



Know Your Organization

MISSION STATEMENT

The General Federation of Women's Clubs is an international organization dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service.

GFWC FOUNDING

GFWC's roots can be traced back to 1868, when professional journalist Jane Cunningham Croly of New York City, attempted to attend a lecture by novelist Charles Dickens at an all-male press club. Denied entrance on account of her gender, "Jennie June" formed a woman's club, naming it *Sorosis*, a Greek word meaning "an aggregation; a sweet flavor of many fruits."

In celebration of its 21st anniversary in 1889, *Sorosis* members proposed a conference of women's clubs to pursue the cause of federation. That conference was held in New York City on March 20, 1889, with the goal of preparing a constitution for ratification the following year. Clubs that had already applied for membership in the new General Federation of Women's Clubs were invited to the ratification convention, which was held at the Scottish Rite Hall in New York City, April 23-25, 1890. Sixty-three delegates from 17 states attended. After some discussion and amendments, the constitution was ratified on April 24, which GFWC members continue to celebrate as Federation Day.

"UNITY IN DIVERSITY" MOTTO

Ella Dietz Clymer gained a particular place of honor in Federation history as the author of the GFWC motto, "Unity in Diversity." Speaking to the delegates at the first Federation conference in 1889, she said, "We look for unity, but unity in diversity. We hope that you will enrich us by your varied experiences..." The aptness of the motto is evident in the diverse interests and talents of GFWC members, who have implemented a broad range of programs and projects tailored to meet the needs of their communities. Adopted as the official motto in 1957, "Unity in Diversity" set the tone for the flexibility that has enabled GFWC to grow and adapt to the changing lifestyles and concerns of women throughout more than a century of volunteer work.

HISTORY OF THE EMBLEM

At the first GFWC Convention in 1892, Dr. Leila G. Bedell of the Chicago Woman's Club (Ill.) recommended that the Federation design a "simple little badge pin" for GFWC members to purchase and wear for identification. In May 1893, GFWC President Charlotte Emerson Brown and Jane Cunningham Croly reported that a light blue, signifying constancy, was chosen as the official Federation Color. The pin design featured a Federation blue background behind a rising sun, with the motto "Unity in Diversity" inscribed on a terra cotta banner beneath.

In 1920, GFWC President Alice Ames Winter felt the rising sun symbol was no longer appropriate, that after 30 years of progress, GFWC could acknowledge that "the sun had risen." She recommended that the Federation create a new design that more accurately represented a mature organization. Within the year, GFWC approved Douglas Donaldson's new design, whose central feature is a crusader's shield, signifying enlightenment, emerging from a black center, representing a darkened world. The white band encircling the shield signifies eternity, and is inscribed with the letters "GFWC" and the motto "Unity in Diversity."