

# GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS



1734 N Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
March 1, 2022

Dear GFWC Friends,

Our founder, Jane Cunningham Croly (1829-1901), earned her place in history through a lifetime of barrier-breaking work. First employed as a housekeeper by her brother John, a Unitarian minister, Jane launched her journalism career by writing a semi-monthly newspaper that she read to parishioners. By the age of 26, she was in New York writing about anything relating to “women’s sphere in society” for various newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Tribune* and *Sunday Times*.

Known for her interest in women’s welfare, Jane called for the first woman’s congress in 1856 for a dialog on the changing role of women in society. A dozen years later she and 11 other women established Sorosis, a woman’s club to “promote agreeable and useful relations among women of literary and artistic tastes,” and to recognize “women of thought, culture and humanity everywhere, particularly when these qualities have found expression in outward life and work.”

In the 1870s and 1880s, in many parlors large and small across a nation that was growing and changing, women were meeting to work together, learn from each other, and reach towards “higher aims,” not only for themselves but for social improvement. In 1890, with Jane in constant communication with women’s clubs across the country, Sorosis hosted a convention in New York City that culminated with women from 63 clubs acting on April 24 to establish the General Federation of Women’s Clubs.

Today, with clubs across the U.S. and in several countries, GFWC members honor the spirit and vision of Jane Cunningham Croly each day with works that improve communities and enhance the lives of others through volunteer service.

As you gather together at your 2022 state conventions, I hope you will be inspired by Jane’s story to continue to work towards “higher aims,” through serving others and learning and growing from your experiences. And I hope that you will relish the “broader and nobler life” that Jane and her contemporaries often spoke of, as they blazed a new path for women such as you and me.

Congratulations to each of you and your clubs for your many successes in the past year, and good luck as you continue to work towards a better future for individuals and communities, near and far.

Yours in **Living the Volunteer Spirit!**

Marian Simmons-St.Clair  
GFWC International President