

L.A.O.H. National History

During the Omaha, Nebraska National Convention of the A.O.H. in May 1894, the Daughters of Erin were organized. Minnesota claims the first Division organized in the country. From that initial date until the A.O.H. Saratoga Springs Convention in 1906, the Daughters of Erin flourished. However, in 1906 the name of the organization became the Ladies Auxiliary, Ancient Order of Hibernians when the A.O.H. Convention Body voted to allow the Auxiliary to act as a separate body, subject to the authority of the National Chaplain and the A.O.H. National President.

The purposes of the society were to assist the A.O.H. in perpetuating the memory of our ancestors, to aid the sick and needy and to defend the priests, our church and country. Initially, membership was limited to those women related to an A.O.H. member. However, after much discussion it was decided that membership would include any Catholic woman of Irish birth or descent between the ages of sixteen and fifty.

Immediately following the Convention, energetic action began in organizing throughout the country. Groups of women from nearly every state and several Canadian provinces were called together at the National Convention in Boston, MA in May 1900. At this convention, a committee of women was appointed to confer with the brothers to suggest changes in the rituals and by-laws and to request permission to elect a National Board of Officers for the Ladies' Auxiliary. The request to elect National officers was denied, however a sign of recognition between the two organizations was allowed. It was agreed that the Ladies' Auxiliary would hold biennial National Conventions in conjunction with the A.O.H., with the session presided over by the A.O.H. National Vice-President.

At the National Convention held in Denver, CO in 1902, a National Advisory Board, consisting of three members, was elected. Mrs. Mary Quinn of Illinois was elected chairwoman and served until 1906, when the brothers granted the power of self-government.

At the Saratoga assembly in 1906, a committee was appointed to meet with a committee from the A.O.H. to recommend that the privilege of electing National Officers be granted. The A.O.H. Convention adopted the motion that the right and authority be given to the Ladies' Auxiliary to elect a National President, National Vice-President, National Secretary and National Treasurer. The first National officers elected were: National President, Miss Anna Malia (later Mrs. Anna Malia Ruddy) of Pennsylvania; National Vice-President, Mrs. Mary McCarthy of Massachusetts; National Secretary, Mrs. Louise DuRoss; and National Treasurer, Mrs. Mary P. Daly of Minnesota.

The first official National Convention of the Ladies' Auxiliary was held in Indianapolis, IN from July 21-26, 1908. Delegates were present from 33 states and from the Province of Quebec. In addition to Mrs. Ruddy, were three delegates who would become National Presidents and continue their interest and activity until their deaths, namely - Mrs. Ellen Ryan Jolly of Rhode Island, Mrs. Mary F. McWhorter of Illinois and Mrs. Adele Christy of Ohio. The report at the Convention showed an approximate membership of 56,000.

The early years of the Ladies' Auxiliary, Ancient Order of Hibernians (L.A.A.O.H.) were marked by rapid advancement and growth. The Order's goals, ideals and enduring principles attracted women of standing in all walks of life. Its members

quickly realized the tremendous power of organization. Within divisions, sick and death benefits were established; the unemployed were assisted; and immigrant Irish girls were given needed support of all types.

In 1902, although no national treasury existed, the L.A.A.O.H. voted to endow a scholarship at Trinity College in Washington, D.C. Fundraising efforts began and the sum of \$10,000 was donated in 1904 at the Convention held in St. Louis, MO. The early leaders of our Order realized the need for and the value of good educational opportunities for the young women of the day. Only seven years after Trinity College was founded, the L.A.A.O.H. became sponsors of a grant which would enable, in part, young Catholic women to obtain the benefits and challenges of a strong Catholic education. The first three scholarship recipients returned to Trinity College after graduation either as teachers or administrators.

Though newly organized, the L.A.A.O.H. was distinguishing itself by actual accomplishments of good. In many areas of the country, newly founded Divisions became the only women's organization in the area. Its membership rolls reached 60,000 women. Its enthusiasm carried forth. At the National Board meeting of 1913 in Atlantic City, NJ, the National Vice-President, Miss B.A. Mahoney of Michigan, was empowered to develop Junior Divisions. She energetically pursued this new program. The State of Pennsylvania accepted the challenge and organized four Junior Divisions.

To create a greater interest in the history of Ireland and the Irish in America, the National Board, in its early years, instituted the Annual History Essay Contests and awarded prizes to winners.

Members faithfully attended religious activities. Masses honoring St. Patrick and St. Brigid, the patron and patroness of the Order, flourished throughout the country and the deceased members of the Order were remembered annually with special Masses.

In Norfolk, VA, at the National Convention in 1914, the national President, Mrs. Ellen Ryan Jolly, LL.D. of Rhode Island, recommended the erection of a monument in Washington, D.C. to honor the Sister-Nurses of the Civil War, it was unanimously adopted. Mrs. Jolly was elected National Chairwoman of the Nuns Memorial Committee. Through Mrs. Jolly's determination and spirit and through contributions from fellow L.A.A.O.H. and A.O.H. members, the dream of the memorial was realized ten years later on September 20, 1924, when the Monument was unveiled in Washington, D.C.

Upon the conclusion of this project, the Auxiliary was asked to donate the St. Brigid's Altar to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. In May of 1927, National President Mary Timon Horan presented a check for \$10,000 to the Most Reverend Thomas J. Shahan, D.D., rector of the Catholic University of America. In 1928, the magnificent gift of a 14 karat gold chalice, designed from the celebrated Kilmallock chalice of the Dominican Priory in Limerick, Ireland which dates to 1639 A.D., was donated by the Order.

Accompanying the chalice was a matching 14 karat gold paten engraved with a Celtic Cross. An illuminated missal, with a specially designed leather cover encrusted with jewels, the work of Sister Hyacin, the Kelly of the Order of the Holy Cross, was also donated. In 1929, a Crucifix reflecting the design of the celebrated Cross of Cong of the 12th Century was presented. The corpus is of hand chased

silver upon a cross of rose gold, embellished with large jewels in jade green.

A hand carved Missal Stand from the wood of the pews where the Nuns of the Battlefield had nursed the wounded of the North and South, during the Civil War, was the next presentation. The pews of St. Francis Xavier Church, in Gettysburg, had been used as cots during the War and the Order was able to obtain the necessary wood for the Missal Stand, which was designed and carved by Brother Michael O'Brien. The design is of Irish Medieval Art. Candlesticks of gold with Celtic designs were presented in the following years. The members of the L.A.O.H. in Washington, D.C. faithfully hold their annual St. Brigid's Day celebration at the beautiful altar dedicated to our patroness.

In 1935, Fr. Edward Galvin (later named Bishop) visited the National Convention held in Baltimore, MD. He recounted the story of the suffering people in China and of the difficulties encountered by his small band of Columban missionaries. He asked for the financial support of our Order to enable the work of God to be done. The delegates assembled at the National Convention voted to name the Columban Missionary Order as the principal charity of the Ladies' Auxiliary. Over the 60 years of association, the Order has contributed over one-half million dollars to the Columban Missions.

During World War I, the women of the Order contributed over \$11,000 to the Mass Outfit Fund for the Catholic Army and Navy Chaplains of the United States. Contributions through the years have been made to the victims of earthquakes, floods and famines throughout the world. Scholarships, church windows, church artifacts and vestments, charitable donations and corporal works of mercy are trademarks of the Order wherever it has been established. Today, the women continue to be actively engaged in works of Catholic Action, in promoting Irish history and the story of the Irish contributions to America.

At the 1978 National Convention of the L.A.A.O.H. in Killarney, Ireland, the women voted overwhelmingly to endorse the proposal presented by the University of Notre Dame, to establish the Hibernian Chair. Today, in 1998, sons and daughters of A.O.H. and L.A.O.H. members are receiving scholarship assistance at Notre Dame. Two International Conferences and four lectures have been presented by the University of Notre Dame and our Order. Over \$300,000 has been raised by the University of Notre Dame Hibernian Fund Campaign of the A.O.H. and L.A.O.H. to preserve and promote the story of the Irish contribution to America and to her Church, as well as providing scholarship assistance to the sons and daughters of the membership.

In 1985, the women of the Order completed the work begun at the 1982 National Convention in San Antonio, TX. The new Constitution was completed and signed by the A.O.H. National President, Joseph A. Roche in October 1985 at the Joint National Board meeting. By the signing of the Constitution, the word "Auxiliary" was deleted and the organization assumed its new name, Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, and jurisdiction over its own affairs.

On March 2, 1986, the L.A.O.H. National Board officially opened the 150th Anniversary Year of the founding of the A.O.H. in America with a Mass of Thanksgiving at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. This tribute to our Brothers was the L.A.O.H.'s anniversary gift to them in recognition of their many accomplishments and in appreciation for the 92 years of association the women's Order shared with the men.