**The Victorettes**

It came to her as an idea in the middle of the night. In the spring of 1944, Dorothy Perry Boyce was a young woman; a recent graduate of Wilberforce University, living with her parents in Yellow Springs. Her husband, Lionel Boyce was stationed in Guam. Prompted by the void she felt as her husband, and the husbands, brothers, and fathers of her friends were serving in the war, she decided to start a group of young African American women in their late teens and early 20s during the final months of World War II.

Boyce was somewhat selective in accepting members to the group. She wanted the Vicorettes to be young women, not children; and she felt this was the vehicle to bring everyone together while benefiting the community and church. The group consisted of members from Central Chapel AME Church, and First Baptist Church. In May of 1944 the Victorettes put on their first “Spring Musicale” in Yellow Springs. This led to a series of summer concerts and performances in area churches in Dayton, Springfield, Wilberforce, and Xenia. Boyce, who was an accomplished musician, played the piano at the concerts, while the other women stood in their patented “V for Victory” formation. They sang classics, show tunes, gospel, and patriotic songs, while dressed in formal evening gowns. The Victorettes were invited to sing for Eleanor Roosevelt in 1944 at Antioch College as she was attending the North Central Institute of International Relations Conference.

In addition, the Victorettes sent Christmas cards to “all our boys” overseas; organized youth dances at The Glen Pavilion (a skating rink and dance hall no longer in existence located off of Route 343). Other fond memories include the performance of a play at Bryan High School which was scheduled for only one night; but villagers requested a command (second) performance.

The Victorettes’ time together was relatively brief. The group disbanded in 1946 when Boyce moved to Cleveland with her husband following his return to the States. Following World War II many members of the group married and remained in Yellow Springs to raise their children. They formed various social clubs and sponsored occasional parties and picnics for group entertainment. As their children grew, many sought employment outside of their homes. They bought new homes and necessary fixtures, including automobiles and sent their children off to college. A few members relocated in other states with their families. Whenever those out of state members returned to Yellow Springs for a visit, the local members held a reunion. These reunions grew to included families, and friends both male and female of local heritage. Deep bonds formed within the group and have remained strong throughout the years and decades that have followed. In 2016, eight of the members, including Boyce (who returned to the area following the passing of her husband) joined together with friends and relatives to reunite and share memories. Members of the Victorettes praise Mrs. Boyce for her patience and the “push” she gave members of the group.

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Sources: Yellow Springs News, August 6, 1998, September 15, 2016; Scott Sanders, Antiochiana; Phyllis Jackson; Isabel Newman