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INCEPTION AND EARLY YEARS OF OUR BRANCH By Mary Voyazes, Historian

The reality of the Auburn Branch of AAUW owes its inception to the devotion and work of the then Athletic Instructor Lois Nelson (later Hatch) and also to Librarian Elma Young, both faculty members of the eminent Placer College.

Plans to formulate the start of a local branch were made at a preliminary meeting chaired by Mrs. Lois Nelson, attended by State officers and "Mrs. Elma Young, Mrs. Harold Chastain, Mrs. Bob Lawrence and Mrs. Katherine Lee," who became our first president. With Mrs. Nelson presiding, about 40 women met for the organizational meeting in Room 51 of Placer College, on Nov. 16 at 7:30 p.m.

At the regular AAUW meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 1, 1949, Membership Chairman Lois Nelson announced that 82 women had met the membership requirements and the sign-up deadline, thus becoming Charter members of the 66th Branch, the Auburn Branch, of the AAUW of California and about the 868th nation wide. Our Charter was dated April 1, 1949.

The somewhat elitist National AAUW, at that time, was concerned only with high standards in women's education. According to the national rules, not subject to local interpretation, only graduates with an approved degree in general education from a college or university of first rate standing and on the AAUW approval list could become members.

Many of our activities during the first few years were held at various areas of Placer College. Started in 1935, its name was changed to Sierra College the latter part of 1953, and in the fall of 1961 it was moved from Orange Street in Auburn to its present campus in Rocklin.

FROM THE BEGINNING WE: Gave scholarships (\$50)--Joy Johnson of Placer College was the first recipient; contributed to the National Educational Fund; participated in tri-branch meetings, then with Nevada County and Placerville, to hear EF speakers; contributed to special Community projects--the first was \$25 for a youth center; held September brunch with new member guests, new member teas, annual art shows, and Christmas parties (at one time gifts were not to exceed 25¢); devoted a meeting each to candidates and ballot measures and to International Relations with "One World or None" as the first year's topic; supported the UN and UNESCO then and UNICEF now; held joint meeting with Auburn Business & Professional Women's Club to plan support for "Equality for Women." In 1949, National allowed Negro women to join: The Washington, D.C. branch seceded as a result.

WHAT WE DID/HAD THAT WE DON'T NOW: Wore hats; had telephone numbers with 2, 3 or 4 digits interspersed or followed by a letter--Lois' was 898R; used husband's identity, e.g., Mrs. H.G. Lee; titled ourselves chairmen, got extensive coverage in the Placer Herald, Sacramento Bee and, especially, the Auburn Journal, even as to who presided at the food tables; included Parliamentarians and Historians in the Executive Board; had a Corresponding Secretary; held home tours; had Civil Defense, Displaced Persons, Drama, Radio & TV, Rug Making, and Soil Conservation sections; sponsored plays by the Auburn Community Players (\$1 admission included tax) to benefit our art shows--the first was "I Remember Mama"; we also sponsored first rate movies to benefit our local scholarships--"Great Expectations" was the first; sponsored the movie "Beauty and the Beast" (Children, 25¢ & adults, 50¢) for the children of the area.

This briefly is the saga of the first few years of our Branch, which we close with nostalgia for Placer College and gratitude to the late Lois (Nelson) Hatch and Elma Clark Young. Data for this article was gleaned from a Branch Scrap Book. First President of Sierra College, Harold Weaver, provided the dates.