



Less than one hundred years had transpired since the end of the War Between the States and unfortunately, in some area of the South, the name REPUBLICAN was still synonymous with “carpetbagger”. A handful of courageous ladies, working relentlessly, helped change this erroneous image and the chance provided a tremendous impact on the political structure of Mississippi.

In the 1950's, Virginia Fite Hooper of Columbus and Eleanor Steel Hardiman traveled to the four corners of the State seeking Republican women to join forces and organize clubs. In their travels, Mrs. Hooper would stop at the beauty shops in town (usually a resourceful location for information) and inquire if anyone they knew had expressed a feeling of sympathy or affinity for the Republican Party.

Mrs. Hooper and Mrs. Hardiman were later joined by Marjorie Tims in their herculean task of organizing women across the State.

In conjunction with Mississippi's National Committeewoman, Kathryn Miller, the ladies invited Claire Williams, who at that time was serving as Republican National Committee Co-Chairman, to come speak to the women of Mississippi. Ms. Williams arrived in Natchez and while visiting one of the antebellum homes fell and sustained a broken leg. Aware of the dedication and determination of the women assembled, she arrived at the meeting that night in a leg cast and stood to address the group.

In 1960, the publicity of the first presidential candidate of a major political party, to visit Mississippi boosted the effectiveness of the ladies in their efforts to recruit. The candidate, Richard Nixon, spoke on the steps of the State Capitol and the Republican women presented Mrs. Nixon with a gold charm as a memento of her visit.

Gradually and painstakingly, the organization of Republican Women came together, holding its first “Assembly” in Pascagoula with Ms. Terry Gautier presiding.