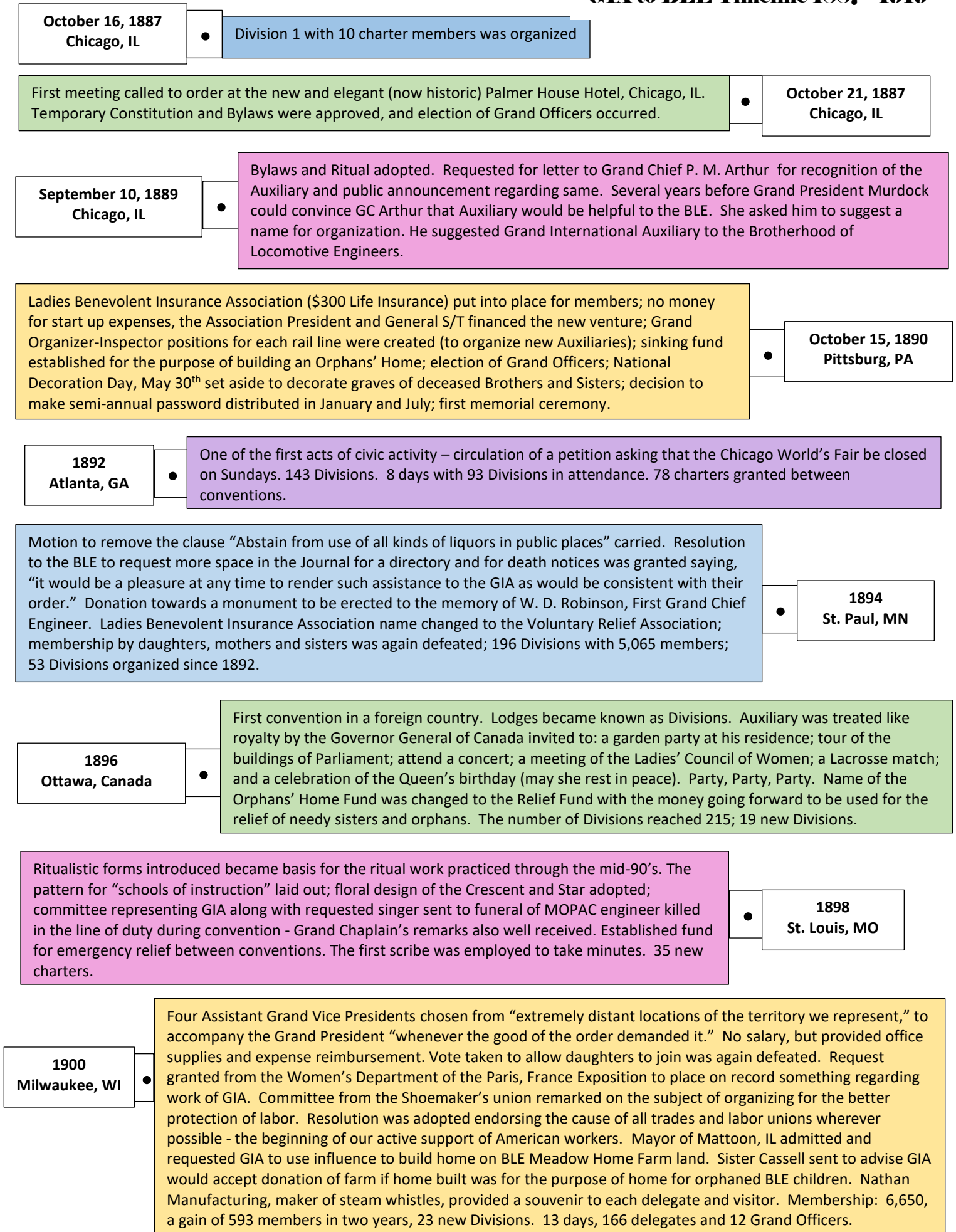


GIA to BLE Timeline 1887 - 1919



Voluntary Relief Association Insurance helped make GIA “one of the finest orders in existence.” Grand VP Cassell’s report chastised those who say “they have no time to read.” Bravo! It exemplified the GIA and their desire to be more than simply wives, but equals whose opinions mattered. Meeting adjourned for a day to help the Norfolk community celebrate Confederate Memorial Day. Old Dominion Steamship Line provided an excursion to Old Point Comfort. Ocean View Hotel invited the convention to a dinner dance, and Norfolk Southern invited everyone to Virginia Beach on their dime. Changed the 4 Assistant Vice Presidents from elected to appointed; 36 new Divisions.

• **May 15, 1902, Elks Hall
Norfolk, VA**

**1904
Los Angeles, CA**

• A flood in 1903 was attested to by Sister St. Clair as her husband was gone for 3 weeks due to the Burlington Bridge over the Missouri River into Kansas City washing out. The delegates donated \$1,599.30 (\$53,000 in today’s dollars) for those who suffered from the flood; Currently 16 pages in BLE Journal; first time a charter was suspended because an “unpleasant condition” (infighting); souvenirs from San Francisco and Sacramento; Erie, Santa Fe, Southern RR and Pullman company thanked for transportation to and from convention; 51 new Divisions organized.

Held at Young Men’s Hebrew Hall only a month after devastating San Francisco earthquake; letter received from secretary of Division 106 reporting that the delegate and alternate were homeless as were many of their members. The Grand President with the consent of the Executive Council sent a circular to each GIA Division requesting that each Division secure “from every member a gift for this most worthy cause” asking that the donations be as liberal as possible. They also sent \$500 and offered to provide a full set of regalia and badges if needed. VRA General S/T resigned no reason given; no response to GP Murdock’s query to keep “peace and harmony of order.”

Sister Cassell attributed biggest growth factor due to exposure in BLE Journal through which “we have made our influence felt.” At the time the GIA had 16 pages. Election of Grand officers changed to 4 years from 2; Gov St. John and wife addressed the body; music books authorized to be printed and sent to every Division; four western states had granted suffrage to women, in time this would “be the privilege of women in every state.” Highland Park Home for Railroad Employees in Illinois received big donation to make their buildings safer; souvenirs from Oshkosh Clothing; Grand President and Secretary allowed to purchase typewriters; many changes were made to the bylaws at this convention; since last convention, 8 schools of instruction for ritual work; 165 divisions visited; 58 new divisions, 9 in Canada.

• **1906
Memphis, TN**

**1907 20th Anniversary
Palmer House, Chicago**

• 1,400 GIA members entertained at 20th anniversary celebration in Chicago; total 9,000 attended ball; Grand Chief Engineer Stone spoke to meeting about importance “of woman’s work and especially dwelt upon the possibilities in regulating child labor.”

Mourning Badge design decided upon; invitation from the Ladies Auxiliary of the Order of Railway Conductors accepted; petition for a paid representative from Canada was defeated - have same chance as everyone else to be elected; petitions to allow members to sit in open meetings with their hats on was defeated; petition to reduce dues to \$.25 was defeated; motion for new rituals was defeated; 230 carnations were presented in memory of each deceased sister. Bylaws changes: suspension may occur for non-payment of dues, attendance, conduct unbecoming which violates the obligation; at least 10 black balls in the ballot box; “woman or women” used instead of “lady or ladies,” special meeting can only transact business it was called for. 60 new Divisions were organized; 5 divisions surrendered charters; one revoked for violation of the law; total membership 15,387 and \$27,402.25 (just under \$900,000).

• **1908
Columbus, OH**

January 1909

• Grand President Murdock’s husband, William A. Murdock, passed in January of 1909. He was an engineer on the North Western RR. (No mention of this as part of the GIA History, only in Sister Murdock’s obituary published in Ella Turner’s book. Others mentioned at the convention of 1910, but not him).

For 25th anniversary, proposed establishing fund for “orphans of our Sisters left in need, until they are past the age by the compulsory education law, this helping our Sisters to keep the little ones in school.” Rules for the fund to be decided at 1912 convention. GIA very popular with many invitations for various events, but when President William Howard Taft addressed the BLE in Worcester, Massachusetts, he positively declined an audience with the women.

Plans made for new ritual by January 1911. First honorary member was voted upon - Mrs. P.M. Arthur, widow of Past Grand Chief Arthur; attendance at the dedication of the new BLE building in Cleveland; assessment of \$.05 was made on each member annually to fund Highland Park Home for Aged and Disabled Railroad Employees, and a hat was passed collecting enough money to furnish one room at the home with a plaque acknowledging the delegates of 1910's contribution; first “name tags” consisting of a white ribbon with the city and state of the delegate stamped in black proposed because conventions becoming so big. As occurred every year, the top officers got raises with the Grand President making the equivalent of \$78,000; Grand Chief Stone and others from the BLE admitted and assured the delegates that “the success of the B. of L.E. was largely in the hands of the G.I.A. because woman's influence was extensive in the family.” As Sister Turner wrote, “We were glad to learn that he appreciated our worth.” During convention, King George of England died and a 5-minute period of silent prayer was observed; \$18,371.72 dispensed for charity; \$3,717.74 given to the Highland Park Home for a total of \$22,089.40 (\$688,660.00); 271 flowers were laid representing deceased sisters; 71 charity claims were paid for needy sisters (our present day CAP) equivalent to \$84,600; 54 new charters granted; attendance: 16 Grand Officers, 2 Honorary Members; 304 delegates; 31 alternates and 42 proxies for a total of 395 votes; 24 sisters joined.

1910
Detroit, MI

25th Anniversary; several poems were written and read about the Auxiliary – such talent; first “colorful” and lengthy introduction of Grand Officers was made; reported that Canadian Pacific RR tendered a private car for the 2nd GVP and her party to make an inspection trip through Canada - “this shows how highly even the railroad officials honor our beloved organization”; language a barrier in Canada in translating ritual work since most only spoke French; GP Murdock said all officers are important to divisions and they are responsible for attending every meeting, she did not approve of any vacations for divisions because of our important work; resolution passed that rituals would be changed not “oftener” than every 12 years; BLE changed convention to every 3 years; meeting addressed by Governor and Mayor and GIA given key to the City; asked to arrange for funeral of BLE member whose wife was in the GIA – sisters Turner and Cassell to sing duet; President of VRA handsomely paid and received raises every convention just like the other Grand Officers; meeting lasted 11 days; charitable contributions to Highland Home \$32,239.93 (just under a million dollars) - out of 27 single occupancy rooms, 19 were furnished by the GIA, and out of 28 double occupancy rooms, 8 were furnished by the GIA; \$5,000 was transferred to the Orphan's Pension Fund and each division was asked to donate a free-will offering to the fund; 60 claims for help paid. 48 New Charters; \$44,707.37 in the bank; total membership of 13,086 spouses out of 72,000 BLE members; 328 deceased sisters were memorialized.

1912
Harrisburg, PA

First Triennial; Grand Secretary St. Clair died in 1914 – 26 years in that office; two of the petitions accepted by the Silver Anniversary Fund (Orphan's Fund) were from a widow with 6 children, and the other from a widow with 9 children – youngest 6 weeks and oldest 17 - \$50 sent to pay oldest daughter's tuition for business college; another division dispute was resolved by the Convention, with new charter granted to withdrawing members in Pueblo, CO with a strict probation to cause no dissension of the BLE Division 29, and suspension of 3 sisters for one year; changes to insurance provisions made; decided that each division would be provided with pins so new members could be given one on the spot; pictures of Sisters Murdock, Cassell and St. Clair would be sold to benefit the anniversary fund (rock stars?); Canadians would be required to pay ½ of the duty for shipping supplies; rules suspended and three Grand Officers elected by acclamation. Membership: 23,922; 12 charters surrendered (2 from Old Mexico, 1 from the Canal Zone, and 1 from Canada); 44 new charters issued (6 in Canada); lost 513 Sisters; 13 joined; \$16,318.05 to the Silver Anniversary Fund; \$69,975.49 in the Bank (over \$2 million); insurance program solid; Bonds from the Harris Trust Co. were purchased to perpetuate the Orphan's Pension Fund \$20,500 (\$601,000)

1915
Cleveland, OH

April of 1917

• **United States entered World War I**

Began with problem of electing Grand Officers by acclamation in violation of governing rules, caused subdivisions who followed suit to holding illegal elections; suggestion to stick to the written ballot; War mentioned and that it was given as an excuse for subdivisions shirking their duties to raise money for Silver Anniversary Fund because of their work with the Red Cross and war relief; chastised them because they had done nothing for the Fund that would go to help those left behind when the soldiers fell; GP Murdock's first recommendation to require each division donate annually to the Anniversary Fund the maximum their treasuries could afford, but a minimum of \$.10 per member; divisions wishing to be excused from representation at convention pay an additional fee to the fund; if money left in the convention fund after bills are paid to deposit that money into the fund (she was very unhappy); passed a law that Divisions could not make honorary members; notices of deaths of members be sent ASAP to the Grand Secretary; reminder that the relief association is a business and rules must be followed-members in the Voluntary Relief Association stands at \$12,089; the Fireman's union hosted a banquet for the BLE and GIA; the BLE sent greetings which read in part, "If we are to make the most of our united and sympathetic efforts for the best common good, we must be guided and animated with the highest ideals of Justice, Morality, Sympathy and Charity." Early legislative activism included sending correspondence to the U.S. Senate requesting passage of the 19th Amendment, otherwise known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, giving women the right to vote; 54 Kits donated to American Relief for French wounded; authorization was given to buy Liberty Bonds from the General Fund; a raffle was held to raise money for the Anniversary Fund; instruction given on when to drape the division charter. 18 new charters; 13 charters surrendered with members transferring to other divisions; 688 sisters passed with the memorial done by the four divisions in Cleveland; 33 claims for assistance; 9 sisters joined; sale of Grand Officer photos netted \$562.20 for the Anniversary Fund; \$70,811.68 in the bank (just under \$1.4 million). Oddly no mention of the Spanish flu which would claim 292,000 people from September to November 1918.

1918
Cleveland, OH

April 13, 1919
Chicago, IL

Executive Council Meeting – Council gathered for a scheduled meeting on April 14, 1919, but Sister Murdock fell ill on April 13th and passed away on April 17th at the age of 59. It was never said, but one wonders if she succumbed to the flu in April of 1919? The GIA burial ceremony was done by Division 1 of Chicago. Sister Cassell ascended to the presidency and Sister Turner became Grand Vice President. Sister Cassell made sure that Sister Murdock's Bibliography was listed in the National Cyclopaedia of American Biography that is located in leading libraries and education institutions and newspaper offices throughout the entire country. The only cost was placing her portrait in the publication, which expense was