

Commemorating 80 Years
Ossoli Club of Corbin
1938–2018



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FIRST 80 YEARS OF OCC

BY DIANE M. MITCHELL

OCC HISTORIAN

**(A MEMENTO DISTRIBUTED TO MEMBERS
AT THE 80TH BIRTHDAY DINNER CELEBRATION
HELD AT SEASONS RESTAURANT ON FEB. 27, 2018)**



**DIANE JOINED THE OSSOLI CLUB IN 1980 AND
COMPILED THESE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:**

A HISTORY OF CORBIN OSSOLI CLUB

BY AGNES HEMBREE

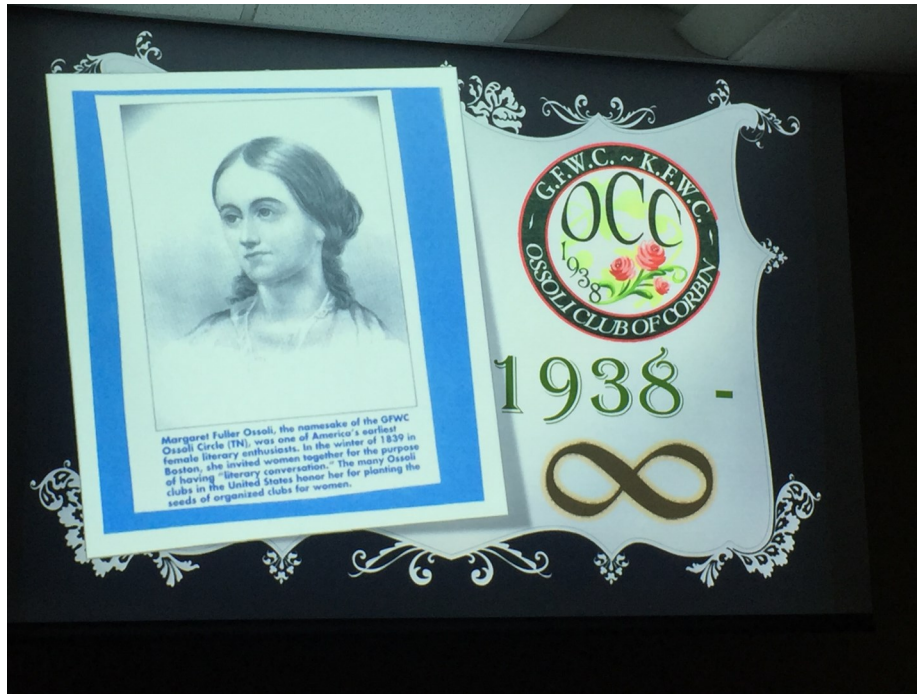
**(AGNES JOINED THE CLUB DURING ITS SECOND YEAR
AND COMPILED ITS HISTORY UP TO 1963);**

50 YEARS OF OSSOLI CLUB

BY JANICE MILLER

**(JANICE JOINED THE CLUB IN 1960 AND ORGANIZED
AND COMPILED THE CLUB'S SCRAPBOOKS
AND UPDATED THE HISTORY COLLECTIONS UP TO THE 1990's.)
THE SCRAPBOOK AND HISTORY COLLECTIONS OF OCC
SINCE 1990 WERE ALSO USED TO HELP WITH UPDATING
THE CLUB'S HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS.**

GLIMPSES OF THE PAST



How and Why the Ossoli Club of Corbin originated:

The Ossoli Club was formed at a dinner party held at the Arden Hotel in Corbin on February 8, 1938. Attending were eleven young women who elected the organizer of the group, Miss Virginia Rogers, (who later became Mrs. Charles Davis) as the first president.

Much ground work had been done before this first meeting. Miss Rogers, a teacher in the Corbin City Schools, had been ably assisted by three other young ladies, who were also teachers in the school. Those ladies were Miss Ada Gray Gilliam (later Mrs. Bruce Williams), Miss Estelle Hatfield (later Mrs. Arch Cecil), and Miss Juanita Thomas (later Mrs. George Schultz).

These women felt the need for self improvement, and thought by bonding together a worthwhile program could be worked out that would be a benefit to all. At first, the group was composed mostly of teachers, unmarried girls who had quiet a bit of leisure time on their hands. They hesitated to ask married women to join because they feared those women might start a family and children would be a hindrance to the work of the group. In the fall of 1939, they began inviting married women to join.

Early yearbooks show that the programs centered around cultural subjects which benefited the members and many social functions were planned, adding social graces to the benefits for members.

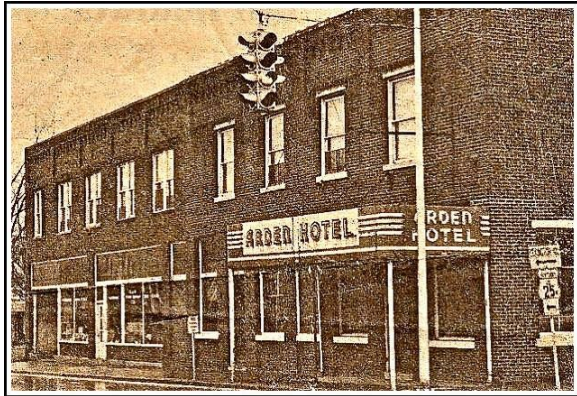
While the club has never lost sight of its original purpose to encourage culture among women, stimulate intellectual growth and moral development, and strengthen individual effort by organization, in the second year of its existence, community service was added to the club's activities.

The Ossoli Club of Corbin was admitted to the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs on December 30, 1938.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CLUB

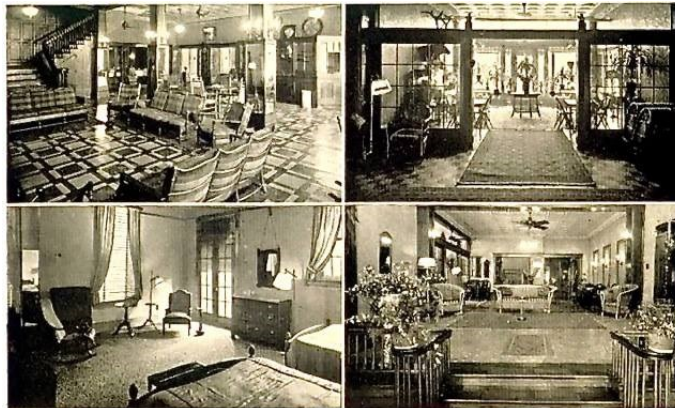
In 1938, meeting time was set as the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, September through May. This has changed a little through the past 80 years; however, the day of meeting has remained on Tuesday consistently and today we still meet every second and fourth Tuesday of each month except January, June, and July. Meeting time is 7 p.m.

According to news clippings, early club meetings were held at the Arden Hotel, Wilbur Hotel, and members' homes. For years, this remained similar with meetings being held often in the Wilbur Hotel, Sanders Restaurant, Jerrys, the Hungry Hound, and Yearys.



Arden Hotel, where first meeting of OCC was held on Feb. 8, 1938. The Arden was located in Corbin on the corner of Laurel Ave. and what was then Center Street (corner where U.S. Post Office is now on Roy Kidd Ave.).

Pictured below is the interior of the once beautiful Wilbur Hotel. Many OCC meetings and events were held in the Wilbur's large meeting areas.



Views of Lobby, Sun Room and Guest Room, Wilbur Hotel, Corbin, Kentucky

Most of the club's meetings during the last decade have been held in the Ossoli Club of Corbin Community Room in the Corbin Public Library. Furnishings and equipment for this room were donated entirely by the OCC in 2009. Special club gatherings recently have been held at Seasons Restaurant, David's Steak House, the Community Rooms at the Depot (now designated as the Corbin Railroad Museum), and the Corbin Center on Falls Road.

In the beginning, the number of members was limited to 20, but on Sept. 14, 1943, member limit was raised to 25, and membership was raised to 45 years later. Though 45 is the membership limit today, members years ago felt more could be accomplished by careful screening of new members, rather than adding large numbers to the fold. Recent memberships average around 30.

The name of Ossoli Club of Corbin, as well as the motto, “Get Together, Stick Together, Pull Together,” and the club flower, the pink rose, the club colors, green and white, were selected by the founders in 1938; these remain the same 80 years later. The same can be said of the club’s bylaws and constitution which have needed only minor changes through the years. Early club members selected Mary Stewart’s prayer as the Club Collect and it is still used to convene meetings today.

Selection of the club’s name was a difficult task. Club organizer, Virginia Rogers, had lived in Knoxville, Tennessee, where she was greatly impressed by the work of the Ossoli Circle in that city. After corresponding at length with that group, it was decided to use the name Ossoli, as founders felt it would be a distinctive name and set the club and its accomplishments apart.

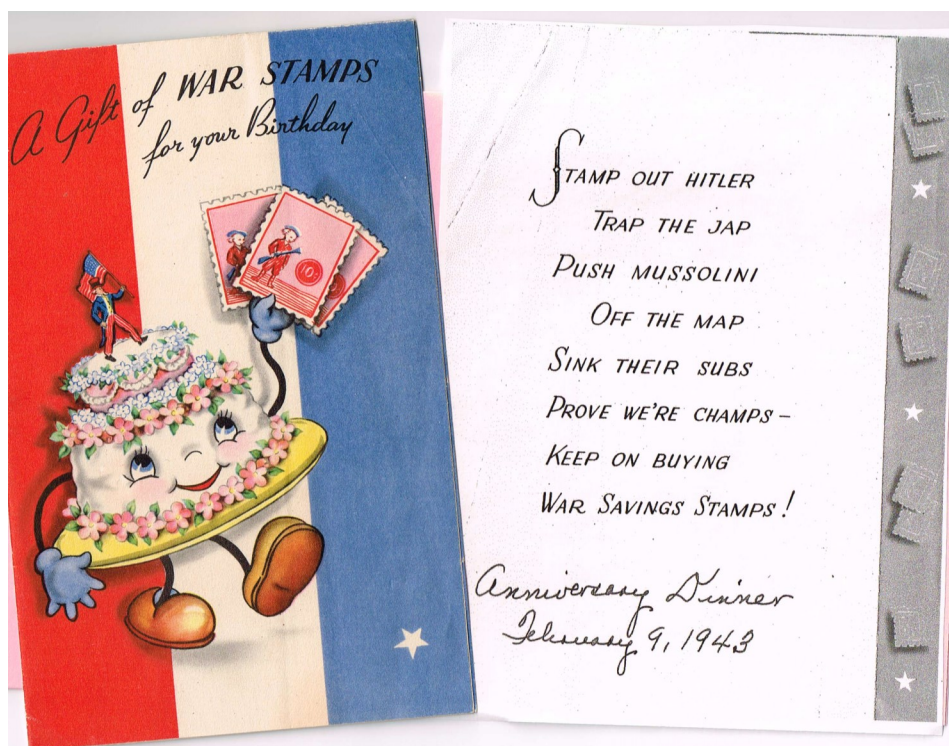
Although *Ossoli* has often been mispronounced and mistaken for a sorority, the club has enjoyed this unusual name, for the members like to think they are an unusual group even as Sarah Margaret Fuller, Marchioness d’Ossoli, 19th Century women’s leader for whom the club was named, was an unusual woman.



Christmas dinner at Seasons Restaurant in 2017

OCC members (seated left to right) Christina Bentley, Gay Nell Conley, Natalie Hopkins, Frankie Sasser, and Lisa Phillips; standing in first row, Diane Mitchell, Sue Weedman, Nettie Sosh, Sheila Sursa, Anita Champlin, and June Martin; back row, Laura Phillips, Flo Brown, and Susan Campbell.

The Way We Were....in 1943



...and in 1947



This is a picture of the Ossoli Club in 1947 taken at a reception in the home of Mrs. Jack Hollin on the corner of Poplar and Fifth streets. Mrs. Hollin was president of the club that year. Officers of the club are seated. They are (left to right): Mrs. S. G. Hembree, Mrs. Russell Stansberry, the president, Mrs. Jack Hollin, Mrs. James O. Crawford, and Mrs. Vernon Wilder. Members standing in the second row from left to right are: Mrs. Steely Terrell, Miss Freda Trosper,

Mrs. Catherine Batsman, Mrs. H. J. Furhman, Mrs. George White, Mrs. Si Monen, and Mrs. Wayne Ritchie. Standing in the back row, left to right, are: Mrs. Myers Clark, Mrs. Edward Wilder, Miss Hazel Chandler, Mrs. Hugh Singleton, Mrs. Frank Gieszl, Mrs. F. D. Stevenson, Mrs. Herschel Sutton, Mrs. Virginia Williams, and Mrs. Earl Kidd.

...in the 1950's



Posing for pictures during an event at the Wilbur Hotel are OCC members (left to right) Joyce Needham, Marietta Thomas, Agnes Hembree, Betty Vermillion, Sara Lou Wilder, Letha Sutton, Evelyn Kidd, Jeanette Vannoy, Inez Cox, Mae Moody, and Nelda Barton.

...and in 1967

Corbin Citizens Recognized For Success Of Easter Seal Drive

The Kentucky Society for Crippled Children's drive in the Corbin area reached a total of \$1,285.97. This amount surpasses the donations of previous years.

The drive's success was made possible because of the generous hearts of the Corbin citizens, who not only gave of their money but of their time and energy as well.

A good example of this is the Benefit Basketball game played on March 21 at the Edward's Gymnasium, between the members of the Optimist Club and the faculty of Corbin High School.

Members of the Corbin High School faculty taking part in the game were Bill Smith, John Fletcher, Duane Hart, Toby McCormick, Wendell Mitchell, Louie Martin and Charles Moore. Members of the Optimist Club were Burlyn Calder, Sam Martin, Doyle Gilbert, Charles Woodlee, Vernon Moore, Rodney Thompson, C. H. Dudley and Walter Smith.

The women of the faculty served as cheerleaders along with the little league cheerleaders, rooting for the Optimist Club. Eddie Fugate was the announcer and the spectators were entertained at half time by the Corbin High School tumblers who are coached by Hal Lockhart.

On behalf of the many youngsters served by Easter Seals, the Ossoli Club which sponsors the Corbin drive, and Mrs. F.



Corbin High School faculty cheerleaders for the Benefit Basketball game were (front row, left to right), Mrs. Harold Gant, little Miss Jenny Fredericks, and Mrs. Kenneth Pennington, (back row, same order) Miss Diane Miller, Mrs. Troy Foley, Mrs. Bill Fredericks and Mrs. L. C. Robinson.

Some Projects Accomplished Over the Past 80 Years

After the club opened the door for community service during its second year, opportunities were not slow in coming. Funding a tonsillectomy for a needy child was the first community service OCC activity, but the first project of any size that the club undertook was to provide milk for needy children.



Milk Fund

This project started in a rather small way on February 20, 1939. In a very short time quite a few children were being served milk at the morning recess of the three grade schools in town. The club soon realized that the bills for milk were getting out of hand, and it became necessary to find some way to raise funds if they were to continue assisting the community. After much discussion, it was decided a cookbook would be published.



Ossoli Cook Book

An appeal was made to the good cooks of Corbin for their favorite recipes. Soon a great number of mouth-watering recipes had been collected and the members began the task of organizing, typing, and publishing the collection. This was considered a successful endeavor when the Ossoli Cook Book was released in 1942. The book was received so well that all copies sold, and the book was revised and reprinted in 1947. All of those copies sold out as well. Many people still ask about the possibility of obtaining one of these books, so the club had the book copied a few years ago. Some copies are still available for purchase.



War Efforts

During World War II the group's war effort was centered around nutrition classes, sale of defense stamps and bonds, and collecting cigarettes, books, and knitting items which were sent to our men in the service.



May Day Festival

On May 4, 2018, OCC will celebrate the 75th presentation of the May Day Festival in Corbin.

On April 8, 1941, the club voted to have a May Day Festival; however, the committee that was appointed to investigate this project reported they felt it was too late to work up a suitable program for that year. It was not until September 14, 1943, that the idea was again brought to the attention of the club.

In May 1944, the Ossoli Club presented its May Day Festival which has become a tradition presented annually on the first Friday of May. This fete is accomplished by Ossoli members through well organized committee work. School personnel have been cooperative most of the time through the 75 years, and many of the teachers do an excellent job in training the children for the public performance. The festival was first held in Edward's Gym on Eighth Street; later it was held in the Gilliam Gym of Corbin High School on Snyder Street, and it is now presented each year in the Corbin Arena on Falls Highway.

Crippled Children's Drive

On January 9, 1945, the club voted to sponsor the Crippled Children's Drive and continued this effort for the next twenty-five years.

Organized Woman's Club

In 1948 the Ossoli Club of Corbin organized the Harlan's Woman's Club in Harlan, Kentucky.

Community Hospital

On March 27, 1945, the club initiated a drive for a community hospital. After much work, in 1949 the city of Corbin voted favorably on a hospital bond issue, the effort being sponsored by the club. As a result, a 52 bed hospital was opened to the public in 1951. The club gave impetus to a campaign for raising \$50,000 as an operating fund by donating \$2500 on February 2, 1953.



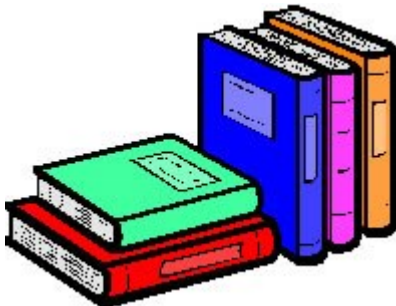
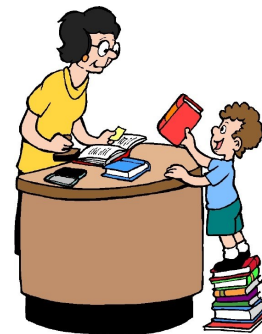


OCC has always been a supporter of books and literacy activities offered for the community; as a result, the club has contributed many times during the past 80 years to the Corbin Public Library and their efforts to encourage reading. Only a few of those will be mentioned here.

In 1955 the club contributed \$500 toward the purchase of the first Whitley County Bookmobile, a community need which was spearheaded by the CPL Board; the club continued to support the bookmobile project as long as it was in operation. Some later donations for literacy and libraries include funding \$5000 to improve the Community Room furnishings in the second library building, and in 2009, the OCC gave \$16,000 to supply equipment and furniture for the Community Room in the new library on Roy Kidd Avenue. The room was named the “Ossoli Club of Corbin Community Room.”



The first Bookmobile in our county. Presented by the citizens of Corbin in 1953. Mrs. Earl Kidd, Bookmobile Librarian. Evelyn Kidd was a member of the OCC and the club contributed \$500 toward the purchase of the Bookmobile.



The Ossoli Club of Corbin Community Room in the new Corbin Public Library which opened in 2010. Members voted to donate \$16,000 to completely furnish and equip the room.





The Youth Conservation Committee of the OCC initiated the movement for a Corbin Youth Center. This was accomplished by the combined effort of all clubs and organizations in the city. The first Youth Center was housed on Depot Street and opened in 1952. Later, the Youth Center moved upstairs over the building on 5th and Main, then upstairs over City Hall when it was located at Main and Gordon Streets; finally, the Center was moved next to the football field on Barbourville Street. Young people in town have sung many praises of the YC and Princess McBurney, the dearly loved leader of the center who operated its activities for many years.



In 1955 a Junior Ossoli Club composed of twenty junior and senior high school girls was organized by the OCC. This was a federated club and their programs were closely aligned with the senior club. The Junior Ossoli Club was in existence for 25 years and many young ladies were members of the group and have memories of good times and lessons learned at meetings during those years.

Vicki Kinsel remembers Junior Ossoli as being “THE CLUB everyone wanted to belong to.”

Betty Sue Surmont keeps her Junior Ossoli Beanie perched on the computer at her desk in Owens Auto Service, and she will proudly show it to you if you happen by there.

Linda Hinkle Platt fondly remembers being in Junior Ossoli Club. She furnished most of the pictures of her group found here as well as naming her club sisters for our archives.

Sue Witt Herald still has the Junior Ossoli pin she wore in 1959 and sent the picture above for our collection.

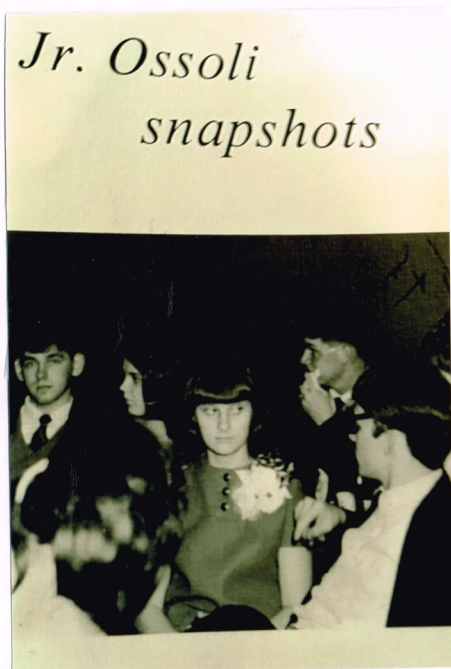


Junior Ossoli

Club of 1967

Front row left to right is Ilene Sams, Bobbi O'Neil, Vicki Gant, Joyce Spinden and Donna Faye Smith. Back row left to right is Linda Hudson, Beverly Walker, Donna Nadine Smith, Debbie Slone and Linda Hinkle.

**The OCC sponsored the Junior Ossoli Club at Corbin High School for a period of 25 years:
1955-1980**



Picture on left.....from left to right Bobby Derrick, Donna Faye Smith, Linda Hinkle and Robert Daniel. Between in back is Doug Wilson. Picture on right.....Debbye Holmes.

Junior Ossoli Club of 1967 and 1968 —Thank you to Linda Hinkle Platt for pictures. Pictures above were taken at their dance held at the Corbin Youth Center in 1967.



Front row left to right Dennis Witt, Patti Reeves and Charlene Osborne. Back row left to right Kathie Crider, Larry Rogers and Ilene Sams.

Junior Ossoli Halloween Party held in 1968 for members and their dates.

Through the 25 years of sponsoring the younger club at CHS, many OCC members served as sponsors of the groups. Pictured below are two of those members with the club of 1968 they sponsored.



Front row left to right Patti Reeves, Brenda Clark, Charlene Osborne, Donna Faye Smith, Linda Hudson and Debbye Holmes. Second row left to right Debbie Slone, Ilene Sams, Patty Flowers and Kathie Crider. Third row left to right Mrs. Vermillion, Shannon Keith, Pam Gilliam, Patricia Litteral, Susan Karr, Jan Bolding, Beverly Walker, Linda Hinkle and unknown. Absent from photo was Donna Nadine Smith.

Unknown person listed in second row is OCC member Lela Crook who served for several years as Junior Ossoli sponsor.

Contributions of the Club

Benefits to City

It is possible that many of the good deeds accomplishments by the OCC throughout the past 80 years could have been done by others, but it is doubtful that any other organization would have brought the children from our schools together for the past 75 years for a May Day Festival event. For many years this was the only opportunity some of the children had to perform before an audience. Through the years, Corbin people have expressed their approval by filling the chosen venue of the year for the event. For many years, this happened both for an afternoon and an evening performance.

Corbin would probably have eventually had a hospital, as there was such a great need for one, but most people seem to think it was built much sooner because of the efforts of the Ossoli Club of Corbin women who worked so hard to make it a reality.

Would the youth of this city have had a place to congregate under good supervision, if this small club had not started the movement and continued their financial support? It is doubtful.

Many Corbin children have benefitted from



proceeds of the Crippled Children's Drive

which this club sponsored for 25 years.

The library, bookmobile, and all of Corbin's schools have benefitted from the Ossoli members' assistance and financial help through the years, and all of these benefit Corbin's citizens.

Other projects during the 89 years rated the big tree near the Methodist furnish downtown Christmas lights Nativity which is put in front of the



benefitted Corbin citizens: The OCC for years decorated Church on Main Street each Christmas and helped several years; more recently, the OCC purchased the Corbin Fire Department each year.

During the past decade alone, the Ossoli Club has helped many students attend state and national competitions and make educational field trips. OCC has purchased needed equipment and materials for educational and health related endeavors. The club has supplied over \$10,000 for seats in the school theater, furnished and equipped the public library's community room, donated \$2500 for Sander's Park, made several kennels possible for the local animal shelter, helped supply the Blue Star Memorial in front of City Hall, and more recently donated \$10,000 to help save the Carnegie Library building in town. These are just a few of the many ways this club has been helpful in making Corbin a better place in which to live.



Benefits To Club Members

If the Ossoli Club of Corbin has been a benefit to the community over the past 80 years, it has also been a means of happiness for its members. It has provided opportunities for self improvement through many uplifting programs and social events sponsored by the club. Leadership qualities have seemed to develop in many women who apparently were unaware of their own potential. Members have learned to attend meetings and be prepared to express their opinions on any question and then graciously abide by the will of the majority. Members have been reminded not to be petty, not to be hasty in judgment, and not to be prejudicial. We are reminded regularly as we convene that we should be kind to each other, think large thoughts, and strive to reach great heights.

We have problems sometimes because in spite of everything, we are human, and we have great hurdles to jump sometimes because the world is as the world is, and no voyage in life is ever perfectly calm and peaceful, but we, along with all our club sisters over the past 80 years, have been constantly reminded of the importance and benefit of “getting together, sticking together, and pulling together.” As a result, through all those 80 years, the OCC has remained strong, forging ahead with any project that it feels worthwhile. Members have learned how to spiritually review our actions and derive benefit from censure. We are often reminded to love and value each other, though we may not always agree on the issues. Members have found truth in Mary Stewart’s ***Club Collect***, since it was first used to convene the meetings in 1941, and “meet each other face to face, without self-pity, putting into action our better impulses, straightforward and unafraid,” for we are always fully aware that in the big things of life we truly are one!

May the Ossoli Club of Corbin live long and prosper well! May these first 80 years be the beginning of many wonderful projects for our community’s future needs, and may a multitude of Ossoli sisters benefit from membership for many years to come .



Mayor McBurney met in 2017 with OCC members, seated left to right, Diane Mitchell, Mayor McBurney, and Lisa Reeder; standing (left to right) Debbie Scarberry, Nettie Sosh, Frankie Sasser, Laura Phillips, Sheila Sursa, Gay Nell Conley, Robin Mahan, Anita Champlin, Kim Young, Michelle Mayo, Sue Weedman, June Martin, and Dorothy Pennington. OCC member, Christina Bentley was the photographer for this picture.