

Woman's Club Baby Clinic – Little Known, but Not Forgotten

March was Woman's History Month, a time when the often overlooked contributions of women are touted. One chapter of Redwood City history that gets little, if any, touting was a Well Baby Clinic operated by the Redwood City Woman's Club.

The clinic's accomplishments were obscure until a few years ago when researchers at the history room in the city library hit upon the clinic saga while gathering information about the club's history.

Though it drew statewide attention in the midst of the Great Depression, the clinic virtually vanished from Peninsula history. The facility was lauded in the 1930s in an extensive article that appeared in the California Federation News published by the federation of California women's clubs. The Redwood City club "is justly proud of its club women to whom each and every little life is precious," the newspaper said.

In the late 1920s the women were asked to house the clinic, then limited to one room downtown, in the club building on Clinton Street. The county turned to the club for help "when use of the room could no longer be had and no other central place could be found," according to the account in the Federation News.



The article said mothers brought babies from as far away as San Francisco to the clubhouse, where the infants were weighed, their height measured and a diet prescribed. A chart was kept of the child's progress from week to week. The clinic catered mainly to poor immigrant families, mostly Mexican. San Mateo County furnished all supplies as well as a social service nurse. Doctors Adelaide Brown and Ralph Howe, aided by club members, volunteered their services at the clinic, which operated every Wednesday.

Later the clinic moved to Washington School where club records for 1937 showed there were 354 visits by mothers who were seen by a doctor, "our own Mrs. Nelson Andrews." In 1940, the records referred to Andrews as "Doctor Bertha Andrews," who by then was giving immunizations against diphtheria and small pox.

The detailed 1940 report by the club's Child Welfare Section stressed that the clinic was, as its name implied, for "well children." Any cases of illness or accident brought to the clinic were "immediately referred to the family phy-

sician or, if necessary, to the County Health Department." The report said that between June of 1939 and May 1940 the clinic staff examined 697 children. There were 33 immunizations as well as four smallpox vaccinations.

The clinic hit its peak in 1950 when it cared for 817 babies, according to a report in the Redwood City

Tribune. Polio shots were added to the clinic's offerings in 1956. After this, there is little known about the clinic. There is no mention of it in the 1958 report by the club's president. Apparently the clinic's function was taken over by the county. A club note in 1972 said the clinic was moved to a union hall where it was operated by nurses from the County Health and Welfare Department. **C**



April 1

History Museum Continues Its Free First Fridays Program

April 16

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