

HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB

The Women's Travel Club was founded in an era of "Whither thou goest, I will go." In our case "thou" were husbands, fathers, and uncles who were traveling to far corners of the world. Many of these gentlemen were personal friends and colleagues, and they decided it would be mutually advantageous and enjoyable to share their travel experiences. In an age of thriving clubmanship, they founded the Harvard Travellers Club. The year was 1902.

But "thou" didn't travel alone. When the Harvard Travellers met and shared their tales of far-off peoples and places, it may or may not have occurred to them to note that their wives and daughters often had accompanied them. But it did occur to the ladies. They, too, had seen the diversity of the world's peoples, observed the complexity of human institutions, and viewed the monuments to gods and demons that decorate foreign landscapes. They, too, had crossed oceans, climbed mountains, and delighted in the variety of flora and fauna that inhabit the globe. If meetings of the Harvard Travellers were so enlightening as they were purported to be, why shouldn't the ladies get together and share their experiences? Why not indeed!

In October 1934, Augusta Batchelder Hartt invited five friends to lunch at the Chilton Club. Nothing out of the ordinary was anticipated by Mrs. Hartt's guests. More than a half-century later this story is being told because, at that assuredly gracious occasion, Mrs. Hartt proposed the idea of forming a club composed of women who had made unusual travels. "No cruisers or casual tourists," she said. Her idea was enthusiastically received. In addition to Mrs. Hartt, the so-called "Six Self-Starters" were Mrs. Larz Anderson, Mrs. Richard B. Hobart, Mrs. George A. Lyon, Mrs. William W. Schofield, and Mrs. Jasper Whiting. Four of the six were married to members of the Harvard Travellers Club.

The first order of business for the Six Self-Starters was to enlarge the group. Within one month a list of Charter Members was compiled, and the first organizational meeting of the Travel Club for Women was held on November 8, 1934, at the home of Mrs. Anderson on Commonwealth Avenue. Mrs. Hartt presided as Temporary Chairman. The dues for active members was set at \$3 and the purpose of the club was declared to be "the promotion of intelligent travel and exploration by women." (In 1989 the word "promotion," thought to sound a bit too commercial, albeit unintentionally, was changed to the "sharing" of intelligent travel and exploration by women.)

The Charter Members were:

Miss Mary Ogden Abbott
Mrs. Larz Anderson
Mrs. Hyles P. Baker
Mrs. Eric Bates
Mrs. William W. Claflin, Jr.
Mrs. John G. Coolidge
Mrs. Carleton S. Coon
(later Mrs. Stanley Salmon)
Mrs. Albert M. Creighton
Mrs. Courtenay Crocker
Mrs. Richard C. Curtis
Mrs. Raymond Emerson
Miss Ethel A. Forbes
Mrs. Horace U. Gade
Mrs. E.T. Gregory
Mrs. Arthur M. Hartt
Mrs. Richard B. Hobart

Mrs. Ernest W. Wicking
Mrs. George A. Lyon
Mrs. Charles MacVeagh
Mrs. Francis P. Mayoun, Jr.
Mrs. Daniel de Menocal
Mrs. Frank Cabot Peaine
Mrs. William W. Schofield
Mrs. George C. Shattuck
Mrs. Joseph Linden Smith
Mrs. Henry Stinson
Mrs. Frederick M. Stone
Mrs. Richard P. Strong
Mrs. A. Leas Strong
Mrs. Rebecca Smith Taylor
(later Mrs. F.B.S. Bird)
Mrs. Robert L.M. Underhill
Mrs. Jasper Whiting

On November 27, 1934, a second meeting was held, again at the home of Mrs. Anderson, and the club's first officers were elected. Mrs. Hartt modestly declined the office of President, and Mrs. Shattuck was so named. Mrs. Hartt became the Vice-President. (The election of two Vice-Presidents was instituted in 1937). Women's Travel Club became the official name, although colorful alternatives had been suggested, including Marco Polo Club and Lady Westar Stanhope Club.

The first regular meeting of the Women's Travel Club was held on January 14, 1935, at the Boston headquarters of the Girl Scouts, 87 Beacon Street. (Mrs. Hartt's chief interest throughout her life was the Girl Scouts, and this undoubtedly accounts for the meeting being held there.) Twenty-one women had joined the new club, bringing the membership, with the Charter Members, to 33. The meeting began with the reading of a letter of congratulations and wishes for future success from Thomas D. Cabot, Secretary of the Harvard Travellers Club.

Mrs. Carleton S. Coon (later Mrs. Stanley Salmon) holds the distinction of being the first person, in a long and remarkable list of women and men, singly, in pairs, and on panels, to address members of the Women's Travel Club. She spoke on her "Travels in Southern Arabia."

*The niece of Prime Minister William Pitt, and accomplished hostess of his illustrious household, Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope (1776-1839) left a comfortable life in England at age 14 and after extensive traveling settled among the Druses of Mount Lebanon. Her influence was said to be considerable; owing in part, no doubt, to her self-proclaimed powers of divination! She remained in Syria (now Lebanon) until her death.

In the early years the club often had speakers who were not members. Among the well-known were Baroness Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen); Margaret Mead; H.R.W. Princess Ileana of Romania, the granddaughter of Queen Victoria; and Jane Goodall. In recent years we have been enlightened by the presentations of non-member scholarship recipients as well as members' spouses.

The second meeting also was held at the Girl Scout headquarters, followed by two at the Y.W.C.A. Most of the meetings for the next three years were held at the Club of Odd Volumes on Mt. Vernon Street, until that club moved across the street and increased the rent.

Priced out of the regular use of the Club of Odd Volumes, the ladies began to hold meetings at the Women's College Club and the Boston Architectural Club. But they were not happy with this itinerancy, and in 1938 decided to find permanent quarters. That decision is surely part of the reason the club exists today. A sense of camaraderie and intimacy began to develop that would cement lifelong friendships. For the next 17 years the Women's Travel Club represented a place as well as an idea. It's true that the club rooms changed — four times, in fact — but each location had its special attraction.

The first home of the club was the top (fourth) floor of 18 Fairfield Street. The rent was \$45 per month. A housewarming party was held on November 29, 1939. The minutes record that the members were delighted. The rooms were well furnished with gifts and loans from members and included sofas, tables, chairs, and a grand piano. Maps of the world covered the walls. They had a bathroom and a small kitchenette, where members could prepare tea or luncheon for friends. And there was a Russian restaurant on the first floor, where a full-course meal cost 85 cents. The ladies often had food sent up from the restaurant, and some of their small occasions, according to Mrs. Whiting, had an "almost Bohemian atmosphere, unusual in Boston!" Both Executive Committee and regular meetings were held there, and by renting to other groups the club treasury was enriched. Every member had a key to the rooms and could stop by anytime.

As pleasant as it was, the Fairfield address was lived. Before a year had passed the building was sold; the club moved to a first-floor room at the rear of 1 Commonwealth Avenue. Large meetings were held in a room at the front of the building. There was more concern the war in Europe than about the attractiveness of the accommodation, however, and the latter was deemed adequate. A Red Cross Sewing Unit was started, and for a year or more came weekly to make layettes. Many club members were in the war years, and those in Boston became increasingly involved in a variety of war efforts. They invested \$700 in U.S. Bonds, and kept a file of their war activities. The room was smaller than before, but the commitment to continue was

[The only other time the survival of humanity be subject of collective club concern was in 1962. Although opinions differed about the strategy, the Executive Committee agreed that members should be encouraged to join the number of people opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. A letter was sent to all the members with a list of 100 organizations and the names of organizations that were working to halt the nuclear arms race. In order to be subject to the purposes of the club, the letter stated that there would be no world to travel in if nuclear war were unleashed.]

In 1941, again because of an increase in rent, 1 Commonwealth Avenue became the club's third home. The room was controlled by the federal government and housed a educational radio station. Although there were the most attractive rooms the club ever had, with a fireplace, courtyard, there were drawbacks. For security reasons had to identify themselves every time they entered the station personnel often interrupted their meeting the foreign language programs were of interest, and sometimes assisted the broadcasters. The government's prohibition on serving alcohol was ignored — the club regularly served sherry! The club remained at this address for the next 10 years.

75 Newbury Street was the last and final home of a large room was shared with the Pan American Society some luncheons and dinners were held elsewhere. (Mrs. Anderson founded the Pan American Society in 1940 for Latin American students who no longer could attend schools in Europe of the war and were coming to universities in Boston, increasing numbers.) The beginning of the end was at however, and the results of a questionnaire sent to the membership on the subject of a permanent location bro deliberations on the matter to a close. It had become to rent rooms, sharing with the Pan American Society ideal, and lives were just too busy to continue to use permanent quarters. Members met at the Pan American for two years, but 1954 marked the end of an era for Travel Club. In the spirit of a good traveler, the club on the road and has been there ever since.

Though members missed the unique quality that had permanent quarters provided (in 1968 the minutes record discussion of the possibility of again finding club meeting places in the past 35 years often have had the special rewards. Many gracious members have offered homes to the club for meetings. Collections of art and antiquities, beautiful gardens, and magnificent ocean have been the setting of monthly gatherings. We also in museums, at private clubs, in libraries, hotels, a ship in the Boston Harbor.

That the women in charge of hospitality have been resourceful and imaginative is unquestioned. But occasionally there were minor difficulties. The club had met at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1948, 1953 and 1958, but in 1961 a request to come again was refused for security reasons! Chinese national art treasures were on display, though why the Women's Travel Club was deemed a risk was not noted. Three years earlier no such problem had arisen when members had luncheon and viewed Korea's national treasures. The club didn't meet at the M.F.A. again until 1990, when a Monet exhibition occasioned a return to Huntington Avenue. In the early 1970s the Internal Revenue Service was another source of concern for the Hospitality Committee. Meetings frequently had been held at the Chilton Club but, according to I.R.S. regulations, only members of that club could be hostesses. It seemed unfair and unreasonable to expect the Chilton Club members in our group to be responsible for all the bills. The solution arrived at was to stay away from the Chilton Club for about a year and hope that the revenuers would forget about us! They didn't.

Boston was a small city when the Travel Club was founded. It was a city without skyscrapers, grid-locked traffic, and impossible parking problems. For nearly 10 years all but one or two meetings a year were held in the evening. By the mid-1940s that began to change, and most of the meetings were luncheons or afternoon teas. Annual dinners and meetings with the Harvard Travellers Club were held in the evening, and since the 1950s, one other meeting per year has been so scheduled. It was noted in Executive Committee minutes in 1966 that daytime meetings precluded the attendance of one member, a college professor. In the 1980s, not surprisingly, as younger members increasingly reflected the changing role of women in American society, the subject was discussed again at meetings of the Executive Committee.

The only organization with which the Women's Travel Club has ever held joint meetings throughout its six decades is the Harvard Travellers Club. It will be remembered that many early (and current) Travel Club members and Harvard Travellers were married to each other. Initial ventures were, in part, family affairs, which may account for their cordiality and the fact that they took place at all. The clubs have met together on 12 occasions, the first in 1938. The clubs continued to be guests of each other until 1949. From the 1950s onward, however, with financial considerations the deciding factor, "joint meetings" rather than "guests of" became the operative words. We were flattered to be invited to the Travellers 500th meeting in the early 1970s, but declined when told the cost would be \$10 per person. There had not been a combined gathering for 14 years when the clubs met together in 1976. Many of our members found the logistics, large size of the group, and the programs a problem. Mrs. Whiting, writing in 1958, had described our meetings with the Harvard Travellers Club as "milestones in the life of the Women's Travel Club," and one surely does not wish to give an impression to the contrary. When the Harvard Travellers decided to accept women as members a few years ago they showed exceedingly good judgment by including, among those first invited to join, members of the Women's Travel Club. Several others of our members have since joined, and so the relationship, one way or another, continues.

This essay would be far too lengthy if sufficient attention were given to the wonderful programs we have enjoyed over the years. And one would be remiss to include mention of some members' presentations while omitting others. Suffice it to say that we have shared with each other both views and visions of all the continents and oceans of the world. We have heard lectures about flying over the land, digging into it, climbing to its heights and skiing down from same. Adventures on the globe's waterways have been described via every conceivable manner of navigation. We have been favored with a number of talented artists among our members, who have rewarded us with displays and discussions of their own works. Experts on the world's flowers, birds, and mammals have shared their considerable knowledge on many occasions. And finally, be they with royalty or peasant, statesman or scoundrel, we have been enriched by the stories of encounters that continuously expand our understanding of the human inhabitants with whom we share the planet Earth.

Martha Lanberg-Karlovska
Melrose, 1990*

*This was written for a program on the history of the club held in 1989 on the occasion of its 55th anniversary. I acknowledge indebtedness to Mrs. Jasper Whiting's 1958 history from which I have borrowed liberally.

GOOD EVENING!

AT THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE WOMENS TRAVEL CLUB YESTERDAY, I ANNOUNCED THAT I HAD BEEN ASKED TO BRING THEIR GREETINGS TONIGHT AND THE MEMBERS PRESENT, MORE THAN HALF OF THE CURRENT 101 MEMBERS, HEARTILY ENDORSED MY DOING SO.

AS A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF BOTH THE WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB AND SUBSEQUENTLY THE HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB, I AM HONORED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO CLUBS.

MARTHA LAMBERG-KARLOVSKY, WHO ACKNOWLEDGES THE ASSISTANCE OF MRS. JASPER WHITING, KINDLY PROVIDED ME WITH A COPY OF HER HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB FROM WHICH I HAVE TAKEN A FEW HIGHLIGHTS.

THE WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB WAS FOUNDED IN AN ERA OF "WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO." IN THIS CASE "THOU" WERE HUSBANDS, FATHERS, AND UNCLAS WHO WERE TRAVELING TO FAR CORNERS OF THE WORLD. MANY OF THESE GENTLEMEN WERE PERSONAL FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES, AND DECIDING IT WOULD BE MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS AND ENJOYABLE TO SHARE THEIR TRAVEL EXPERIENCES, FOUNDED THE HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB IN 1902—AS WE WELL KNOW TONIGHT!

BUT "THOU" DIDN'T TRAVEL ALONE. THE CLUB MEMBERS WIVES AND DAUGHTERS HAD OFTEN ACCOMPANIED THEM. THEY, TOO, HAD SEEN THE WORLD'S WONDERS.

IF MEETINGS OF THE HARVARD TRAVELERS WERE AS ENLIGHTENING AS THEY WERE PURPORTED TO BE, WHY SHOULDN'T THE LADIES GET TOGETHER AND SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES? WHY NOT INDEED! SINCE THE WOMEN WERE NOT ELIGIBLE TO JOIN THE HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB AT THAT TIME, IT WAS DECIDED —IN 1934--TO FORM A WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB AS A COUNTERPART, MAKING NO EXCUSES OR APOLOGIES THAT THEIR NAME CLEARLY EXCLUDED MEN!

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MOST OF THE FOUNDERS AND MEMBERS WERE WIVES AND DAUGHTERS OF HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB MEMBERS.

THE FIRST REGULAR MEETING OF THE WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB BEGAN WITH THE READING OF A LETTER OF CONGRATULATIONS AND WISHES FOR FUTURE SUCCESS FROM THOMAS D. CABOT, SECRETARY OF THE HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB.

THE ONLY ORGANIZATION WITH WHICH THE WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB HAS EVER HELD JOINT MEETINGS THROUGHOUT ITS NEARLY SEVEN DECADES IS THE HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB. SINCE MANY EARLY (AND CURRENT) WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB AND HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB MEMBERS WERE (AND ARE) MARRIED TO EACH OTHER, INITIAL VENTURES WERE, IN PART, FAMILY AFFAIRS, WHICH MAY ACCOUNT FOR THEIR CORDIALITY AND THE FACT THAT THEY TOOK PLACE AT ALL.

THE FIRST OCCASION WAS IN 1938. THE CLUBS CONTINUED TO BE "GUESTS" OF EACH OTHER ANNUALLY UNTIL 1949. FROM THE 1950'S ONWARD, HOWEVER, WITH FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS THE DECIDING FACTOR, "JOINT MEETINGS" RATHER THAN "GUESTS OF" BECAME THE OPERATIVE WORDS.

THE WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB WAS FLATTERED TO BE INVITED TO THE HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB'S 500TH MEETING IN THE EARLY 1970'S BUT DECLINED WHEN TOLD THE COST WOULD BE \$10 PER PERSON.

THERE HAD NOT BEEN A COMBINED GATHERING FOR 14 YEARS WHEN THE CLUBS FINALLY CAME TOGETHER AGAIN IN 1976. WHEN THE HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB DECIDED TO ACCEPT WOMEN AS MEMBERS THEY SHOWED EXCEEDINGLY GOOD JUDGMENT BY INCLUDING, AMONG THE FIRST INVITED TO JOIN, MEMBERS OF THE WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB—MYSELF INCLUDED!

OUR CLUBS HAVE BEEN INTERTWINED IN MANY WAYS FROM OUR INCEPTION. SO, ON BEHALF OF THE WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB, I BRING GREETINGS, GOOD WISHES, AND GODSPEED AS THE HARVARD TRAVELERS CLUB ENTERS ITS SECOND CENTURY.

WOMEN'S TRAVEL CLUB
133 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston 16, Massachusetts

A special meeting will be held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 28 Newbury Street, Boston, on Thursday, March 27, at 8:30 p.m. (Please note change of place.) The members of the Harvard Travellers Club are cordially invited and husbands, wives and guests of both clubs are welcome. Dress optional.

“INDIANS AND COSTA RICA”

Doris Zemurray Stone (Mrs. Roger T. Stone), anthropologist, of San Jose, Costa Rica, will be our guest speaker. Mrs. Stone, a graduate of Radcliffe in 1930, has been for five years Research Fellow in Central American Anthropology of the Peabody Museum at Harvard; she is a member of the Board of Directors of the Escuela Agricola Panamerica at Tegucigalpa, Honduras, a trustee of Radcliffe College, a member of the Sociedad Anthropologica Mexicana and of the American Geographical Society. She has been a pioneer in the exploration of the Costa Rican jungles, being the discoverer of an Indian tribe hitherto unknown to the government itself; and she has been appointed by the government of Costa Rica to set up plans for the practical education of their neglected tribes. The talk will be illustrated.

DOROTHEA RICHARDS, President
FLORENCE K. MORRIS, Secretary

MRS. FREDERICK K. MORRIS
420 Memorial Drive
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

123 Brattle Street
Cambridge 38, Mass.

5 March 1947

Dear Mr. Fiske:

Enclosed is the copy for the Women's Travel Club invitation to our open meeting, containing some information about Mrs. Stone, the speaker, which you said you would like to have. The Tom Cabots, who have known her both here and in Costa Rica, say she is a most fascinating person and a brilliant speaker.

Sincerely yours,

Fatima H. Moore

Gardiner H. Fiske, Esq.
48 Franklin Street
Boston, Massachusetts

P.S. We are having the invitations printed, and they will be sent to Henry Hall to be mailed to Harvard Travellers Club members. We do hope a great many will be able to come.

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Dorothea Richards, President

Florence K. Morris, Secretary

Mrs. Frederick K. Morris
420 Memorial Drive
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

450 WARREN STREET L. CABOT, INC.
BROOKLINE, MASS. BOSTON OFFICE

February 15, 1935.

1935 FEB 18 AM 8 55

Mr. Thomas D. Cabot, Secretary
Harvard Travellers Club
77 Franklin Street, Boston

Dear Mr. Cabot:

The cordial letter of greeting from the Harvard Travellers Club to the Women's Travel Club on the occasion of their first meeting was read and received with great pleasure and appreciation. Will you please take our thanks to the Harvard Travellers Club.

Very sincerely yours,

Virginia C. Shattuck
(W.T.C.)

President
Women's Travel Club.

Dear Tom,

I have been in bed
several weeks with what
you go by the
name of a mild
phlebitis — and for
that matter I am still
flat.

This morning I told
the secretary to go down
and bring me everything
that was on my desk
for I knew there were
some papers there I
wanted her to file. To
my chagrin there was
also a "crumby" note

To gain an secretary of
The Harvard Trackers
club — it was not in
an envelope and it
was just never sent,
And here I was getting
fat and lazy and
blissfully unaware of
"unfinished business",
and very much ashamed.
Ginger came home this
evening and told me your
letter took it out and I
have extracted a promise
that he will bring it
home for me to see.

Always sincerely,

Virginia Shattuck

Friday,

330-DARTMOUTH-STREET-BOSTON

April 30th 1935

Thomas D. Cabot Esq
77 Franklin St.
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Cabot:

The members of the Executive Committee of the Women's Travel Club were so sorry to learn about your serious accident and, at the meeting on Monday, asked me to express our deep sympathy and our hope that you will make a speedy recovery.

Very sincerely yours

Caroline H. Sade Secretary

Women's Travel Club

Women's Travel Club

(20)

450 WARREN STREET, CABOT, INC
BROOKLINE, MASS. BOSTON OFFICE

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(W.T.C.)

President
Women's Travel Club.

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also a "crumby" note

Women's Travel Club

16

77 Franklin Street
Boston, Massachusetts
January 9, 1935

Doctor A. Hamilton Rice
901 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Doctor Rice:

You will perhaps have heard that there has been formed in Boston a new Club called the **Women's Travel Club**, which is very largely composed of the wives of our members. I thought it would be nice to send a greeting to them on the occasion of their first formal meeting, which is next Monday, and, after consultation with a majority of the Council, I have sent a letter to them as per enclosed carbon copy.

Yours very sincerely,

Thomas D. Cabot, Secretary
Harvard Travellers Club

TDC:MN
ENC


77 Franklin Street
Boston, Massachusetts
January 9, 1935

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Thomas D. Cabot, Secretary
Harvard Travellers Club

TDC:MN
ENC

77 Franklin Street
Boston, Massachusetts
January 9, 1935

Women's Travel Club
c/o Mrs. George C. Shattuck
450 Warren Avenue
Brookline, Massachusetts

Mesdames:

The Harvard Travellers Club sends
greetings to the Women's Travel Club at its
first meeting, and wishes it every success.

Cordially yours,

Thomas D. Cabot, Secretary
Harvard Travellers Club

TDC:MN

Copy to Mrs. Horace U. Gade
330 Dartmouth Street
Boston, Massachusetts

Doctor Rice

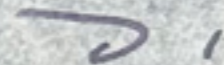
77 Franklin Street
Boston, Massachusetts
May 8, 1935

Mrs. Caroline H. Gade
330 Dartmouth Street
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Mrs. Gade:

It was very cheering to have a word of sympathy from the Women's Travel Club, and I appreciate your kindness in writing me.

Yours very sincerely,



Thomas D. Cabot, Secretary
Harvard Travellers Club

TDC:MN