



**Mrs. Thomas Motley, Jr. (Margaret F.)**  
**GCFM Founding Member**  
**1<sup>st</sup> GCFM President**  
**1928-1930**  
**39 clubs – 3,000 members**



Mrs. Thomas Motley, Jr. was the first elected president. A program pattern was set in line with the objectives which have been followed during succeeding administrations. The program included two study courses, one on plant physiology and one on landscaping, round table discussions, garden pilgrimages, establishment of a Speakers' Bureau, conservation lectures and participation in the New England Spring Flower Show. At the 1929 annual meeting held at the Statler, 400 were present and 500 in 1930. GCFM grew from 14 to 30 clubs, hundreds attended the meetings with outstanding speakers, such as the famous E.R. Wilson, Keeper of the Arnold Arboretum, one of the lecture participants. The timing was right! Garden clubs were filling a need and GCFM could and did serve as the coordinating factor. The tentative organization with its proposed constitution and by-laws became a permanent one in 1928.

The first yearbook was edited in 1930 with a list of 53 clubs and has continued through the years as a valuable asset. The importance of conservation was emphasized, and pledge cards were distributed among school children.

Mrs. Motley's Message in the First Yearbook 1929:

*"Remember our objective is: to coordinate the interests of the garden clubs of the state, to bring them into closer relations of mutual helpfulness by association, conferences and correspondence, and to co-operate with other educational agencies furthering the interests of gardening and conservation. The scope of this statement is broad indeed, but if each club will put its shoulder to the wheel in its own locality and really live this aim, one thing is sure, Massachusetts will be proud of her garden clubs and their influence will be far more reaching. Shall we try it for 1930 and see where we go?"*

While president of GCFM, Mrs. Moley served as the first Acting President of National Council of State Garden Clubs for one year 1929-1930. Following this, she was a member of National Council Advisory Committee for several years.

#### Margaret Motley and the Beginning of the National Council (NGC)

In March of 1929, a call was sent to all State Federations of Garden Clubs asking each that a representative attend a meeting in New York to consider the advisability of uniting the federations. Eight states responded, including Mrs. Thomas Motley, Jr., President of the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts.

A follow-up meeting was held the following May in Washington, D.C. Thirteen state federations sent representatives, including Massachusetts. On May 1, 1929, the National Council of State Garden Club Federations, Inc. was organized, including bylaws and a constitution. A slate of officers was presented. Mrs. Motley was selected first vice president. When the elected president was unable to serve, Mrs. Motley agreed to serve one year as acting president.

Charter members of the National Council included Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin. From a small nucleus of women at the beginning of the Great Depression, the garden club movement has grown to a nationwide organization.

Mrs. Motley's administration during 1929-1930 of National Council was a time of getting organized, filling offices, committees, and deciding upon objectives for the national organization. One of the first objectives was the conservation of our natural resources. Many felt that her wise leadership helped set a course so that decades of gardeners could be a "force for good" around the world.

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Margaret Motley was young, at the age of 47, to be president of two budding organizations at the same time, but it didn't slow her down. In fact, she seemed to thrive. As a champion of women, she defended her organizations, saying, "*We'll show those men on Beacon Hill that we are more than a social club.*" She was married to Thomas Motley and had two daughters and seven grandchildren. In her later years she lived in Milton, Massachusetts, and lived to the age of 87.