



Chapter 1

Introduction

Zonta dates from the establishment of the first Quota clubs in the USA in 1919. These clubs were different from any other women's clubs at the time because they were based on a classification system and open only to women holding executive positions.

The Quota Club in Buffalo grew rapidly to more than 100 members and Marian de Forest, one of Buffalo's most outstanding newspaper women, was the first to notice that rapid growth brought a trend to quantity rather than quality of members.

When the club refused her request to have the intake of members halted until the situation could be reviewed, the officers and board of directors of the Quota club in Buffalo established a new, different but unnamed club in Buffalo on 2 September 1919, with Marian de Forest as club president. The Quota clubs in Rochester, Binghamton, Elmira, Syracuse, Erie, Ithaca, Utica and Detroit followed suit, establishing separate clubs based on the same principles.

On 8 November 1919, representatives of the nine clubs met and the Confederation of Zonta Clubs was born. Constitution and bylaws were adopted and the name Zhonta (later spelled Zonta) chosen by a near-unanimous vote.

On 10 April 1920, the officers of the Confederation created districts, determined their boundaries, and arranged District Conferences for the election of District Officers. On 20–21 May the following year, the first annual convention was held in Syracuse, New York.

Initially, all clubs were located in the United States, but by 1927, Zonta had expanded across the border to Canada. Three years later, the Confederation of Zonta Clubs became Zonta International, following the establishment of the first club in Europe. At this time, there was even a precursor of the current Zonta Club of Sydney established in Australia. Meanwhile, at home in North America, the number of clubs continued to grow, leading to the District Plan which survived, largely unchanged, to 2020.

The years after World War II saw rapid expansion to the remaining four geographical regions: South America in 1948, Asia in 1952, New Zealand and Australia in 1965-66, and Africa in 1970.

By June of its centennial year, Zonta International had 31 Districts and one Region (Region South America) with a total membership of 26,598¹. These members were distributed as follows:

- Europe 11,978
- North America 6,473
- Asia 4,934
- Australia and New Zealand 2,736
- Africa 363
- South America 114

¹ Zonta International Online Directory, 22 June 2019