

**THE CONTEMPORARY CLUB  
OF INDIANAPOLIS**

**A HISTORY**

**THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS (1890-1940)**

**Golden Memories  
As I Remember**

**THE THIRD QUARTER-CENTURY (1890-1965)**

**THE CENTURY MARK (1965-1989)**

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**CHARTER MEMBERS**

**PAST OFFICERS**

## THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS 1890 – 1940

Mrs. May Wright Sewall, on North Pennsylvania Street. The apartments were tastefully embellished with bowls of flowers, which gave a festival appearance to the gathering. The club has about 140 members and includes men and women. The members who attended last night were numerous, and were received by the committee of entertainment, Mr. T. L. Sewall, Mr. W. P. Fishback, Mr. George T. Porter and Miss Julia H. Moore. After all had been welcomed, the club was called to order by Mrs. Sewall, who set forth its purposes. She then introduced Prof. John M. Coulter, of Wabash College, who read an interesting paper on 'The Physical Basis of Life.' The club proposes to hold its meetings the fourth Wednesday in each month, and the programme is to be arranged by the executive committee, of which Mr. A. L. Mason is chairman." Such is the account given in the Indianapolis Journal, September 25, 1890, of the first formal meeting of the club.

Organization of the club had been effected during the preceding months. A constitution had been adopted June 27th and officers had been selected by the 38 charter members.

The Contemporary Club was conceived, promoted, and guided during its early years by Mrs. May Wright Sewall, as were so many of the cultural and civic organizations of the city during the years of Mr. and Mrs. Sewall's residence here. In 1913, in a letter, Mrs. Sewall told of the beginnings of the club:

"In the late spring of 1890, on the personal invitation of my husband and myself, a small company of men and women who, among our friends, seemed best to unite intellectual order and the clubable personality, convened at our home to consider they knew not what, for the object of the gathering had not been thus indicated.

"I had not ventured to let anyone but my husband know that a new club had been born in my brain, for already clubs were so numerous in Indianapolis and of such variety that a proposition to limit would have seemed more reasonable than one to increase this form of mental co-operation. However, the second sentence in the constitution of the Contemporary Club indicates the essential something not provided by the existing clubs, viz.: 'Its membership shall be open to men and women on equal terms.'

"Prior to this the only opportunity that the women of our city had to hear men talk their best was on the 'ladies night' of 'the Gentlemen's Literary Club,' and we were always assured that 'ladies night' were relatively dull nights, that the members were hindered from talking their best by the embarrassment occasioned by the infrequent presence of ladies or by the chivalrous consideration of our feebleness, which restrained them from exhibiting a brilliance which would have been dazzling and fatiguing to their guests.

"In a desire to have one place where men and women should associate on equal terms, and also (as the next sentence of the constitution indicates) to have one place where there should be no excluded subjects, no forbidden ground-in these two desires,

very strongly felt by one person and very completely shared by that person's husband, the Contemporary Club had its origin.

"The spring and summer were consumed in framing its constitution, gathering its first membership and electing its officers. This was the summer that the Propylaeum was building and it had been decided that the Contemporary Club should hold its meetings there, but until its completion the Contemporary Club met in our drawing room-indeed, held its first four meetings in what our friends called "Sewall House." The Contemporary Club was the first tenant of the Propylaeum and in this role opened its career by a very brilliant meeting, addressed by Dr. David Swing. The meeting is as memorable for some sparring between General Lew Wallace and Mr. Fishback as for the eloquence of the clerical heretic."

Through the 50 years of its existence the club has brought for its members, and for their friends at the annual guest meetings held for many years now, outstanding speakers in all fields: literature, art, international affairs, science, exploration, economics. The discussions and questions following the lectures have, as at that first meeting in the old Propylaeum, often been equally outstanding and memorable.

The members recall with pleasure too the social hours following. During the early years the refreshments were lavish and the hostess committee welcomed members in a receiving line upon arrival. In the war period and for some years following, the club did not serve refreshments, but in recent years we have returned to this pleasant custom, though in more simple form. The old Propylaeum building is gone and for many years now we have met at the John Herron Art Institute, and more recently in the War Memorial or the American Central Life Insurance building.

The older members look back upon years of stimulating and interesting lectures and pleasant association; and older and younger look forward in this 50th anniversary year to a worthy continuation of the Contemporary Club in the decades to come.

## Golden Memories

By *Charlotte Jones Dunn*

Little did I dream, when on a pleasant spring evening some 48 years ago—in 1892 to be exact—I walked down Pennsylvania Street and across North Street to the then new Propylaeum (you know we walked in those days, or rode in the street cars, or when the weather was very bad or the distance very great, we had a taxi from Horace Woods)—little did I dream, I repeat, that one day, in another century, I should stand before an invention such as this, to talk about "the early years of the Contemporary Club."

On that evening I was a very happy and elated young person, for had I not just been elected a member of this distinguished new group of seekers for truth and culture and enlightenment upon the problems of the world? And was I not perhaps the youngest member? For I did not "marry into" the Contemporary but was regularly and duly elected, though I must confess that the fact that I was Mrs. Sewall's secretary at the time - Mrs. May Wright Sewall - and also engaged to a Board member, may have had something to do with my elevation! I did not feel a stranger for had I not addressed the monthly cards all winter, for Mrs. Sewall, who was the secretary? And had I not also served tea, quite often, to the distinguished speaker, at Mrs. Sewall's weekly Wednesday-at-home? You may recall, or have heard, that the meetings were to have been held on Wednesday, and the lion of the month was usually lured to Mrs. Sewall's for at least an hour during the afternoon.

The early meetings of the Contemporary, as you know, were held in Mr. and Mrs. Sewall's drawing room, where the club was organized. Their home was on the corner of Pennsylvania and Walnut Streets, now the Lincoln Chiropractic College. With the completion and gala opening of the Propylaeum [at 17 E. North Street] in January 1891, the Contemporary became one of the tenants of the new meeting place, so long needed.

To return to that spring evening, we entered through the basement door, left our light wraps on that floor, and proceeded upstairs. At the door of the east parlor, we were received by the chairman of the reception committee and passed along a line of six or more, quite formally, yet with friendly hospitality. The committee were in evening dress, as were most of the members. I cannot recall that our names were ever announced, as stated in a recent newspaper.

As we came through the hall - and I may explain here that "we" means Miss Nora Farquhar, our much loved neighbor, and myself, for Mr. Dunn was out of town, and so unable to escort me - we had glimpses of a table in the west parlor set with shining linen and flowers and silver, from which, later in the evening, refreshments were served.

But all this has been very material. What of the cultural side? As I have read over the list of speakers and the subjects they discussed, I am shocked because of the number I do not remember at all! Of course, I recall, and I fear it, only those of lighter touch and theme: James Lane Allen; John Fox, Jr.; [the Reverend Samuel] Crothers of Boston, with his delightful, whimsical humor; [naturalist William] Beebe, others too. But the various historians, economists, philosophers, religionists who came from afar, are names only. Perhaps I couldn't attend, the nights they spoke!

But I must tell about the great night when Henry James was the speaker. Being a guest evening, the meeting was held in the large assembly hall. The stage, at the east end, was very high, excellent for an orchestra for a dance, but not so good for a speaker. The floor had no slope, the chairs were none too comfortable, so if you sat anywhere near the front, very soon you had a pain in your neck from looking up to see the speaker's face. And if you sat toward the rear - Mr. James' style was involved, difficult enough to read, more difficult to follow spoken, his accent a cultured Boston-British one - you had your difficulties. But it was a noteworthy occasion!

The Columbian Exposition, in Chicago in 1893, brought many distinguished and notable foreigners to the Middle West, and, as Mrs. Sewall was a member of the Board of Lady Managers, she was in a position to bring many to speak before the Contemporary. Two of these were especially delightful to me - May French Sheldon, who was one of the first women explorers in Africa and therefore rather unusual, and Captain Magnus Anderson, who piloted the three Viking ships from Norway, to finally anchor them in Lake Michigan.

I must add a word about the discussions which followed the address of the evening. A breadth of knowledge, a quickness of thought and speech, and often much humor and clever repartee were shown by the club members. The speaker was frequently our prisoner and startled and put upon his mettle to reply in kind.

Those were "the good old days" perhaps, but that I am here tonight, still a loyal "Contemporary-ite" suggests that all the years of the Contemporary have been interesting and worthwhile and that the club has justified the faith and hope of its founder.

*These reminiscences were presented at the Contemporary Club's 50th anniversary dinner in 1940 by Charlotte Jones Dunn, who, as young woman, had been May Wright Sewall's secretary and who later married the Indiana historian, Jacob Piatt Dunn.*

## As I Remember

By May Louise Shipp

As a member of the Contemporary Club for more than 25 years, once its president, and many times a member of the executive committee, the present writer has recollections in regard to speakers and entertainers modified by little happenings attendant upon their presence which have not always to do with the question of merit—something to do, however, with the life of the club. The *why* of one's most vivid memories, the picking out of this person or that person from the long list of entertainers, is hard to seek, a mystery for psychologists to solve.

An odd thing, one's recalling the changing color in the ruddy face of William Allen White as he spoke - he was young then - in his sensitive reaction to his own thought and to questions asked him, and remembering not at all the substance of what he said! Why forget the greatly valued address of Woodrow Wilson and recall, for instance, the picture of George Ade, balancing a plate of oysters in one hand, and listening to a shy and attractive debutante who was imploring him for an autograph! It was her deepest wish she said, to collect the autographs of famous men and to do it alphabetically. Beseechingly she held out to him a minute brown book without a single signature. "Beginning with A?" he asked quizzically, putting down his plate, and wrote "*Yours sincerely, Aid i.e. George Ade.*"

The meetings of the Contemporary Club before and after the World War were divided by a considerable difference of procedure. Pre-war meetings were marked by a sort of festive formality. A reception committee of five or six greeted the arriving members; evening clothes were worn; the flowers furnished by Bertermann were profuse; and, after the address, a two or three course supper was served by "Mary" or "Kitty" or "Belle" or whomsoever the reigning dusky cateress might be. This sort of thing was out of tune with the gravity of the time when war came on, and was abolished. The club gained a brisker quality perhaps by the change but lost something too, mainly a tendency to linger in talk a long time over and after the good supper, an opportunity for informal acquaintance with the speaker of the evening. There was in this era of good suppers a kind of camaraderie between speaker and audience that in some measure departed after the war.

The more intimate quality of the club of those days was enhanced by the fact that it had in the old Propylaeum, a *home*, not just a meeting place. Sometimes it met in the east parlor and sometimes in the west parlor and, on guest nights, it had only to move upstairs to the ballroom; but always in whatever part of the building the meeting convened, the place was familiar as an old shoe. Why shouldn't it be? One went to the Propylaeum for so many purposes—for dances, receptions, committee meetings, club meetings of a dozen sorts.

In spite, however, of this much appreciated atmosphere, the old Propylaeum had its inconveniences. In connection with the visit of Beatrice Herford there comes back to the writer a poignant memory of the draughty hall or lobby between the east and

west rooms. One wintry cold night the swinging entrance doors kept battling back and forth, letting in with each swing an icy blast as the executive committee waited in the hall with Miss Herford for the return of one of its members from a strange errand. The design of the committee had been to present the performer with her highly figured check-for she was an expensive lady-at the close of her performance, a neat envelope pressed into her hand with the good-byes. But Miss Herford demanded pay before entering the audience room, and demanded cash, and she would not "utter" before she had it.

Out into the windy night went the victim from the committee while its other members shivered and shuddered for a full half hour, waiting his return with the money. The memory of the writer dwells upon the rosy healthy appearance of Miss Herford - in a ball gown, too -apparently impervious to cold, and the on-the-verge-of-pneumonia aspect of those standing about her. We wondered where her money was to come from as the banks were all closed but when, at last, the messenger came back with the currency we did not dare to ask whether he had broken into a bank or committed murder to get it.

Where the amenities are concerned, it is taken for granted-at least, by citizens of the East-that inhabitants of the Middle West are inferior to those of the Atlantic coast. Perhaps the exception proves the rule, the exception, as regards the Contemporary Club, being Josephine Dodge Daskam who arrived on the date set for her appearance in time for tea with the executive committee at the house of her hostess. Someone introduced the subject of Midwestern writers, hoping to make her feel at home in a strange land; and, one by one, in a brittle yet fascinating manner, she disposed of Hoosier claims in the field of writing. A dig in the ribs for Meredith Nicholson, a smart stab in the back for Booth Tarkington! Mr. Riley was uninjured but lower lights were dimmed. It took one's breath away. In Indianapolis the social rule for reference to the creator of *Beaucaire*, and to the author of the *House of a Thousand Candles* was almost monotonously uniform. The mere mention of their names at any gathering had been the signal for a praise meeting. Now, however, the entire pleasant structure of Indiana literature - its fictional wing, its poetical section, its philosophical bays jutting out into free air - was demolished. It lay in ruins at the attractive feet of Miss Daskam.

If this exhibition was shocking, it was also exciting, a little exhilarating, and, in the interim between tea and the evening's entertainment, the tea-drinkers telephoned their friends on no account to miss what was coming, with the result that the largest audience of the season that night waited for the appearance of "the Daskam." They waited a long time. It was nearly half an hour after the scheduled time before she appeared, manuscript in hand and radiant in an evening gown of some thin stuff, in color of an unforgettable deep blue. She was a vision of vitality and style; and, with her first paragraph she felled the commonalty before her as she had in the afternoon mowed down its artists. Without preface, she began: "I shall read an unpublished manuscript not before presented to any audience. I'll just try it on the dog." The attractive performance which followed was needed to blot out the memory of this startling opening.

One of the most vivid memories of the writer concerns John Fox, Jr., the author of a novel or two, and of short stories concerning the life of ignorant people in the hills of Kentucky. Writing was however a side issue with him as he was an engineer by

profession. The executive committee engaged him through an agency but, his date almost arrived and hearing nothing from him, followed up with a note of inquiry sent to his Kentucky address. On the date preceding that on which he was scheduled to appear, a wire from West Virginia, where he was doing a job of surveying, informed us that the lecture bureau had never apprized him of the engagement, that he would, by the "skin of his teeth and the grace of God" be on hand for both the lecture and the tea with the executive committee at the house of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Griffiths.

Straight from the train came the author of *The Kentuckians* and, in the instant, the good looking young man became one of us. His striped shirt, a bit wilted from the journey, seemed only to add to the informal charm of his manner as he entertained us at that dining table across whose carved and shining surface, for a certain period of years, more wise and brilliant talk perhaps was uttered than over any other in the city of Indianapolis. So engaging was the guest and so engaged, that he had barely time to dress and dine at his hotel before facing his audience.

His subject was "Kentucky Mountaineer Life" and he talked in a vein promoted by the feeling of the afternoon. Absurd to call such a congeries of incident, experience and observation a lecture! It was far too living and spontaneous for such a title. With a sparkling radiance and a gay insouciance, he talked of the genesis of his stories, of the people in the hill country of Kentucky who lived on Hell-fer-Sartain Crick and called their Sunday School the Hell-fer-Sartain Sunday School. When asked about the songs of the mountaineers the future husband of Fritzi Scheff returned: "Like to hear some of them? Perhaps I can do it without a piano." He stood there with his hands in his pockets and trolled off three or four ballads, not embarrassed when he made a mistake but going back, picking up the thing where the fault occurred, his manner rather that of one performing for a small group of friends than for an audience which had, so to speak, paid for their tickets. He smiled after the last light note died away when some one murmured, "Perhaps next year you'll date us for a concert." Perhaps on this night he was inspired by his own quick response to the call of the club, by the effort he had made to reach us. At any rate one of his hearers wondered afterward whether he ever had done, or ever would do, anything better than this evening's performance. When he left, his audience and he were old acquaintances.

War time in the Contemporary Club was marked by an emphasized interest in the programs offered. This was owing partly to the fact that social gatherings were few and prized and it was also because many of the speakers threw light upon the subject nearest our hearts. One remembers the gallant presence of Captain Ian Hay Beith, and one recalls even more vividly Sir John Foster Fraser, not long from sojourn with the British troops. One recalls him singing, "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile." Fresh from the horror of war, he could sing it gladly, like a soldier, but we who had known the horror only by report, could not keep the tears from falling. Another affecting moment in the club's life during this period occurred after the performance of Granville Barker, well known English playwright, when it was announced that he could not stay for the usual question and answer period because he was going to the front, "somewhere in France," and, leaving at once, would barely have time to catch the train which would connect him with the outgoing ship. Emotionally

the audience rose to its feet as he crossed the stage on his way to a war in which men still counted for more than machines.

There were other reasons than those indicated for excitement over the presence in our midst of Mr. Norman Angell, who believed in stating what he thought in war time, all the more when what he thought was opposed to the conventional pattern. Before appearing in Indianapolis, he had been bitterly censured by some of the newspapers in the country, had even been subjected to personal violence. He brought with him to the platform of the Contemporary Club a pale haunted face, an invincible air, and a most reasonable fashion of speaking. But the audience was on edge. It was understood that the crisis in the evening would come when the question and answer period was reached. People gripped their chairs and sat expectant of what never came; for the president, with some skill, warded off the blow by announcing on the close of his speech that the meeting would become informal.

Two occasions in the life of the club stand out as preeminent in the memory of the writer, in each case not only because of the distinction of the speaker but also because of attending circumstances. In 1905, Mr. Henry James returned to America after an absence of more than 25 years. Though he traveled over the country extensively, few places were honored by his presence as a speaker. Indianapolis, through the Contemporary Club, was one of these. There was pride over his presence in the city. The members of the club and their invited friends all wished to hear him but for very different reasons; some because they admired him, some because they did not. The time was that of the feud between the admirers of William Dean Howells and those of Henry James. A partisan preference was taken for granted in the reader of the time, though why, as the two men were dear and intimate friends, it was difficult for a coolly reasoning person to say. An audience which filled the chairs and occupied the standing room of the lecture hall in the old Propylaeum greeted Mr. James who, one of the greatest of our critics, delivered himself of a masterpiece of criticism in "The Lesson of Balzac." He was not a practiced reader. It was difficult to follow him but it is not too much to say that, for those who did, there occurred either a beginning of interest in Balzac or a revival of that feeling. The sales of the French author increased considerably in Indianapolis.

Divided feeling as to the personality of the speaker continued during his visit which lasted for several days. This was noticeable particularly at a small dinner given in his honor and attended by ten or twelve members of the club the night after his address. Side by side at this festivity sat Henry James and James Whitcomb Riley. For the other guests it was the opportunity of a lifetime to observe genius of two sorts, inhabiting two distinct worlds, neither one of the two men having the slightest acquaintance with the world of the other. For the time being, it gave the observer who delighted in the work of both a grateful sense of advantage over either. After the dinner, Mr. Riley was quoted as saying that personal contact with Mr. James had made the task of reading him much less difficult, as his books were simplicity itself in comparison with his conversation.

It was noted at the dinner that along with other oppositions, what amused one of the two had in it nothing mirthful for the other. The conversation turned on the novels of Thomas Hardy, and the writer of these reminiscences remarked that she could not understand why Hardy had given the bright and alluring title, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, to

a novel replete with sadness and tragedy. Mr. Riley expressively countered: "Because he did not wish to break the set." A roar from the table greeted this characteristic bit of Rileyana. But there was not the shadow of a smile on the massive countenance of Henry James. He was not amused. Evidently the quip seemed to him grotesque in answer to a serious question. This incident was repeated in one fashion or another all over the country during the term of Mr. James' visit to America; hence it seems proper to include the true version in the annals of the club. What Mr. James thought of Mr. Riley he might have set down in *The American Scene*, a record of his American visit, but he did not do so. One who had seen them side by side, however, did not need to have it set down in words that there was little community of interest between the distinguished artist of urban life, of international episodes, and the genius of the small town, of life on the farm.

The other occasion to which reference was made seems to the writer the most impressive of those remembered by her. It occurred when, as guests of the Irvington Athenaeum, the members of the Contemporary Club heard an address by President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard University on the subject, "Continuous Education." The meeting was held on an April night in the auditorium of the old Butler College. In the midst of President Eliot's address, a terrible storm arose. The windows were open and the wind rushed through the room like a hurricane. The lightning flared, the thunder roared, and the lights went out. In the darkness, the steady and commanding voice of President Eliot carried on with his great theme, lifting the audience out of the terror of the moment, compelling thought in the mind of the listener as he communicated his own, preparing one for the climax of his reflections when the lights came back and the storm was stilled. This climax was the highly developed theory that the most important avenue of adult and continuous education lies in a direction open to the majority of mankind, in the opportunity afforded almost every one to observe, during his lifetime, four generations - that of his grandparents, that of his parents, that of his own generation, and that of his children. To carry away from a lecture an idea that is to haunt one for life involves a sense of obligation. This sense of obligation-toward the Contemporary Club, alive in other instances for both entertainment and instruction, acts, for the writer, most poignantly and continuously in relation to the address of President Eliot. Now, even more than then, the observation of four generations is an education.

## THE THIRD QUARTER-CENTURY 1940 TO 1965

*By Jane Moore Howe Brown*

There could have been no better name chosen by our founders 75 years ago than that of the Contemporary Club. As you look back on the club's activities for the past 25 years, you realize it has been a mirror of the times. The choice of speakers, their subjects, the changing social mores of the club itself, all reflect the kaleidoscope of world events. Being of the conservative nature, these changes were not abrupt but rather gentle and sometimes accompanied by dragging feet.

One thing that is known to every president and member who has served on the board of directors is that the final program may bear little resemblance to the glowing brochures sent by the lecture bureaus that are so carefully studied by the president and his board.

Some of the most prominent authorities made the poorest speeches and, conversely, some of the little known were the greatest successes. We've also had our temperamental stars.

Major C. Layton Hutton, who in January of 1951 spoke on the "Secrets of the Secret Service," was one of the happy surprises. Here in the country writing a book and glad to pick up a lecture here and there for a small fee, he fascinated the audience with his cloak and dagger tales of England's military espionage.

Hal Holbrook entertained the club in 1957 with his "Evening with Mark Twain." A little known young man, he was transformed by a tousled white wig, flowing mustache, bushy eyebrows and the well known white linen suit, into the famous wit and author. His amusing dialogue, taken from Mark Twain's writings, delighted the club members. A year and half later Holbrook became a nationally known star when he opened at the 41st Street Theater in New York in his one-man show that was a great theatrical success.

Boris Goldovsky, Metropolitan Opera intermission commentator, was so well liked in 1954 with his "The Romance of the Piano," that he was invited back in 1956 to give the second program listed in his repertoire by his booking agent.

This may have had a new title but that was all. Again he told to the same audience the same stories which included the one of his mother, a concert violinist, invited to play before the Queen of Belgium, who made the unfortunate mistake of wearing for the performance the same dress as worn by the Queen.

As for our temperamental guests, in January of 1949 there was Milbourne Christopher, whose guest night performance of "Magic Around the World" did not bring forth the expected reaction and enthusiastic applause that he considered his due. After 20 minutes he stalked off the stage.

It was President John I. Kautz's dubious pleasure to announce to the packed gathering of members and guests in Caleb Mills Hall, "That's all. You can go home now!"

The booking agent sent a free speaker that year, General Leslie R. B. Groves, whose talk on "Future Non-Military Aspects of Nuclear Energy" was so good it smoothed the ruffled feathers of the club's members.

Nor will we forget Emlyn Williams, guest performer in 1953, with his wonderful impersonation of Charles Dickens. His was a lively intermission, too. He found no fault with his reception, only the financial arrangements. He demanded a check for his performance then and there or he would not reappear for the second half of the program. Neither the club's president nor treasurer could be found. Finally, Williams agreed to accept the personal check of a member (and it was a large one) so the show went on.

It was in December of 1940, during the presidency of Samuel R. Harrell, that the Golden Anniversary Dinner celebrating the Contemporary Club's 50th year was held in the Riley Room of the Claypool Hotel.

J. Duncan Spaeth, emeritus professor of English of Princeton University, was the speaker. Others on the program were the late Mrs. Jacob P. Dunn, Charles N. Thompson and Dr. Carleton B. McCulloch, all members of the club.

Although Hitler was on the European rampage, there still was a false calm, a blind hope that life, somehow, might go on as usual. Not only did the president and his dinner party honoring the guest speaker wear dinner clothes, but the club members as well, as always had been the custom.

Contemporary Club night was a popular time for members to entertain at small dinner parties in their homes, for there were still cooks in the kitchens, and this was considered a social event. After the program there was, as is still true today, a social gathering for light refreshments and an opportunity to meet the speaker.

The time did show itself in the choice of speakers. Premier Carl J. Hambro, president of the Norwegian Parliament, then in exile, was the speaker in January, 1941. He told of Norwegian children carrying on their sleds their country's gold bullion, under the very eyes of the occupying German army, to waiting open boats where it was transported to England and Norway's government-in-exile.

The next season of the Contemporary Club, that eventful 1941-42 period, opened with Henry C. Wolfe, internationally decorated author, lecturer, war correspondent and authority on international relations, who spoke on "Germany, Its Economic and Political Flavor."

The rest of the year's program long was planned with Odgen Nash providing wit, Irvin S. Cobb, humor, when that memorable December 7th arrived and with it Pearl Harbor and an end of an era.

The war years brought changes in our country, our way of life, and the ways of the Contemporary Club. Food rationing and the vanishing servant eliminated the pleasant custom of small, home dinner parties; with so many men gone to war and the general difficulties of living there was little heart or purpose for black tie and long dinner dress, although this loss was felt deeply and accepted begrudgingly by many older members. The programs reflected the mood of the times. There was both a desperate desire to be informed on the world's problems and the equally great need for relaxation in war time's limited social life.

Premier Hambro returned to speak on "How to Win the Peace"; foreign correspondent William Henry Chamberlin spoke on our then allies, "Russia Today and Tomorrow." Aviation authority Major Alexander P. deSeversky's subject was "The Airplane and Victory" and that new wartime problem, "Taxes, Prices and Inflation," was knowingly discussed by Dr. Simeon Leland, then chairman of the department of economics of the University of Chicago.

With the end of World War II in the summer of 1945 the Contemporary Club again mirrored the times. It was a period of readjustment, of search for understanding of a once large world now grown surprisingly small.

Owen Lattimore, Orientalist and author, a former political advisor to General Chiang Kai-shek, and from 1942 to 1944 the deputy director of the Pacific Bureau of War Information, spoke in November of 1945 on "Solution in Asia." This was five years before Senator Joseph McCarthy turned the klieg light of national publicity upon Lattimore with his accusations of communist spying.

Prince Peter and Princess Irene of Greece (she is the aunt of the present King Constantine XIII), were the guest night attraction in February, 1948, with their discussion of "Social, Economic and Political Conditions in Greece" and that same year Madam Rajan Nehru spoke on "The Change in India."

Our foreign visitors were not without their humorous sides. The Petrovs, who spoke in February, 1949, on "We Were Russian Slaves" asked President John I. Kautz to show them Indianapolis' slums. Mr. Kautz did his best, checked the worst city sections and took them there. They insisted they were being deceived. "The slums aren't bad enough."

R.W.G. Mackay, the British Labor leader, who spoke in January, 1950, on "What to Expect in Britain," raised blood pressures among the medical members of the club with his remarks on socialized medicine. The question and answer period following his speech bore a slight resemblance to a riot. And today there is Medicare!

The world, and our club, jogged along. The president or a member of his board continued to entertain the guest speaker at a private dinner with a few selected friends who all were easily recognized by the black ties and dinner dresses.

Then in 1961-62 came the administration of Harry V. Wade. It was the revival year, the re-birth, the New Society! There was an accumulation of surplus money in the treasury and President Wade saw no reason not to use it.

Rather than the usual four or five programs, tailored to meet our budget, we had seven, including two guest nights, both of magnificent and expensive order - Tyrone Guthrie's production of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pirates of Penzance" in November and, lo and behold, Cornelia Otis Skinner with her "Monologues" in December.

This was not all. Mr. and Mrs. Wade personally invited each member of the Contemporary Club for cocktails and dinner at a series of parties in the Standard Life Insurance Building with 125 guests at each affair. It was a return to the glory of former years with formal dress, jewels and furs and a festive, social air all around. It was a year to remember.

No one really wanted to settle back into the prosaic old routine yet none could equal the Wades. Two years later President Robert D. Coleman had a brilliant idea. Arrangements were made at different clubs ... the Propylaeum, Woodstock and

Meridian Hills ... for members to meet together for dinner before proceeding to the meeting. It was a great big dinner party to which everyone was invited. No longer did the president bear the full responsibility for the speaker's entertainment. The speaker was "at the club" for dinner, to be met and visited with by the members.

This is a pleasant new custom that again reflects the changing times ... the general lack of servants for home entertaining and therefore the greater use of public facilities, economic prosperity with its gayer social life and trend towards more formal dress.

If there has been a noticeable graying of hair among the presidents of the Contemporary Club, there have been reasons.

One speaker, liberally wine and dined at the home of the president, favored the wining over the dining. When the great moment came and he ascended the podium there were some very uneasy minutes for the president. The speaker did manage to get himself under control and gave a successful talk.

Wilbur D. Peat was getting ready to attend the Contemporary Club meeting on January 19, 1945, when the telephone rang frantically, dragging him out of the shower. It was president Dr. Jerome Littell. The evening's speaker had not appeared ... would Mr. Peat please come to the rescue.

Mr. Peat was not in the least prepared to give a lecture, but, rising to the occasion, he gathered some colored slides from the Herron Art Museum's collection and conducted an Art Quiz with members identifying pictures and artists.

Arrangements long had been made in 1956 by President Frederic M. Hadley for guest night. The choice was Sulie Harand, a dramatic teacher of Chicago, who was to give a one-woman show of the musical comedy, "Fanny."

Having not heard a word from Miss Harand, Mr. Hadley telephoned her in Chicago a week before the event.

"I've never missed a show in my life," she informed him. She declined dinner and that was all, absolutely all.

With no information as to her needs, but as a precaution, Mr. Hadley had a piano put on the stage at Caleb Mills Hall.

At 8:20 p.m. the hall was filling fast, but there was no Sulie Harand! Another frantic look through the curtains by Mr. Hadley showed late-comers hurrying to a few remaining seats before the 8:30 curtain.

At 8:25 p.m. in blew Sulie Harand!

"You have a piano there? Good. All I need is a chair and what time is the curtain?"

"Right now!" was the harried answer.

"I'm ready," she calmly replied, and up went the curtain!

Miss Harand had missed her plane, hired a car and driver, and changed into her costume in the car.

After the show was over again, she declined a hotel room, food, coffee, a drink ... anything.

And away she went into the night.

When Richard Dyer-Bennet came in April of 1955 to entertain with a program of folk songs and guitar accompaniment, his late plane was met by President Robert Ashby.

There was a brief stop at the hotel, then Mr. Ashby was hurriedly driving north for the traditional dinner party in his home before the meeting. A short stop enroute at the home of Mr. Ashby's in-laws, Dr. and Mrs. Willis D. Gatch, was necessary.

Mr. Ashby left the keys in the car while he rushed into the house on his errand. Mr. Dyer-Bennet thought he had arrived at his dinner destination. Out he got and slammed the car door. It locked. The car keys and the essential guitar were inside.

There was nothing to do but make an emergency call to Mrs. Ashby to leave the waiting dinner guests and bring the extra set of car keys.

Helen Jepson, former Metropolitan Opera star, who was to give the guest night performance, "A Night at the Opera" in February, 1952, arrived at the Indianapolis Athletic Club under the guidance of President Charles R. Weiss.

The bellboy was loaded with her luggage which contained the beautiful costumes she had worn at the Metropolitan for her roles in Thais, Faust and Manon and that she planned to wear for her show that night.

Her suitcase caught in the door, broke, and spewed out on the entrance hall of the club the costumes designed by Omar Kiam, valued at \$50,000 which Miss Jepson would let no one pack, touch or press but herself

When William L. Shirer, noted correspondent and authority on Germany and world affairs, was engaged during July, 1964, as guest night speaker for mid-November, President John M. Kitchen wrote letters to the lecture bureau and Mr. Shirer, himself, carefully stating that the audience would be very tired of politics so soon after the presidential election and he wanted no discussion of it. The talk definitely should be the one listed as "The United States in World Affairs."

When Mr. Shirer came he held a news conference and spoke volubly and enthusiastically on the recent election of President Lyndon B. Johnson and announced his evening speech would be on similar lines.

Mr. Kitchen reiterated that the club had requested Mr. Shirer speak on world affairs, not domestic politics.

At guest night in North Central High School auditorium, Mr. Shirer spoke on the recent presidential election and with glowing praise of the success of the Democratic party.

In the Republican stronghold of the Contemporary Club there were audible roars of rage.

As Mr. Shirer remarked, after a question by a former club president, "His question got more applause than my whole speech!"

Finally, and never to be forgotten, was Mr. Ramshaw, the live, healthy, 22-year-old golden eagle who accompanied Captain C.W.R. Knight on December 13, 1950, when he spoke and showed a color film entitled "An Eagle's England" in the Herron Museum.

Mr. Ramshaw added life, complications and confusion the like of which the Contemporary Club has not seen to this day.

First there was the problem of a perch. President Charles R. Weiss located a parrot's perch, only to be told that wouldn't do at all. They compromised on a six-foot ladder hauled from the Weiss' basement and carted to the museum.

Hooded, Mr. Ramshaw quietly behaved himself during the lecture but later, unhooded, he took to the air, swooped over members' heads, skimmed over glass cases holding irreplaceable art treasures. He tried out the ladder perch, then lit on the falcon glove Mrs. Anna Marie Saylcs put on for the occasion.

All during his swoopings and soarings, club treasurer, Burke Nicholas, was saying his prayers and hoping that the Contemporary Club's insurance covered eagles in art galleries! Even treasurers get gray hairs in the Contemporary Club.

As we look forward to the Contemporary Club's next anniversary celebration-its Centennial on September 24, 1990-we wonder what changes members will see. Their speakers, subjects and changing customs you may be sure will reflect the years.

There are subjects we sincerely hope they will select. No more war speakers, we trust, but a good talk on "Peace in Asia"; "The End of the Cold War"; "International Control of Nuclear Power and Our World Wide Use of the Atom in Peace"; "The Miraculous Advances in Medicine"; "America's Renaissance in the Arts"; and certainly "Lower Taxes and the End of Inflation." We hope we all are here to listen to these.

One thing will continue, we are sure. The friendships and happy social gatherings that always have been a keystone in the life of the Contemporary Club will still be there.

## THE CENTURY MARK 1965 TO 1989

*By Ruth Fark Banta*

The Contemporary Club could not be true to its name if some changes had not taken place over the past 100 years. At black tie evenings, only a few long gowns dress up the speaker's table and audience. Elegant at-home dinners have gone the way of full-time cooks.

Mrs. Sewall and her friends might whisper their disapproval behind gloved hands. On the other hand, being conservative Hoosiers they probably would approve the fact that dues increased to only \$17.50 over the past 25 years (President William S. Ramey announced the last increase in 1984). They also would like the fact that presidents take great pains to keep dinners from creeping above the \$15 mark. This may account for the recent preponderance of Cornish hen in orange sauce for guest night dinners.

Club founders would applaud the fact that their legacy has kept up with the times, no small feat since those times have seen dramatic changes. We've put men and women in space, developed the ballpoint pen, turned loose computers on all phases of living and sent more women off to offices each day. Our mentors brought the leaders of their times to Indianapolis. Today television takes us to important events, people and places around the world; and if we want a first-hand view, jets can fly from New York to London in the time it took early members to drive home to Irvington.

The past 25 years have witnessed the continuing shrinking of the globe, the increasingly sophisticated explorations in space, the onward march of technology and a multitude of other changes. The quarter century also is scarred with the Vietnam War, Watergate scandal, pollution and terrorism.

Programs over the past 25 years have responded to these events and trends, but also to the timeless interests in arts and letters and in the stories of ordinary people who have accomplished extraordinary achievements. In other words, there was something for everyone.

Even with instant, full-color access to the day's news, Contemporary Club members remain curious about the stories-behind-the-stories. One of the most memorable came from native son William Ruckelshaus. When recruited to give an address, he was United States deputy attorney general. By the time of his appearance, January 24, 1974, he had become both hero and victim of the Nixon administration's efforts to cover up the Watergate break-in. The public was still outraged that he was forced out for refusing to fire special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox.

Melvin Laird, also part of the Nixon cadre, gave us a behind-the-scene look at an earlier Washington scandal: the forced departure of Vice President Spiro Agnew. Laird, former secretary of defense and then special White House adviser, helped manage the transition from Agnew to Vice President Gerald Ford. The rare opportunity

to hear Mr. Laird was the result of the persuasive services of members Dr. and Mrs. Melvin Masters whose niece Barbara was married to him.

When club President James F. Bash was arranging the program for his 1978-1979 term of office, someone suggested that he ask the new congressman from the Fourth District to speak since his father-in-law was a long-time member. Mr. Bash contacted Dr. Warren Tucker who, in turn, persuaded his son-in-law Dan Quayle to address the February 15, 1979, meeting. The address, one of Quayle's first as an office holder, made a very good impression. Mr. Bash, incidentally, reactivated a grand old tradition. He personally entertained every club member at dinner during his presidential year.

In 1981, when William M. Evans was president, Contessa de Romanones gave a talk on her World War II experiences with the OSS in Spain. Her cloak and dagger colleague was William Casey. We heard from two other Nixon administration officials with Hoosier roots. Joseph Barr, then under secretary of the treasury, led us through some of the complexities of high level economics in 1967, during the presidency of William R. Higgins, Jr. In retrospect, Barr was prophetic in emphasizing the need for international cooperation in handling world economic affairs and in bringing the balance of payments in line.

The address by Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz also proved to be as much international economics as agriculture. D. David Kriplen, president at the time (1974-1975), and his wife had a taste of Washington perks when they returned Mr. Butz to the airport. They taxied directly onto the runway and up to the secretary's waiting Air Force jet. It had been an evening of drama on and off stage. Earlier, as Mr. Kriplen was presiding, he had received an SOS from a babysitter that a peeping Tom was at his house. President Kriplen did not miss a beat.

Being president of Contemporary Club definitely involves the family as Mrs. Paul Kortepeter discovered. The schedule for Mr. Kortepeter's 1973-1974 year was set. Sir Rudolph Bing of Metropolitan Opera fame was to open the season. At the last minute he had to cancel because his wife became ill, so the speakers' bureau moved the last speaker of the year into his slot. The woman, who was to talk about her native Russia, showed up two days early - complete with boots, Cossack hat and a penchant for giving bear hugs. Mrs. Kortepeter was the gracious hostess for two days, running interference for complaints about the hotel and watching her guest wash fruit in her water glass at some of the city's finer restaurants.

In their role as hosts, presidential couples often see a side of speakers that members miss. The Kortepeters, for example, remember author-adventurer George Plimpton who sat like a bump during dinner and impatiently drummed his fingers on the table. President Mary Jane Meeker and her husband recalled the discomfort of being taxi drivers and dinner partners for a speaker who was ripe for a deodorant commercial. Both problem guests, incidentally, turned out to be extraordinarily good speakers.

A few speakers have proved so popular they have been invited back for encores. John Biddle has twice taken us to the America's Cup yacht race and other sailing adventures. (The club also has enjoyed programs by Robert Manry who sailed the Atlantic solo as well as 6,000 miles of inland waters.) Three-time speaker Ralph Salerno, an expert on criminal justice, has shared his experiences with organized crime, racketeering, gambling and the underworld.

Indiana University artists and duo-pianists Charles Webb and Wallace Hornibrook entertained us in 1978 and in 1983.

Recent presidents L. Robert Lowe, Jr., Fritz R. Gordner and Gordon D. Wishard happily bowed to popular demand for programs by Elliot Engel. The actor-scholar enthusiastically presented Dickens, Shakespeare and Chaucer. From others we had literary reincarnations: James Humes in 1983 as Churchill, and Richard Blake in 1987 as Abraham Lincoln. One of the most memorable evenings was October 7, 1986, which was spent with Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley — a/k/a Contemporary Club member and past President Henry C. Ryder.

John A. Gable, head of the Theodore Roosevelt Association, came from Oyster Bay in 1987 to help Mr. Gordner, a loyal Roosevelt fan and collector, launch his presidential year. Teddy and his Hoosier vice president, Charles Fairbanks, would have been proud of the salute. Contemporary Club officers and directors with spouses gathered at the Fairbanks mansion (now Indianapolis Life) where Mrs. Walter H. Huehl (wife of former Indianapolis Life president) had arranged a reception. They placed a commemorative plaque on a tree on the mansion grounds, then boarded an old fashioned trolley and popped champagne on their way to the meeting.

Since the '70s there has been a trend to more entertainment programming for the club. Do we just enjoy being entertained or are we escaping from the stresses of the day? (We had a program April 16, 1986, by Dr. Richard Ittner, on stress and aging.)

During Thomas M. Billings' presidency, in 1969, we had programs by Ray Middleton, a theater and musical star; and by Leonid Hambro, pianist with the New York Philharmonic and straightman for Victor Borge. Mr. Hambro became a serendipitous eleventh hour substitute for a British theatrical couple who canceled when the wife became ill.

More recently we have been entertained by humorists Marshall Dodge, Janet Cliff, James Boren, Irene Kampen, Hope Mihalap (who mimics American accents) and Mary McBride (former writer for Phyllis Diller and Joan Rivers).

During John O. LaFollette's presidency (1971-1972) we heard Goodman Ace of the "Easy Aces." We have been treated to the music of soprano Judith Dickison, pianist Marianne Williams Ulyot, the musical group Re'generation, balladeer Bill Schustik, Broadway performer Johnny Andrews and Celtic music specialist Fiona Ritchie. We've also traveled to Purdue University to hear violinist Itzhak Perlman and attended an Old English feast and Shakespeare evening.

Club members also have made three pilgrimages to hear the great opera available at Indiana University. These were arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Clarence W. Schnicke through their I.U. connections. (Mrs. Schnicke is a long-time member of the I.U. School of Music board and a voice coach.) Those lucky enough to join the trips have been treated to tours of the art museum and Lilly Library on campus and receptions given by the university presidents. One such trip became known as the "Phantom of the Opera" adventure. Forty-four members signed up for the trip, but 46 went. Organizers never were able to identify the "extras." The Schnickes also arranged for a program by George W. Headley, a former Hollywood jewelry designer who had created an extraordinary collection of bibelots. He was the son of the founder of Keeneland Race Track and married to a Whitney.

Mr. Headley enjoyed his evening with the Contemporary Club and invited members to visit his museum. So the following year, J. Edward Ransel ushered in his presidency with a memorable fall outing in 1976 to Lexington, Kentucky, to see the dazzling collection. Travelers stopped for lunch at the Wakefield Scarce Gallery.

In 1974 Sir Humphrey Wakefield presented a program on English furniture. Such topics have always been popular. Charles E. Meyer recalls that during his 1972-1973 presidency an auctioneer from Sotheby's drew one of the biggest crowds in club history.

The club often ends the season with a big musical finale at the Civic Theatre. One of the most impressive was the production of "George M" which wound up the 1976 U.S. Bicentennial year. H. Earl Capehart, Jr., president for that special year, and his board organized an exceptional program that covered the nation's history, culture and progress as presented by outstanding Indiana speakers. Wesley N. Haines, president of Franklin College served as keynoter. Others were Dean Charles M. Sappenfield of the Ball State University College of Architecture who spoke on "A Hundred Hoosier Houses"; Frank Cooper of Butler University who presented a program on 200 years of American music; Dr. Robert H. Furman of Eli Lilly & Company who reviewed 200 years of American medicine; and Fred N. Andrews, dean of the Purdue graduate school, who outlined 200 years of science and technology. The year also included a tour of the Indiana State Museum's George Rogers Clark exhibit.

Dozens of speakers, too many to list, have covered an incredible scope of topics over the past 25 years of Contemporary Club history. Among the more famous who have not been mentioned are Alexandra Tolstoy, who spoke during Mr. Higgins' presidency. The sprightly but elderly lady is particularly remembered for her discussion of the death of her famous father Leo Tolstoy. Actor Vincent Price talked to us about the "Enjoyment of Great Art." We also heard from Ronald Berman, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and from Daniel J. Boorstin, librarian of Congress and author-scholar.

The wife of Admiral Elmo Zumwalt charmed members with recollections of her childhood in China and her life with the Navy. Arthur C. Schrader, president at the time (1983-1984), remembers that few knew Mrs. Zumwalt had just learned that afternoon that her son had cancer.

A number of speakers addressed science, energy and ecology- related issues of the day. Some, like Robert Cain (1968), University of Michigan conservationist, were like prophets, identifying problems before they became widely held concerns. We also heard from former Hoosier Betsy Ancker-Johnson, then assistant secretary of commerce for science and technology, who raised some red flags about patent licensing and other problems that were inhibiting U.S. technology development. Elvis Stahr, president of the Audubon Society and former I.U. president, talked about ecology and the economy (1977); Frederick Garibaldi, president of SOHIO transportation, reviewed some of the problems with the Alaskan pipeline (1978); Thomas F. Malone of the Holcomb Research Institute covered the future of energy (1978), and John W. Macy, Jr., president of the Development and Resources Corp., discussed energy (1980).

During Lewis Enkema's 1981-82 presidency, we reached a peak - the peak of Makalu, that is. Climber-photographer John Roskelley gave a personal commentary on the first American ascent of the world's fifth highest mountain. Mr. Enkema arranged

the program through Fritz Gordner, a climber himself and the insurance specialist who wrote the life insurance policy on Mr. Roskelley and his companions when they became the first Americans to climb K2, the world's second highest mountain. The American Alpine Club recently named Mr. Roskelley the best U.S. climber.

Club members also may be able to look back and say they heard Herbert I. London before he was mayor of New York City - if he wins the upcoming election. Mr. London, a New York University dean, member of the Hudson Institute board of trustees and social critic, addressed Contemporary Club in 1988.

The club heard a memorable round table presentation on education in 1979 by college presidents Richard Rosser of DePauw, John O. Johnson of Butler and Lewis S. Salter of Wabash with H. Dean Evans, then an education specialist with Lilly Endowment, Inc.

We learned about cities and restoration from Mayor William H. Hudnut III (1981), Robert A. Borns (1986), Maestro John Nelson and Circle Theatre architect Peter Van Dijk (1984) and Charles B. Hosmer, Jr. (1976 - on Williamsburg and Greenfield Village). As citizens of an emerging amateur sports center, we heard from Colonel F. Don Miller (1979), executive director of the U.S. Olympic Committee, and from Mark Miles (1987) who headed the 1987 10th Pan American Games held in Indianapolis.

Early in the quarter century in 1968, Nathaniel Alexander Owings, a native son and one of the era's leading architects, addressed the Contemporary Club. Mr. Billings, president at the time, has kept a copy of Owings' speech. In it he said that Indianapolis has a central plan with the elements needed to "make a city viable" and singled out the "central plaza with open space, focal points, fountains, plantings, sculpture and historically valuable buildings." He criticized "profligate use of resources and the pollution of the environment." He also charged that automobiles are unsafe and blamed Indianapolis for promoting cars and speed. He added that he wished for a "habitat that is more than a mechanical storeroom for gadgets or a race track on which we move at a snail's pace in our 2,000 cubic-foot piece of mobility."

Many programs had strong Hoosier roots. Besides the native sons mentioned, we heard from Bernard Vonnegut (1988) on rainmaking, Alan Nolan (1989) on the Civil War, William Clayton (1983) on China, Philip Appleman (1981) of I.U. on science vs. English and David Martin (1984 - son of Mr. and Mrs. Wendell Martin and nephew of Mr. and Mrs. Howard R. Meeker, Jr.) on immigration laws. For want of an electric cord, we almost did not hear from Professor David Koltick (1986) of Purdue who had a slide talk on "Asteroids and Dinosaurs." Herbert E. Strong, Jr., president at the time, fortunately found a member who had the same projector and raced home to fetch the needed cord.

The roster of presidents in the last 25 years has strong club roots. Gordon Wishard, 1988-1989, is the son of Dr. William N. Wishard, Jr., president from 1937-1938; Mary Jane Coleman Meeker, 1979-1980, one of eight women presidents, is the daughter of Robert D. Coleman, 1963-1964 president; and Fritz R. Gordner, 1987-1988, is the son of LeRoy G. Gordner, 1957-1959.

The century mark of Contemporary Club finds many second and third generation members enjoying a family tradition and sharing the legacy the founders passed to all members.

The club stands firmly on tradition, but fortunately a key part of that tradition is keeping abreast of contemporary events. We know topics for the second century will be timely. Will they be about a man on Mars, a woman in the White House, domes over cities?

**CHARTER MEMBERS**  
**Those Present or Represented by Letter**  
**At the Meetings For Organization**

Rev. John Baltzly .....	74 East Walnut St.
Mrs. John Baltzly .....	74 East Walnut St.
Mr. Frank H. Blackledge .....	205 North East St.
Mrs. Frank H. Blackledge .....	205 North East St.
Mr. Noble C. Butler .....	210 Park Ave.
Mrs. Noble C. Butler .....	210 Park Ave.
Prof. Scot Butler .....	Irvington, Ind.
Mrs. Scot Butler .....	Irvington, Ind.
Miss N. Cropsey .....	85 College Ave.
Miss Mary Dean .....	20 North Meridian St.
Mr. Thomas C. Day .....	820 North Meridian St.
Mr. William P. Fishback .....	733 North Delaware St.
Mrs. William P. Fishback .....	733 North Delaware St.
Hon. William Dudley Foulke .....	Richmond, Ind.
Mrs. William Dudley Foulke .....	Richmond, Ind.
Mr. John L. Griffiths .....	Woodruff Place
Mrs. John L. Griffiths .....	Woodruff Place
Dr. Edward F. Hodges .....	152 North Meridian St.
Mrs. Edward F. Hodges .....	152 North Meridian St.
Dr. John N. Hurty .....	372 North Tennessee St.
Mrs. John N. Hurty .....	372 North Tennessee St.
President David S. Jordan ..	Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.
Mrs. David S. Jordan .....	Bloomington, Ind.
Mrs. John M. Judah .....	Memphis, Tenn.
Mr. Harry J. Milligan .....	735 North Delaware St.
Mrs. Harry J. Milligan .....	735 North Delaware St.
Mr. Augustus L. Mason .....	The New-Denison
Miss Julian H. Moore .....	850 North Pennsylvania St.
Prof. Harriet Noble .....	Irvington, Ind.
Mr. George T. Porter .....	275 North Delaware St.
President James H. Smart .....	Lafayette, Ind.
Mr. Alexander P. Spruance .....	579 North Tennessee St.

Mrs. Alexander P. Spruance ..... 579 North Tennessee St.  
Mr. Theodore L. Sewall ..... 343 North Pennsylvania St.  
Mrs. Theodore L. Sewall ..... 343 North Pennsylvania St.  
Mr. William H. Talbott ..... 230 North Pennsylvania St.  
Miss Lillian B. Wright ..... 343 North Pennsylvania St.

*The following review was prepared and presented by Nelson Price at the  
120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary program on May 12, 2010*

## **And We're Still Here...**

*This program description was included in the 120<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration invitation:*

What happens when Woodrow Wilson, Booker T. Washington, and Vincent Price walk into a room?

Ask Nelson! Award-winning author, journalist, historian and radio personality Nelson Price has been poring over ancient texts, digging through archives and interviewing our members for the juiciest stories, most humorous anecdotes, and history-making moments in the Contemporary Club's history.

The incredible narrative he's uncovered from more than 700 programs over the course of 120 seasons is a delightful and rollicking story that's certain to fascinate you. It also demonstrates why the Contemporary Club is as relevant today as it was at its founding.

*The following speech is excerpted directly from Nelson Price's original speech manuscript, with all emphasis left intact and unaltered to convey a better sense of the robust and engaging narrative vigor:*

### **Contemporary Club 1890s**

It is the 1890s, and WE ARE HERE.

On a balmy June night in 1890, the first unofficial gathering of the Contemporary Club occurs. Thirty-eight friends assemble in the parlor of May Wright Sewall's home. The group includes three university presidents: David Starr Jordan of IU, James Smart of Purdue, and Scott Butler of Butler University, which is in Irvington. Indianapolis in the 1890s is a truly walk-able city, although there are very few sidewalks and paved streets.

You walk or you ride the streetcars. Of May's 38 friends, the farthest "north" of the local folks are married couples who live at 850 N. Pennsylvania – the sticks. Streetcar tickets cost 5 cents in 1890. The streetcars are exhilarating to ride – and in the spring and summers the streetcars are "open", with reversible seats.

One annoyance though: COWS roam the streets of downtown Indianapolis, and sometimes they lie down in the streetcar tracks.

Almost everyone's house has a fence – white picket or wrought iron. And almost everyone has a front porch where the family spends the summer. Sometimes on those porches a few of the guys are starting to light up and smoke cigarettes.

We call these guys "sporty types". Their packs of cigarettes usually have on them the photo of a woman – she's called a quote "ACTRESS".

These are NOT the type of performers who will be invited to speak to the Contemporary Club.

At the first gathering, May explains that the Club should be designed for ITELLECTUALS and Hoosiers who have a CLUB-ABLE personality. Her idea is that

the club will be a mirror of its times. It will expose its membership to distinguished speakers in all fields:

“Literature, art, international affairs, science, exploration and economics.” At May Wright Sewall’s insistence, the Club constitution has as its second sentence:

“Membership shall be open to men and women on equal terms.”

This is considered radical. Before now the only real opportunity for Indianapolis women to hear distinguished male speakers has been when the Gentleman’s Literary Club has its “Ladies Night.”

Years from now, an early Contemporary Club member will recall, “We were always assured that Ladies Nights were relatively DULL.” The organizers did not want controversial or even stimulating speakers on Ladies Nights out of consideration of the quote “feebleness” of the women present.

But May Wright Sewall has very different notions, as she has been proving for years.

By now in 1890, she already is a civic leader with a national reputation. She’s 44 years old and a native of Wisconsin who came to Indianapolis as a teacher, then shook things up.

After Ted Sewall founded the Indianapolis Classical School for Boys. May insisted they start the Indianapolis Classical School for Girls – with a curriculum that’s just as rigorous.

Latin, Greek, the classics – girls should be taught in all of that, May decides.

After launching the Girls School, this firecracker named May starts up a slew of cultural and arts organizations. About five years before this June 1890 gathering of friends in her parlor to put together the Contemporary Club, she starts the Art Association of Indianapolis, which eventually evolves into the Museum of Art. She also starts the Propylaeum Club, a club FOR women MANAGED by women.

The brand new Contemporary Club will become the Propylaeum’s first tenant. May will become known as the leader of half-a-million women because – in her crusade for women’s rights, particularly suffrage – she helps organize women’s groups across the country. Then she goes international, organizing women in Holland and other countries.

Because of her international connections, she is able to draw speakers from abroad to the Contemporary Club. During the first year, there’s a professor from Rome. Speakers in 1891 include the dean of Yale University’s law school, a London resident, and a Russian princess.

Speaking of international: The buzz in town during the 1890s is about the monument going up on Circle Drive right in the center of the city and the international competition to design it. The crusade to create the Monument honoring Hoosiers is led by Civil War veterans and civic leaders such as Col. Eli Lilly and Gen. Lew Wallace, the “Ben Hur” author – who, by the way, is an early member of the Contemporary Club.

Their rationale for the monument? Indiana responded in a HUGE way to the call for Mr. Lincoln's Army. Only one other state – Delaware – had a higher percentage of men who enlisted in the Union Army.

But as the decade goes on – and people can peek over the construction fence to see this Soldiers and Sailors Monument going up – there's a controversy about its design.

The competition yielded entries from 65 countries. The winner is a German who arrives with a Viennese-born sculptor. They create "War" and "Peace" groupings of soldiers at the Monument's base who have heavy, thick beards.

Well, Hoosiers are up in arms for TWO reasons. These beards make the soldiers look too Germanic. And many of the Hoosier men who fought and died for the Union cause were actually teenage boys. At most, they had peach fuzz. Bowing to pressure, the German design team "shaves" off the beards of the monument soldiers.

One other fashion note. This has to do with our founder May Wright Sewall. She's a sensible, stocky woman but she has begun wearing her skirts at ankle-length. This is a shocker in an era when women's skirts sweep the ground. Only a woman as prominent and warmly regarded as May could get away with a major breach of social etiquette like this.

Some other big things are going on in the 1890s.

The first game of BASKETBALL in Indiana is played. The game – using peach baskets – is played during March 1894 in Crawfordsville at the YMCA..

During the 1890s, Indianapolis is a very German city. In the Census, nearly 70 percent of the residents say they have some German ancestry.

And one of the world's biggest events of the decade occurs not far away, up in Chicago. It's the Columbia Exposition/Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

The Contemporary Club benefits from this by drawing notables who are en-route to and from the Chicago Exposition as our speakers.

Other Club speakers during the 1890s include Indiana's most famous painter, T.C. Steele, in 1894, and Booker T. Washington in 1896.

The club becomes such a big deal that even former President Benjamin Harrison feels compelled to send May Wright Sewall a note of apology when he misses a meeting because of a head-cold.

No wonder President Harrison hates to miss Club meetings. In addition to the exciting speakers, the refreshments are lavish in these early days of the Club. And formality reigns.

At each event, host and hostess committees stand at the entrance to welcome members upon their arrival.

And – guess what? -- the remarkable May Wright Sewall not only is the club's very first President, she often is the one who makes the refreshments.

She is still making them when the new decade arrives.

IT IS THE 1900s. AND WE ARE STILL HERE.

### **Contemporary Club 1900s**

She is still making them when the new century arrives. AND WE ARE STILL HERE

In the early years of the new century, Three “B” sports dominate American culture:

Baseball, boxing and bicycle racing.

The song you just heard that becomes the anthem of baseball – “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” – is written in 1908 by a man from Indianapolis, Albert Von Tilzer. According to folklore, he was NOT a baseball fan – and had never even attended a game when he wrote the song.

Meanwhile, his brother Harry often is credited with coining the phrase Tin Pan Alley.

AND the world’s top bicycle race is an Indianapolis native: Major Taylor, nicknamed “the Ebony Streak.”

To top it off, the country’s best race horse – he never loses a single race – also is a native Hoosier. None other than Indiana-born Dan Patch. He’s so popular they even name a dance after the horse, the “Dan Patch Two-Step”.

Dan Patch isn’t the only high stepper. Downtown Indianapolis also is stepping out.

The elegant Claypool Hotel opens in 1902 on Washington Street with a lobby that’s said to be one of the largest in the entire country.

And a CARTOON CHARACTER drawn by a Hoosier becomes a national hit.

Kin Hubbard’s folk philosopher, pipe-smoking “Abe Martin” of Brown County, eventually is syndicated in 300 newspapers across the country. His wry observations, which NEVER seem dated, include this comment one election season:

“You can take a voter to the polls, but you can’t make him think.”

And speaking of elections and politicians: A man who will go on in the next decade to the biggest job of all comes to Indianapolis in 1904 to speak to the Contemporary Club. His name is WOODROW WILSON, and he’s president of Princeton University.

The Club scores an even bigger coup the next year, in 1905, by landing as a speaker literary great Henry James, who returns to America after an absence of 25 years. Although Mr. James travels extensively across the country, he speaks at very few places. So the entire city takes great pride in his distinguished presence and his talk to the Club.

It is preceded with an intimate dinner in his honor during which he is seated next to Indiana’s own James Whitcomb Riley.

Club presidents during the decade include Mr. Hilton U. Brown in 1905.

Other speakers include:

- Jane Adams of Hull House in 1903.
- painter William Merritt Chase in 1904
- And the president of Harvard University. For his presentation, the Club meets at Butler University, which is still in Irvington

The Harvard president has the challenge of trying to talk when a ferocious storm explodes that members say was “like a hurricane”. The windows had been opened, and lightning flares, thunder roars and the lights flicker. Even so, the Harvard president carries on and so mesmerizes the Club members with his oratory that he quote “lifted us out of the terror of the moment,” as one member recalls.

And in terms of excitement citywide, there also was the opening of the town's first retail outlet to present itself as a full-fledged department store. LS Ayres at Washington and Meridian streets, designed by local architect Bernard Vonnegut, has eight stories and six elevators. It's a huge hit.

Just as Ayres is taking off, there's a rare achievement in one of those "B" sports. The Chicago Cubs win the World Series in 1908 – and never win it again to date. This triumph has a Hoosier angle.

The Cubs' pitcher is a charismatic Indiana farm boy named Mordecai "Three-Finger" Brown. His nickname is derived from a childhood accident with a corn shredder in which he lost part of his right hand. Experts speculate that Mordecai Three Finger Brown's reshaped hand actually is an asset. He's able to throw a curveball with an exceedingly sharp downward break.

Then, almost as fast as one of Mordecai's curveballs, it is the 1910s.

AND WE ARE STILL HERE.

### **Contemporary Club 1910s**

AND WE ARE STILL HERE.

The decade begins with a roar.

In 1911, the inaugural 500 Mile Race is held at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. There had been a shorter car race, a 5-mile dash, two years earlier that was a disaster, with the deaths of two drivers, two mechanics and two spectators as the track surface broke apart. Hence, the laying down of bricks at the race track.

The President of the Contemporary Club during this period, 1910 to 1911, is Evans Woolens Sr. He's one of several Club members who will be part of family legacies. His son, Evans Woolens Jr., will be Club president in 1936.

The 1910s can be divided into two parts, both in terms of the country at large and, mirroring the times, the Contemporary Club:

BEFORE the Great War and DURING-SLASH-AFTER.

There is a sharp difference in the tone and trappings.

Before the War, Club events are festive in tone. Formal evening clothes are worn, flowers abound, and a two or three-course dinner typically is served.

During the war, dinner is eliminated – as are, at some meetings, refreshments of any kind. There is a brisker pace and topics tend to be solemn and profound.

Still, there are episodes of humor - -if only in retrospect.

One cold, winter night, the guest of honor speaker – an opera singer – keeps the executive committee of the Club shivering outdoors. She refuses to enter unless she is paid in advance. In cash. A check is offered, but that will not do. The opera singer demands cash. No dollars, no arias.

Somehow, some way, at an hour long after all banks and businesses have closed, a messenger is dispatched and returns with cold cash.

No one dared ask whether he had broken into a bank or committed murder to get it. Regardless, the speaker accepts the cash – and the happy outcome is that – yes – the fat lady sings.

In local performing arts news, the lavish Circle Theatre opens on Monument Circle in 1916. It is one of the first theaters west of New York built specifically for the purpose of showing movies. Before the Circle Theater, city residents had seen the “flickers” by just watching them on storefronts.

During what is known as the Great War, doughboys come to our Fort Harrison, which has been named in honor of the former president and Club supporter.

Also during the War, one Contemporary Club speaker – English playwright Granville Barker – departs in a way that brings the immediacy of the conflict home to members.

Mr. Barker excuses himself from staying for the usual Q & A because he must leave at once to catch a train at our Union Station and make connections on the East Coast to a ship that will take him “directly to the front” somewhere in France. As Mr. Barker crosses the stage on his way to the exit, emotional Club members rise to their feet and give him a standing ovation.

It is worth noting that the American president during the Great War is our former speaker, Woodrow Wilson. And his vice president is a Hoosier, Thomas R. Marshall.

Vice President Marshall is renowned for his wit. He is destined to be remembered for his line: “What this country needs is a good five-cent cigar.”

But there may be even more truth in one of his other quips. It goes:

“Once there were two brothers. One ran away to sea. The other was elected vice president. Neither of them was heard from again.”

Then it is the 1920s. AND WE ARE STILL HERE.

### **Contemporary Club 1920s**

That standard, “Stardust,” is written, of course, by Indiana’s own Hoagy Carmichael

It arrives during a dizzying decade:

The Jazz Age, flappers, dance marathons, Prohibition and pogo sticks.

No more bustles and long dresses for women. Skirt lengths go up, hair gets bobbed and it’s trendy to wear strings of pearls thrown over the right shoulder.

Men wear Chesterfield coats, navy blazers– and high hats at a rakish angle.

The year 1924 alone brings the debut of Wheaties, the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, Kleenex, spiral bound notebooks and the dead-bolt lock.

All things Egyptian become the rage with the opening of King Tut’s Tomb.

Here in town, there’s plenty of moving and shaking going on as well.

Shortridge High School – which evolved out of the old Indianapolis High School – moves from downtown to 34<sup>th</sup> and Meridian.

Most of the North Meridian Street mansions are constructed, making the thoroughfare our city’s showplace.

And in the summer of 1924, all eyes are on Broad Ripple Park, which has the largest outdoor swimming pool in the country and hosts the US Olympic Trials. The star of those trials is a spectacular freestyle swimmer from Chicago: Johnny Weismuller.

Meanwhile, Notre Dame Coach Knute Rockne and his Fighting Irish are revolutionizing college football.

The dying plea to Coach Rockne by his star player George Gipp – who asks that when the going gets rough, future teams win won for the Gipper. – becomes part of locker room folklore.

Early in the 1920s, the Butler campus moves to the Northside  
And at the end of the decade the largest basketball arena in the country – a fieldhouse -- opens on the new campus

In 1920, women finally get the right to vote, casting ballots for the first time in a presidential election.

Our founder May Wright Sewall – who crusaded all of her life for women’s suffrage – is not among them. She passes away just a few months before the election.

At the Contemporary Club,

Speakers include poet Robert Frost in 1924 and poet Carl Sandburg in 1926.  
The club president during the 1926 season is Miss Margaret Donnan. She will be the LAST woman president for more than 50 years.

At the start of the decade, in 1920, two-thirds of the world’s oil originates in the United States.

Insulin, which regulates the internal use of sugar, is introduced during the 1920s as a treatment for diabetes and is marketed by Eli Lilly & Co

Near the end of the decade, movies start to speak, with Al Jolson and his “Jazz Singer” becoming the first full-length talkie. The limited dialogue includes a line that will become a national catch phrase: “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet.”

As the decade draws to a close in 1929, there is bad news – DEVASTATING NEWS – from Wall Street.

It means the 1930s begin with a big bust. AND WE ARE STILL HERE.

### **Contemporary Club 1930s**

Of course, this is the decade of the Great Depression.

It’s also a decade when the sophisticated lyrics and music of Cole Porter from Peru, Indiana, offer escapism as the scores of Broadway shows and movie musicals.

By the way, Broadway notables in the 1930s come to Indianapolis to speak to the Contemporary Club:

They include no less than playwright Thornton Wilder, who is our speaker in 1937. His is just one name on a staggering list practically out of “Who’s Who in America” who are Club speakers. They include Dr. Karl Menninger, who speaks to us about psychoanalysis in 1934;  
and Gertrude Stein in 1935

By then, Indianapolis has a Symphony Orchestra. Several of the musicians who accompanied silent movies at the Circle Theater get together in 1930 under conductor Ferdinand Schaefer to form the Symphony.

So in the 1930s, there is music in the air, but a lot of misery in the streets – Indiana included

Amid all of this, crime takes hold and, sadly, gangsters become folk heroes, There's Al Capone, Ma Barker, Bonnie and Clyde And "Public Enemy No. 1" is another Indiana farm boy, John Dillinger.

On the lighter side, Indianapolis-based Wonder Bread becomes the first to introduce pre-sliced bread

Pluto is identified as a planet, "Gone With the Wind" causes a sensation, and backgammon becomes a national fad.

Contemporary Club presidents during the 1930s include Dr. William Wishard, a national pioneer in the field of urology who is regarded as the "father" of what is then known as City Hospital Dr. Wishard is Club president in 1936.

In another example of multi-generational Club membership, attorney GORDON Wishard will be president in 1988.

Back to the 1930s. – and the lighter side, Donald Duck and Snow White make their debuts. So do popular radio serials such as the Lone Ranger.

And the decade features the debut of Hostess Twinkies. Little did Hostess know that, 70 years later, at our Indiana State Fair, Hoosiers would deep-fat fry those Twinkies

First, though, it is the 1940s. AND WE ARE STILL HERE.

### **Contemporary Club 1940s**

In 1940, the Contemporary Club celebrates its Golden Anniversary The celebration is a festive dinner that takes place at the still-elegant Claypool Hotel. Everyone wears formal evening clothes. As one club member recalls years later, "Although Hitler was on the European rampage, there was still a false calm, a blind hope that life, somehow, might go on as usual."

The omens are all around, even in the roster of Club speakers.

They include, in 1941, the president of the Norwegian Parliament, which is then in exile. He tells how Norwegian children hide gold bullion in their sleds and walk past German soldiers to get it into open boats. Then the gold is transported to England and to this Norwegian government-in-exile

Soon enough, THE War touches everyone's lives

Club members and relatives are sent overseas with the realization that not everyone will return

Food and other goods are rationed.

And even the most superficial aspects – perhaps especially them – are altered. For example, Club members decide, as one puts it, that there is "little heart or purpose" in black tie and long evening dress. So attire at meetings becomes more informal, a change that unsettles some older members. But there are still occasional bursts of levity, even amid the black cloud of war. For example, speakers during the War include humorist Ogden Nash

Club presidents during the 1940s include Wilbur Peat. In fact, Mr. Peat comes to the rescue one evening, pulling off what probably is the biggest "save" in Club history.

The evening speaker suddenly does not show up. Whereabouts are unknown! Would Mr. Peat please fill the program?

Although not prepared, Mr. Peat gathers up some color slides from what is then called the Herron Art Museum. The evening's program becomes an Art Quiz, with Mr. Peat asking the assembled members to identify the artwork and artists. There's no record of how well members performed on the pop quiz.

In pop culture, this is the decade of swing music, Big Bands, and network radio shows featuring wits like Jack Benny and Fred Allen.

Before the War ends, President Roosevelt passes away. And beloved Hoosier war correspondent Ernie Pyle is shot to death by a sniper on the island of Iwo Jima.

After the war, Contemporary Club speakers include Prince Peter and Princess Irene of Greece, who talk about the economic and political struggles in their homeland.

There also are some speakers from Russia, who ask to be shown the "slums" of Indianapolis before their talk. The Russians are taken to the worst areas of the city, but insist they are being deceived "The slums aren't bad enough," they say.

This is welcome news for a city that is about to enter an era when it becomes known as "India-NO-Place" and "Naptown"

The suspicions of the Russians are, perhaps, a small indication that the Cold War is beginning

Of course, it will last for decades.

Meanwhile, to keep things lively, the Club starts varying its meeting sites. One of the final gatherings of 1949 is at Caleb Mills Hall. The speaker is an expert on MAGIC. But the evening turns out not to be magical. The speaker feels that he's not getting the amount of applause that he should, So after 20 minutes, he stalks off the stage.

Curtain down, and it is the 1950s. AND WE ARE STILL HERE.

## **Contemporary Club 1950s**

The 1950s may be thought of as the decade of the Man in the Gray Flannel Suit - But they kick off with hot collars and spirited debate at the Contemporary Club In 1950, speakers include the British Labor Leader - Who, QUOTE, "raised blood pressures among medical professionals in the membership" because of his remarks about quoting again "socialized medicine." The question-and-answer session following his speech bore QUOTE "a slight resemblance to a riot."

Frankly, 1950 was a lively year from start to end. In December 1950, for a Club event at the Herron Art Museum – it was still called that -- a British captain arrived accompanied by a golden eagle, for his presentation titled "An Eagle's England". The eagle, at his master's request, was perched on a six-foot ladder obtained from the basement of a CC member. Hooded during the presentation, the majestic bird behaved himself quite nicely. But later, un-hooded, he QUOTE "took to the air, swooped over members' heads and skimmed over glass cases holding irreplaceable art treasures." Then he lit on a long glove that a CC member, Mrs. Anna Marie Sayles, had put on for the occasion. The eagle thought it was a falcon glove.

The Club's treasurer was said to be praying – during all of the swoopings and soarings – that the Club's insurance “covered eagle attacks in art galleries.”

The 1950s become memorable in Indiana in so many ways ...A little school from Milan – and a player named Bobby Plump – make a miracle in the state basketball tournament.

Then it is Attucks High School's turn to shine in the state tournament, with the legendary Oscar Robertson leading his teams' to back-to-back victories.

Poodle skirts and hula hoops are all the rage

So is “cruising,” with the TeePee and other drive-ins such as the Pole, Knobby's and Ron-D-Vu making ideal settings for the action

A car crash kills Indiana native James Dean, who has created such a sensation that he becomes a cultural icon of the decade, along with Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley.

Because of atom bomb threats, schoolchildren are instructed to “duck and cover”, Schoolchildren in Bloomington serve as guinea pigs for a new, IU-developed, toothpaste: Crest.

Dr. Jonas Salk creates the polio vaccine

LIFE magazine publishes a devastating 10-page essay – with shadowy photos – labeling Terre Haute “SIN CITY”

Because of its red-light district and illicit gambling

And a series of popular entertainers speak to the Contemporary Club

They include: -- Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy in 1954; -- and the “Casablanca” movie actor Claude Rains in 1953

And in 1957, “a little-known young man” named Hal Holbrook entertained the Club with his “Evening of Mark Twain”. Eighteen months later, young Mr. Holbrook becomes a nationally known star when he opens his one-man show in New York to rave reviews

Rock and roll is exploding, and suddenly

It is the 1960s.

AND WE ARE STILL HERE.

## **Contemporary Club 1960s**

The Swinging Sixties...

Just before the jeans, love beads, mini-skirts and the “Mod” look The Contemporary Club begins the decade with a return to formality. The president in 1961, Harry V. Wade, brings the Club back to some of the glamour that existed before WWII that involves, QUOTE “formal dress, jewels and fur, and a festive, social air all around.” Mr. Wade's son, Doug, is president this year.

Amid all of this splendor is real accomplishment ...Members during the decade includes the state's movers and shakers: El Lilly, J. Irwin Miller of Columbus, Dr. Herman B Wells, attorney, and Civil War historian Alan Nolan

Speakers are a widely varied lot ...Ranging from a young William F. Buckley in 1960, To actor Vincent Price – who talks not about horror movies – but instead his passion, the Enjoyment of Great Art.

The Club in the Sixties also is treated to a visit by the man who played Sherlock Holmes - Basil Rathbone - in 1961

Less than three years later, the Fab Four – the Beatles – take America by storm. First on the Ed Sullivan Show in February 1964

Then later that same year, John, Paul, George & Ringo throw Indianapolis into a tizzy. By performing two instantly sold-out shows at the Indiana State Fair, Hoosiers who attend those shows say you barely could hear a note of music. It was mostly just one loud scream. The Beatles, by the way, stay at the Speedway Motel

This is, of course, a decade of strife with Vietnam, protests, assassinations of a President, his brother, and a civil rights leader.

It's also a decade when men land on the moon. And a young Indianapolis mayor named Richard Lugar makes headlines for initiatives such as Unigov.

Meanwhile, homegrown literary giant Kurt Vonnegut creates a sensation with his bestseller "Slaughterhouse Five". He also complains about Naptown: quote "The city sleeps for 364 days per year, and then wakes up for one day and has a race."

Well, there's some demolition going on downtown. The Marion County Courthouse is torn down – Critics say it was infested with rats and pigeons. On its site, the 28-story City-County Building goes up. It's rectangular – The folklore is that designers were told to create a building where pigeons could NEVER roost

During the 1960s . . .

There's a moment in the sun for Purdue, which wins the Rose Bowl.

Back at the Contemporary Club, this decade features family legacies in addition to the Wades. The other presidents include Robert Coleman in '64. His daughter, Mary Jane Meeker, at the close of the next decade, will end this drought of nearly 50 years of no women presidents

So that brings us TO the next decade – The 1970s. AND WE ARE STILL HERE

## **Contemporary Club 1970s**

In a decade of roller coaster events, the Club is in many ways AHEAD of the curves. Speakers include William Ruckleshaus, who, at the time of his invitation, was Deputy Attorney General of the United States. By the time of his presentation in January 1974, he was making national headlines by, QUOTE "becoming both the hero and the victim of the Nixon administration's efforts to cover up the Watergate break-in". Mr. Ruckleshaus, of course, was forced out in a series of events known as the Saturday Night Massacre. Accounts of his presentation indicate Club members are almost totally supportive of Mr. Ruckleshaus.

Also in the category of being ahead of the curve, in February 1979, a young Congressman from far-northeastern Indiana addresses the Club It's one of his very first public speeches as an office holder The name of this young Congressman? Dan Quayle. Accounts of the Club session indicate he made a good impression with his talk.

And then there is an unforgettable experience with a last-minute fill-in speaker in 1973. The substitute is a Russian woman who will talk about her homeland. She surprises everyone by showing up in town two days early – complete with boots,

Cossack hat and an inclination to bear-hug all new Hoosier acquaintances. Mr. and Mrs. Paul Kortepeter (COURT-ehh-PETER) suddenly find themselves hosts and escorts of the colorful Russian for two days. Notes about the episode indicate they had to run interference with local restaurants and hotels. While dining out at some of our finest restaurants, our Russian guest had a habit of washing her fruit in the water glasses on the table.

The Club makes field trips, in 1974, the Club travels to an IU School of Music production. According to then-president David Kriplen: “Before the production, we had a wonderful backstage tour of the Music Hall, but when a head count is taken, it reveals an extra head. One wag remarked: ‘It must be the phantom of the opera.’ “

Regarding fashion styles of the 1970s...Paisleys, Earth shoes, leisure suits in colors like rust, peach, power blue and lime green – well, the less described, the better.

Let’s talk art. In 1970, Hoosier-born Robert Indiana creates his iconic LOVE sculpture, that’s been displayed ever since here at the Museum of Art.

In 1978, Indianapolis endured what’s generally considered the worst blizzard in city history.

The decade also includes the opening of Market Square Arena, Elvis Presley’s final concert – anywhere – is at MSA in 1977 two months before his death. And the debut of a Channel 13 weatherman named David Letterman who causes confusion with his quirky reports that predict hail the size of canned hams

At local rival Channel 8, weekend anchor Jane Pauley is hired away and after a brief stop on Chicago TV, is chosen at age 25 to replace Barbara Walters on ‘The Today Show’

There’s a telethon with Mayor William Hudnut and Bobby “Slick” Leonard to “Save the Pacers” – the city is in danger of losing the team.

The Pacers end up staying here as we move into the 1980s.

AND WE ARE STILL HERE

## **Contemporary Club 1980s**

Club presidents during the 1980s include Mr. Henry Ryder.

Speakers in the 1980s include Mayor Hudnut.

Two Club anniversary celebrations are squeezed into the decade. In May 1981, there’s a belated 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala. The setting is Woodstock Country Club.

Then at the end of the decade the Club celebrates its 100th anniversary. In September 1989 - with a black tie dinner at the Columbia Club. At the conclusion, the ubiquitous Mr. Henry Ryder leads the group in singing Auld Lang Syne

During the 1980s, the city – specifically, downtown – starts roaring to life. A domed football stadium goes up, then Mayflower moving vans transport the Colts in the middle of the night from Baltimore. Baltimore, hometown of Edgar Allen Poe, hates us forevermore

No matter, in 1987, Indy hosts the exhilarating Pan American Games. Our largest international sport event EVER, it cements our reputation as “amateur athletics capital.” Pan Am organizer Mark Miles is a Contemporary Club speaker around this time. And several governing bodies of Olympic sports move here

In the center of downtown, the Circle Theater – following decades of deterioration and decaying into a B-run movie house – has a stunning restoration. The Symphony Orchestra – after having been organized in part decades earlier at The Circle – moves from Clowes Hall into the gloriously restored Theater. By the way, in 1986, the Circle REVERTS to its historic roots as a movie house. And is the setting for the WORLD PREMIERE of a little movie called “Hoosiers”. That movie – considered no big deal during its making, when filmmakers had to beg for extras – will go on to be named the BEST SPORTS MOVIE EVER MADE by Sports Illustrated and ESPN. And by anyone with a heart.

The springing to life continues with the opening of the Eitlejorg Museum - Designed by young local architect, Jonathan Hess, who will be a Club speaker in the next decade.

In other news, in 1988 Evan Bayh, at age 32, is elected Indiana’s governor, and it’s the decade of yuppies, Ronald Reagan, TV shows like “Dynasty”, and a revolutionary all-news TV network named CNN. In terms of cultural impact, CNN becomes the “Google” of its day. But Google itself has to wait for another decade. First, it is the 1990s.

AND WE ARE STILL HERE

### **Contemporary Club 1990s**

In the 1990s, something called the Internet explodes into our lives  
So do cell phones and DVDs

And the Contemporary Club hits the road. According to 1997 president Bob Everitt, the goal that year is to “have programs and/or venues that deviate from the standard dinner at a country-club-and-speaker format”. So the Club visits the oldest TAVERN in the state of Indiana that’s the Slippery Noodle, which opened in 1850. Today, the Noodle is also the oldest commercial building in the city and a popular venue for blues music

Also on the road, the Club gathers for a discussion by the author of a bestselling book about the Iditarod. This is at North Central High School, and the refreshments include cookies shaped like dog biscuits

Other speakers during the 1990s include: Homegrown baseball great Carl Erskine, the pride of Anderson, Indiana. Carl had a stellar career with, first, the Brooklyn Dodgers, then he threw out the first pitch when the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles. Carl Erskine eventually is named a Living Legend by the Indiana Historical Society.

In fact, it is striking to me how MANY of the Club speakers during the 1990s and beyond have been given that Living Legend distinction. Another of them during the 1994 season is Indiana’s senior Senator Richard Lugar.

Club presidents include, in 1990, Alan Hyde, the father of current VICE president Charlie Hyde.

In the city, there are more MAJOR changes DOWNTOWN and in SPORTS during the 1990s. The long-delayed Circle Centre Mall opens with fireworks in 1995.

NASCAR comes to the Brickyard, and the first stock car race is won by a 23-year-old who grew up nearby in Pittsboro, Jeff Gordon. At the end of the decade, Market Square Arena is “imploded” and Conseco Fieldhouse opens as the new home of the Pacers

And as the CENTURY draws to a close, there is news to report about our founder May Wright Sewall. At the Indianapolis Star, where I’m then a feature writer, editors want to involve readers in all of the new millennium hoopla. They ask me to put together a BALLOT OF 70 distinguished men and women. We ask our readers to VOTE for THE TOP 10 GREATEST HOOSIERS OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. Thousands voted. I bring all of this up because of what happened to May Wright Sewall. She ends up in between Indiana Pacer Reggie Miller and sex researcher Alfred Kinsey. Not too shabby – In Indiana, to finish in between BASKETBALL and SEX . . . for a civic leader of 100 years ago, I think that’s great

And speaking of the new millennium, It is now officially the 2000s.

AND WE ARE STILL HERE

### **Contemporary Club 2000s**

AND “STAR WARS” IS STILL HERE.

With the new century, the city is much more DIVERSE. In contrast to 100 years ago, when 70 percent of residents describe themselves as having German heritage, at the new century, 17 percent say they do. There have been waves of new residents, from Italians and Eastern Europeans to African-Americans, Asians and Hispanics.

Mirroring the times, Club speakers during the decade include: Former IPS superintendent Esperanza Zendejas, a native of Mexico, Butler University president Bobby Fong visits in 2003, the title of his presentation is “The Status and Growth of Butler University”

And one of the 2007 speakers is Maxwell Anderson, the widely acclaimed new CEO and director of the Indianapolis Museum of Art. For that event, the Club meets HERE (the Art Museum)

And nothing against Max Anderson, Dr. Fong or Esperanza Zendejas, but from many accounts it sounds like the most memorable meeting of the decade occurs early on, in September 2001. This is the Club’s first gathering since 9/11. About 260 members gather at the Historical Society for a pre-planned celebration of the music of the Gershwins, but what happens first is a moment of silence in the auditorium. Then the “Star Spangled Banner” is played. According to Club president Tom Krasean, “At the conclusion of the National Anthem, there were few dry eyes.”

So everyone’s lives are changed that fall. But there are always things to celebrate and showcase. During this decade, the Club tours the new NCAA Hall of Champions in White River State Park and its neighbor, the brand new Indiana State Museum.

Speakers near the end of the decade include the new mayor, Greg Ballard.

Club presidents include several women . . . Jamia Jacobsen and Peggy Sabens are among them.

And speaking of celebrating, you can’t mention this decade here without noting that in February 2007 the football team that, at one point shortly after moving to India-

NO-Place, had a 0-13 record. Well, in February 2007 the Indianapolis Colts go all the way and win the Super Bowl

I think the glow is still with us as we enter 2010.

AND WE ARE STILL HERE

### **Contemporary Club 2010s --- FINALE**

So we come to this year and a new decade.

After starting 120 years ago in May Wright Sewall's parlor, we have come through Benjamin Harrison's head cold, visits by future Presidents, the hurricane-like storm explosions, the dawning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the opera diva who wouldn't sing, the Jazz Age, Prohibition, the Great Depression, the two world wars, rationing, the magician who stalked off the stage, the un-hooded eagle who swooped around an art gallery, the Russian visitor who washed her fruit in drinking glasses, India-NO-Place, exiled European royalty, the Saturday Night Massacre of Mr. Ruckleshaus, a resurgent downtown, the new millennium, a Super Bowl win, the starts of beautiful friendships.

**AND WE ARE STILL HERE!**

### **Acknowledgments**

"Indianapolis From Our Old Corner" by Charlotte Cathcart. (Indiana Historical Society Press./The Studio Press Inc., 1965)

"Indianapolis Then and Now" by Nelson Price (Thunder Bay Press, 2004)

"American Chronicles, 1920-1989: Seven Decades in American Life" by Lois Gordon and Alan Gordon (Crown Publishers, 1990).

"Indiana Legends: Famous Hoosiers from Johnny Appleseed to David Letterman, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition" by Nelson Price (Hawthorne Publishing, 2005)

"When We Were Young: A Baby Boomer Yearbook" by Rita Lang Kleinfelder (Prentice Hall, 1993)

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*Note: Nelson Price's speech was extremely well received by the 300 members in attendance, and earned him a standing ovation and a champagne toast. There was an immediate and overwhelming interest in obtaining copies of his presentation. This document was made possible through the gracious consent of the author.*

## THE CLUB'S OFFICERS

### PRESIDENTS

Mrs. May Wright Sewall.....	1890-1891
Mr. William Dudley Foulke.....	1891-1892
Mr. Nathaniel A. Hyde.....	1892-1893
Mr. Albert G. Porter.....	1893-1894
Mr. William P. Fishback.....	1894-1895
Mr. John E. Cleland.....	1895-1896
Mr. John L. Griffiths.....	1896-1897
Prof. Demarchus C. Brown.....	1897-1898
Mr. Charles R. Williams.....	1898-1899
Miss Catherine Merrill.....	1899-1900
Mr. Thomas C. Day.....	1900-1901
Mrs. William L. Elder.....	1901-1902
Mr. Meredith Nicholson.....	1902-1903
Mr. Alfred F. Potts.....	1903-1904
Mr. Charles W. Moores.....	1904-1905
Mr. Hilton U. Brown.....	1905-1906
Mr. Hewitt H. Howland.....	1906-1907
Mrs. John M. Judah.....	1907-1908
Mr. Merrill Moores.....	1908-1909
Mr. John B. Elam.....	1909-1910
Mr. Evans Woollen.....	1910-1911
Judge A. B. Anderson.....	1911-1913
Mr. Charles Martindale.....	1913-1914
Mr. Lee Burns.....	1914-1915
Mr. William P. Kappes.....	1915-1916
Miss May Shipp.....	1916-1917
Rev. F. S. C. Wicks.....	1917-1918
Mr. Lucius B. Swift.....	1918-1919
Mrs. Albert Rabb.....	1919-1920
Mr. H. H. Hornbrook.....	1920-1921
Dr. Carleton B. McCulloch.....	1921-1922
Mr. J. W. Fesler.....	1922-1923
Mr. D. Laurance Chambers.....	1923-1924
Mr. Alexander R. Holliday.....	1924-1925

Miss Margaret Donnan .....	1925-1926
Mr. Christopher B. Coleman.....	1926-1927
Mr. Robert A. Adams.....	1927-1928
Mr. J. J. Daniels .....	1928-1929
Mr. Theodore B. Griffith .....	1929-1930
Mr. E. H. Kemper McComb .....	1930-1931
Mr. Warrack Wallace.....	1931-1932
Mr. Thomas D. Sherrin .....	1932-1933
Dr. Robert A. Milliken.....	1933-1934
Mr. Herman W. Wolff .....	1934-1935
Mr. Philip C. Lewis.....	1935-1936
Mr. Evans Woolen, Jr. ....	1936-1937
Dr. William N. Wishard, Jr.....	1937-1938
Mr. John Collett .....	1938-1939
Mr. Carl J. Wilde .....	1939-1940
Mr. Samuel R. Harrell.....	1940-1941
Mr. Hubert Hickam.....	1941-1942
Mr. Herman W. Kothe .....	1942-1943
Mr. Willbur D. Peat .....	1943-1944
Dr. Jerome Littell .....	1944-1945
Mr. Harold B. Tharp .....	1945-1946
Mr. Grier Shotwell .....	1946-1947
Mr. R. Hartley Sherwood.....	1947-1948
Mr. John I. Kautz .....	1948-1949
Mr. Newell C. Munson .....	1949-1950
Mr. C. R. Weiss.....	1950-1952
Mr. Allen W. Clowes .....	1952-1954
Mr. Robert Ashby .....	1954-1956
Mr. F. M. Hadley .....	1956-1957
Mr. LeRoy G. Gordner.....	1957-1959
Mr. Noble Dean, Jr.....	1959-1961
Mr. Harry V. Wade .....	1961-1962
Mr. Carter B. Tharp .....	1962-1963
Mr. Robert D. Coleman .....	1963-1964
Mr. John M. Kitchen.....	1964-1966
Mr. William R. Higgens, Jr.....	1966-1968
Mr. Thomas M. Billings.....	1968-1969
Mr. Paul H. Buchanan, Jr.....	1969-1971

Mr. John O. LaFollette.....	1971-1972
Mr. Charles E. Meyer.....	1972-1973
Mr. Paul F. Kortepeter .....	1973-1974
Mr. D. David Kriplen.....	1974-1975
Mr. H. Earl Capehart, Jr.....	1975-1976
Mr. Clarence W. Schnicke.....	1976-1977
Mr. J. Edward Ransel.....	1977-1978
Mr. James F. Bash.....	1978-1979
Mrs. Howard R. Meeker, Jr .....	1979-1980
Mr. William M. Evans .....	1980-1981
Mr. Lewis A. Enkema.....	1981-1982
Mr. Henry C. Ryder .....	1982-1983
Mr. Arthur C. Schrader.....	1983-1984
Mr. William S. Ramey.....	1984-1985
Mr. Herbert E. Strong, Jr .....	1985-1986
Mr. L. Robert Lowe, Jr .....	1986-1987
Mr. Fritz R. Gordner .....	1987-1988
Mr. Gordon D. Wishard.....	1988-1989
Mr. Peter B. Krieg.....	1989-1990
Mr. George C. Charbonneau.....	1990-1991
Mr. Alan D. Hyde .....	1991-1992
Mr. King R. Traub .....	1992-1993
Mrs. John E. Stiers.....	1993-1994
Mr. R. Ronald Calkins .....	1994-1995
Mrs. Fritz R. Gordner.....	1995-1996
Mr. Howard R. Meeker, Jr.....	1996-1997
Mr. G. Thomas Carlino.....	1997-1998
Mr. Robert H. Everitt.....	1998-1999
Mrs. James C. Carter.....	1999-2000
Dr. John G. Pantzer, Jr.....	2000-2001
Mr. Thomas K. Krasean.....	2001-2002
Mrs. Stephen E. DeVoe .....	2002-2003
Mr. Donald G. Sutherland.....	2003-2004
Mr. Alan R. Kimbell .....	2004-2005
Dr. Jamia Jasper Jacobsen.....	2005-2006
Mr. Howard F. Creveling, Jr.....	2006-2007
Mr. Donald Menchhofer .....	2007-2008
Mrs. James A. Sabens .....	2008-2009

Mr. Douglas M. Wade .....	2009-2010
Mrs. Carole C. Garstang .....	2010-2011
Mr. Charles A. Hyde.....	2011-2012
Mrs. Lynn Wilson .....	2012-2013
Mr. John K. Powell .....	2013-2014
Dr. James H. Glass.....	2014-2015
Mr. Brad B. Boyd.....	2015-2016
Mrs. Carole Darst.....	2016-2017
Mrs. Phyllis Geeslin.....	2017-2018
Mrs. Samantha Hyde.....	2018-2019
Mr. David Stuhldreher .....	2019-2020

### SECRETARIES

Mr. Frank H. Blackledge .....	1890-1891
Mr. Theodore L. Sewall .....	1891-1896
Mr. George T. Porter.....	1896-1897
Mrs. May Wright Sewall.....	1897-1901
Mr. Charles W. Merrill .....	1901-1903
Mrs. Lucius B. Swift.....	1903-1904
Mr. Calvin N. Kendall .....	1904-1905
Mr. Frederick R. Kautz .....	1905-1907
Mr. D. Laurance Chambers.....	1907-1908
Mr. William P. Hapgood.....	1908-1909
Mr. Lee Burns .....	1909-1912
Mr. J. W. Fesler.....	1912-1914
Mr. Edmund H. Eitel.....	1914-1917
Mr. Frederick G. Melcher .....	1917-1918
Mr. D. Laurance Chambers.....	1918-1920
Mr. Albert L. Rabb.....	1920-1923
Mr. Myron R. Green .....	1923-1928
Mr. Warrack Wallace.....	1928-1929
Mr. Robert C. Winslow.....	1929-1930
Mr. William R. Higgins .....	1930-1931
Mr. Philip C. Lewis.....	1931-1933
Mr. Herman W. Kothe .....	1933-1940
Mr. Francis W. Dunn .....	1940-1942
Mr. Paul E. Fisher .....	1942-1948

Mr. Newell C. Munson .....	1948-1949
Mr. Edwin M. McNally .....	1949-1956
Mr. Ralph Vonnegut .....	1956-1957
Mr. Ralph L.Flood .....	1957-1958
Mr. Reily G. Adams.....	1958-1959
Mr. Joseph C. Wallace .....	1959-1961
Mr. Newell C. Munson .....	1961-1964
Mr. Bloor Redding.....	1964-1965
Mr. John Dean.....	1965-1966
Mr. Richard Fowler.....	1967-1968
Mr. Douglas R. Shortridge.....	1968-1970
Mr. William M. Evans .....	1970-1972
Mr. G. Vance Smith, Jr .....	1972-1974
Mr. William E. Roberts.....	1974-1975
Mr. James F. Bash.....	1975-1977
Mr. Arthur W. Banta.....	1977-1979
Mr. William S. Ramey .....	1979-1981
Mr. Herbert E. Strong, Jr. ....	1981-1983
Mr. Fritz R. Gordner .....	1983-1986
Mr. James L. Murray, Jr.....	1986-1987
Mr. Peter B. Krieg.....	1987-1988
Mr. Alan D. Hyde .....	1988-1990
Mrs. Howard F. Creveling .....	1990-1991
Mrs. Alvin E. Meyer .....	1991-1992
Mrs. James L. Murray, Jr .....	1992-1994
Mr. Harry V. Huffman .....	1994-1995
Mr. Arthur Christian Schrader, Jr. ....	1995-1997
Mrs. Charles H. Warneke.....	1997-1998
Mrs. William H. Cook .....	1999-2000
Mrs. Robert M. Anderson .....	2000-2002
Mrs. Philip M. Morton .....	2002-2004
Mrs. Alan T. Nolan .....	2004-2005
Mrs. Susan Hudnut.....	2005-2006
Mrs. F. Jean Turner .....	2006-2007
Mrs. Constance C. Earle .....	2007-2008
Mrs. Charles W. Culp .....	2008-2009
Mrs. Neil C. Norrick .....	2009-2010
Mrs. Barbara Summers .....	2010-2012

Mrs. Pat Garrett Rooney .....	2012-2013
Mrs. Barbara Summers .....	2013-2014
Mrs. Carole Darst.....	2014-2015
Mrs. Donna Willis-Brown .....	2015-2016
Ms. Valerie George.....	2016-2018
Mrs. Dolores Hoyt .....	2018-2020

### **TREASURERS**

Mr. John N. Hurty .....	1890-1895
Dr. Charles E. Ferguson.....	1895-1898
Mr. George E. Hume.....	1898-1901
Mr. Frank N. Lewis.....	1901-1902
Mr. John O. Perrin .....	1902-1903
Mr. Frank N. Lewis.....	1903-1904
Mr. William L. Elder .....	1904-1906
Mr. Harry J. Milligan .....	1906-1907
Mr. Henry W. Bennett .....	1907-1908
Mr. Evans Woollen .....	1908-1910
Mr. William Kerfoot Stewart.....	1910-1912
Mr. George C. Calvert .....	1912-1922
Mr. Gilbert J. Hurty .....	1922-1923
Mr. Irving M. Fauvre .....	1933-1948
Mr. Burke Nicholas.....	1948-1949
Mr. Carter B. Tharp .....	1950-1962
Mr. Kennard King.....	1962-1965
Mr. Bloor Redding.....	1965-1969
Mr. Horace A. Shonle .....	1969-1970
Mr. William B. Clark .....	1970-1972
Mr. J. Edward Ransel.....	1972-1975
Mr. Richard K. Fowler.....	1975-1976
Mr. Robert T. Whitcraft .....	1976-1978
Mr. Alfred E. Kuerst .....	1978-1980
Mr. Robert H. Zeigler .....	1980-1993
Mr. Howard A. Pelham.....	1993-2008
Mr. David A. McDaniel, CPA .....	2008-2017
Mr. John Medaris .....	2017-2019
Mr. Tom Jenkins .....	2019-2020