldest women's club in Maryland. Both the "little club" and the newer organization are part of the Maryland Federation of Woman's Clubs.

A charming history by Anna H. Farrell and Marion M. Corddry opens with Marion's comment that "It is quite remarkable that a little band of Victorian ladies could carry their influence from the end of the 19th century to the end of the 20th. But it has happened, and the annually-elected historians duly recorded years when not much happened as well as when great events occurred."

"The Kensington club has been shaped but not hemmed in by the founders' ideals and organization," she continues. "On the contrary, what was established for us was a set of enlightened guidelines. While meetings have become more informal, club purposes remain steadfast and the term 'mutual improvement' recurs..." The 100th Anniversary Program tells the story as follows:

"On October 20, 1899, a handful of Victorian ladies gathered in Kensington to plan a mutual improvement organization for women.

Membership was limited to 30, a manageable number for meeting in homes. Having obtained their husbands' permission to join, this band of activists set out to learn about their world, to improve their community, and to possibly even vote in real elections."