

Beaumont History #1

The Beaumont Pan American Round Table had its first meeting in September 1939. It was organized by Mrs. Clyde Marchbanks who was niece of Mrs. Florence Terry Griswold, the Founder.

For several years the Members met twice a month at the old Edson Hotel. Later, when the hotel was sold, our meetings were on the second floor of the then Security National Bank on Orleans Street.

There was great enthusiasm among the members for the study of the history, arts and language of our sister republics. The programs were full of interest and many members who were not Spanish speaking studied in classes, accepting instruction from those who did know the language.

Early in 1940 the Table was visited by the State Director, Mrs. d'Arcy Cashin, who was also a member of the Houston Round Table. She gave a broader sense of the movement, and encouraged us to regard ourselves as part of a great purpose – the well stated purpose of understanding and friendship. This sense was more deeply developed when two of our members attended an Alliance Convention at Dallas, presided over by the then Director General, Mrs. Lois Hugo, a member of the Table in Mexico City.

The Beaumont Table had given scholarship aid to two Latin American students attending Lamar in 1955-56, but hoped to accumulate enough to grant a full scholarship to a Latin American girl. After several years it was accomplished and we brought a young teacher from Concepcion, Chile.

It was a wonderful success and she graduated from Lamar University and became a fine teacher.

Prior to this time we had instituted a Spanish Contest at Lamar University awarding money prizes to local students who were proficient in speaking, reading and writing Spanish. Along with awarding scholarships we also continued the Spanish Contest each year. When circumstances permitted we sent some of our own students in Texas to Mexico for the six weeks summer course at the Monterrey Institute of Technology. This also proved very successful and several of the recipients became very fine Spanish teachers. In this effort we were greatly helped and encouraged by the faculty of Modern Language Department at Lamar University; they assisted us in selecting the students with the best potential.

Of late years our Table has declined due to death and illness of our older members, and since the City is greatly over-organized with clubs of one kind or another our ranks are not replenished. This past year we were not able to assemble a full corps of officers and therefore curtailed the number of meetings and activities.

We have a good history. We did accomplish some worthwhile things, and the friends we made among Latin American women are precious to us.

History II

What follows is an excerpt from *The Pan American Round Table*, Lois Terry Marchbanks, Avon Behren Press, 1983, (pp. 114-116).

The Beaumont Pan American Round Table was organized in August 1939, by Mrs. John Case Griswold with Mrs. Clyde Marchbanks, niece of Mrs. Griswold, as our first director. She established the Table most successfully and in appreciation, the Table elected Mrs. Marchbanks in 1941 as Honorary Life Director. From the very first the membership was made up of women who were eager to study and to understand the relations that must be established in the Americas if we are to live in amity.

How fortunate this new Table was to have the Founder, Mrs. Griswold, to be our "founder". In her talk to us, she very clearly and succinctly voiced her expectations that we become a serious and responsible Table, dedicated to uphold the Pan American ideals.

Mrs. Griswold's address, given in Beaumont in 1939.

"Try to remember that a Pan American Round Table is not a club in the ordinary sense of the word. Your purpose will not be to have a grand big time among yourselves, but to work for understanding among the women of the Americas; North, South and Central.

"First, there is the necessity for overcoming ignorance, especially your own. Study, think, discuss, learn. Don't wait for somebody to come and tell you. Find out for yourselves."

"Never neglect the Round Table concept, which is a coming together to discuss, to share the things you have learned, to ask questions. Never let your Round Table come to depend on speakers who may only entertain you. If you study and watch and learn about all the countries of our Americas, you will become authorities yourselves. Think what it means to know and understand the geography, history and culture of a Hemisphere".

"Be careful what you do with your money. Use it only for stated purposes of the Pan American Round Tables. Never, never, NEVER let your Round Table become just a tail to some other kite. If you don't stick to one purpose, you will lose your way."

"Don't try to be too big. Be busy. Check yourselves to see if you are accomplishing what the Round Tables are intended to do."

"Try to think about the other Americas as if they were as precious as your own country. If you will work on this you will find that Argentina, Peru and Mexico will seem as important to you as Louisiana and Arkansas neighbors, parts of a whole."

"Now, one thing more, a little delicate. If you find yourselves with a member who is forgetful of the purposes of the Round Tables and seeks and struggles for her own glory - make her the custodian of the flags. There is enough glory in these American flags for anybody."

Our Charter was received early in 1940, and the first yearbook shows the following members:

Director - Mrs. Clyde Marchbanks

Active:

Mrs. C.O. Prickett
Mrs. J.B. Morris
Miss May Shipley
Mrs. Donald Streater
Mrs. Arthur Dooley
Mrs. E.L. Conyers
Mrs. S. Rosinger
Mrs. C.H. Walker
Mrs. Guy Reed
Miss Harriet Rietveld
Mrs. Melvin Dunn
Mrs. L.J. Tillery
Miss Pearl Burr
Mrs. L.L. Rupert
Mrs. C.H. Hendry
Mrs. Arthur Nall
Mrs. T.M. Keiller
Mrs. W.G. Lovell
Mrs. Felix Martin
Mrs. Jack Allen
Mrs. Rose Wahrmond
Mrs. Frank Higgins

Associate:

Miss Della Ashley
Mrs. B.F. Beck
Miss Fannie Bouton
Miss Pearl Brock
Mrs. W.E. Glover
Mrs. Leo Gordon
Mrs. W.D. Gordon
Mrs. Hal Greer
Mrs. R.E. Hilliard
Mrs. Clyde Jones
Mrs. L.W. Jonietz
Mrs. Frank Keith
Dr. Lena Milam
Mrs. L.R. Pietsch
Mrs. Irving Rosenfield
Mrs. W.H. Stewart
Miss Dorothy Stine
Miss Nancy Snider
Mrs. Beeman Strong
Mrs. Clem Winkler
Miss Fay Wilson

Honorary Member: Mrs. Jose Martinez

Beaumont is completely off the beaten path that diplomats use in their travels and visits. There is not even a Latin American consulate in the city; therefore, it is not very often that we come in contact with people of the other American Republics. However, the Table has been privileged to entertain several distinguished visitors from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela.

Because of this situation, it behooved the Pan American Round Table in Beaumont to do the next best thing. To become acquainted with the cultural, social, economic, geographic and political situations that exist in the Americas. In other words our own geographical position has forced us into becoming for the most part, a study group. But we have learned there are a great many needs in our own community, and the result is that we have done a good bit of local work among Latin Americans.

The Beaumont Pan American Round Table has sponsored essay contests in the schools and has offered prizes in the four high schools to the students most noted for their ability in conversational Spanish. Spanish and Portuguese classes were conducted for more than two years for both children and adults. One of the most noted achievements were Spanish classes conducted over the radio. This was especially successful.

Several of our women have written articles that have been accepted by the newspapers and magazines. Our Director, Mrs. Lois Marchbanks, conducted a daily radio program and many times discussed Pan American problems and questions. Several times each year she has broadcast especially to the schools in the area and it has been an established procedure that she broadcasts a program to the schools on Pan American Day.

On April 24, 1945, the Beaumont Pan American Round Table observed its meeting with a beautifully appointed luncheon in the Pan American Room of the Edson Hotel. Mr. R.E. Smith of Houston, Chairman of The Good Neighbor Commission, Mrs. Darcy Cashin, State Director and Mrs. Wright Matthews, State Treasurer, were guests of honor, each of whom brought a message of interest to the Beaumont Table. The same trio were honor guests at a reception given by Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Marchbanks. The following morning, April 25th, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Cashin and Mrs. Matthews were given fifteen minutes on Station KFDM. At noon, Mr. Smith was principal speaker at a Rotary luncheon attended by more than two hundred members. He was introduced by Mrs. Cashin.

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