



## [Study Club Records.](#)

### **Copyright Notice:**

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit [www.mnhs.org/copyright](http://www.mnhs.org/copyright).

See Jan 29, 1974 memo

## THE STUDY CLUB

As I seem to be the only person still alive and well who attended the first meeting of the Study Club in October of 1913, I shall try to tell you something about those early days and how the idea of a study club came into being.

In the summer of 1912 a few of us ex-debutantes were discussing the fact that our lives seemed quite useless and only occupied with pink teas and formal luncheons, usually given by one of the grandes-dames of Minneapolis in our honor. For these occasions we were dressed in long satin or broadcloth dresses with huge black hats that seemed to be flowing with ostrich plumes. In the dining room the curtains were drawn, and we sat formally at a much decorated table with bonbons to match the pink paper baskets filled with nuts. The room was lighted only by candles. These luncheons gave us no outlet for our intellectual aspirations and when we attempted social work we were not accepted by the professionslas. We decided, Therefore, to change our life style, so a small group of us organized a club to study art, literature and politics. There were ohly eight of us:

Lelia Winston (Yerxa)  
Dolly Winston (Franchot)  
Grace Townsend ( Partridge)  
Ella Sage (Little)  
Mary Rand  
Harriet Loring (Ward)  
Margaret Jackson (Bovey)  
Myself

We were all very serious-minded and conscious of the necessity to acquire culture and learning, all except Mary Rand, who had a keen sense of humor and seemed to find our little group most amusing. Our organization did not last more than a few months as Mary's humor was distracting, then one of us was married, another had a baby and still another went out of town, so with no regrets our attempt at culture dissolved. The following year Henriette Tierney had married Sumner McKnight and had come to Minneapolis to live. She was soon complaining of the same situation that we had discussed the year before. I told her that the reason for our demise was that we did not have a leader to inspire us and to maintain discipline. Henriette had a brilliant idea. She suggested that we ask Aunt Nora, Mrs. George H. Christian, to be our leader. This we did immediately. Mrs. Christian was flattered by

our request but she did not have the time to give us. She suggested that we ask the perfect person, Mrs. Alice Ames Winter, and in order to persuade her to guide us in our worthwhile project Mrs. Christian would invite Mrs. Winter and ten young women of our choice to have lunch with her at her home on 10th Street. None of us had known Mrs. Winter before, and she impressed and awed us. In appearance she was a typical club woman of the day. She paid no attention to her figure but apparently took great interest in her clothes. She did not have many clothes, but those she did have were carefully selected with a view to watching colors and having outfits that would enhance her dignity and prominence at public functions. She wore a purple dress and purple high-heeled shoes at Mrs. Christian's luncheon and at most meetings thereafter. Her hat was high and profusely decorated with flowers, birds and velvet ribbon.

I sat next to Mrs. Winter and I do not remember much of our esoteric conversation except that she confided in me that she was a mystic and persuaded me that everyone should strive to be one. After looking it up in the dictionary when I got home, I decided that I would

wait a few years before aspiring to be a mystic. I could not help wondering how her purple shoes and mystical mysticism would fit into Hollywood where she had been invited to censor movies.

After lunch we adjourned to the living room where Henriette McKnight reminded us that this was an important charter meeting and that she would take the minutes, which unfortunately have been lost. However, I do remember that we decided to meet at the Woman's Club and to enlarge our group at the next meeting.

The second meeting was held at the Women's Club, and we sat in stiff chairs in a semi-circle and new members were unanimously voted in. Their names I have forgotten but I do remember that we had two out-of-town members, one of whom was Susan Christian Brown who lived in Wayzata, which at that time was definitely out-of-town to us. The other was Anne Turney White of St. Paul. But shortly afterwards we voted that we would have no St. Paul members. Consequently, she resigned and started a study club in St. Paul, but they had no Mrs. Winter so broke up after a few meetings.

Mrs. Winter spoke at that second meeting on her favorite subject "The Smoke Nuisance". I had never realized that smoke coming out of our nice little chimneys was causing such havoc. and I remember walking home on First Avenue and looking at the chimneys with added interest and affection for fear that Mrs. Winter would have them all removed.

I was assigned a subject for the next meeting. In the minutes of that meeting it was written that I "addressed the meeting on the subject of politics". My subject included a bill before the Congress on currency, a bill giving independence to the Phillipines, and the situation in Mexico. At the third meeting, after my addressing the Club, these subjects were discussed and then we read aloud Miss Adams' book "Democracy and Social Ethics". Mrs. Winter announced that the class should finish the book at home and also read "The Spirit of Spiritual Unrest" by Roy Baker to be discussed at the next meeting.

We apparently continued this type of program through that year, but in the spring Mrs. Winter announced quite forcibly there should be no reading of

any kind at the Study Club, that each of us should give a 45-minute topic, speaking it with no notes, and then the topic should be discussed during the final fifteen minutes. This plan of doing topics continued for over thirty years, and I am sure if Mrs. Winter had remained with us we would be doing topics today. I am glad to remind you of the powerful leadership of Mrs. Winter because we never showed her sufficient appreciation.

As I remember, we sent her flowers at Christmas-time, and that caused a heated discussion since some of our members thought we should pay for the gift from our treasury. However, we had not yet decided on the amount of our dues so the treasury had only a few dimes which had been paid as fines by tardy members. Others of us thought we should contribute 50¢ toward the gift. I have forgotten how this matter was finally decided, but I am happy to say we did send Mrs. Winter flowers.

Eleanor L. Peabody

October 7, 1976.