The first meeting of the Mothers and Patrons Club of Flat River was held at the home of Mrs. Oliver M. Bilharz, the club’s first president, on March 23, 1907. The stated aims of the club were social and civic improvements in the Flat River mining district. The local schools were the objects of its first efforts, and members visited the schools and sponsored improvements in the classrooms and playgrounds. Members also paid regular visits to the county jail, infirmary, and hospitals, and became increasingly involved with aiding the indigent and sick of Flat River, especially those suffering from tuberculosis. With the financial help of the club, a number of patients were sent to the state sanitarium at Mount Vernon, Missouri. In 1913, the club hired a professional nurse to make home visits and treat cases of tuberculosis in Flat River.

The club’s active membership remained relatively constant at approximately thirty, although the rolls indicate a larger membership. Regular meetings were held every third week, and usually included speakers or readings on selected topics. Speakers were often doctors and professional people who traveled, expense paid, to address the club. Soldiers stationed in the mining district during World War I were occasional guests, and were entertained by club members on holidays.

The record book includes minutes of meetings beginning with the first meeting on 23 March 1907 and continuing through 14 March 1924. Also included are lists of officers and members, 1907-1924. Enclosed at the end of the volume is a congratulatory letter by Mrs. Oliver M. Bilharz, 2 April 1937, written on the occasion of the club’s 30th anniversary.
enclosure: Mrs. O. M. Bilharz, Kenilworth, Illinois, to Mrs. Charles Mergentheimer, Flat River Woman’s Club, Flat River, Missouri, 2 April 1937. 4 pp., A.L.S.

Index Cards

Bilharz, Oliver M., Mrs.
Flat River (Mo.)
Flat River Woman’s Club
Lead Belt Woman’s Club
Mothers and Patrons Club of Flat River, Missouri
Saint Francois County (Mo.)
Women—Societies and clubs