February 6, 2019

During the February 3, 1939, meeting of the All Hallows Guild Executive Committee, a Board member proposed the idea of having a Flower Mart on the Pilgrim Steps. It is believed that the idea for Flower Mart came from an All Hallows Guild member who spent time in Rome – often visiting the flower vendors on the Spanish Steps. The Pilgrim Steps were considered to be a similarly good location for a flower sale to benefit the Cathedral grounds.



Flower Mart 1942 – held on the Pilgrim Steps

An article about the Mart in the *Cathedral Age* Summer 1939 issue states that the Mart was held on May 1, postponed from the previous Saturday due to rain. There were 19 booths that brought in money, and many garden clubs participated in some

way. Prizes were given to the booths, with judging by Mrs. Frank B. Noyes (member of the AHG Garden Committee) and Mrs. John H. Gibbons (AHG president). First prize went to the seedling booth for a white wire pergola: “among the varieties of young plants were the sculptures of Fausta Mengarini and a cage containing two white doves.” Second prize was awarded to the Bethesda, (Maryland) Garden Club: “This booth was a stand arranged in irregular tiers with an array of pastel colored flowers ranging from dainty roses to tall gladioli.” Third prize went to the Trowel Club for their Italian flower cart, described as “a riot of color.” The article goes on to say that the tea booth was presided over by the wife of Supreme Court Associate Justice Owen J. Roberts.



Flower Mart 1947 – the Wesley Heights Garden Club booth

Bell Gurnee (first Flower Mart chairman) agreed that Mrs. J. Hamilton Lewis, wife of the senator from southern Illinois, should tell fortunes in a gypsy tent. A news item about this appeared in *The Washington Star,* setting off correspondence between the bishop (the Rt. Rev. James Freeman) and the dean (the Very Rev. Noble Powell). The dean assured the bishop: “Certainly nothing of this kind was contemplated by me when I brought the matter to you for consideration. I feel sure it was not in your mind when you gave approval to the general idea of having flowers, which would be a very beautiful thing, for sale on the steps.” Senator Lewis’s wife disagreed. While the dean was away, Mrs. Lewis called on the bishop – which prompted the following memo from bishop to dean:



Flower Mart 1948

Dear Dean,

While you were away, Senator Lewis’s wife came to see me with reference to what was understood to be a fortune telling tent at the approaching Flower Mart. She was quite shocked at my calling it a fortune telling tent and, as she explained it to me, it is to be conducted under a title such as ‘Interpreting Character Through Palmistry’ . . . She was exceedingly nice about it and is a devout woman . . . I think it would be well for you to drop a line to the committee that has this in charge indicating that

what Mrs. Lewis is to do is to Interpret Character Through Palmistry. I do not think there would be any question as to the propriety of this.



Flower Mart 1949 Original Poster

Preparations have been underway for months for Flower Mart 2019 – which will be a celebration of “Pollinator Power”. Over past the 80 years Flower Mart has continued to grow and evolve – eventually taking over much of the Cathedral Close for a two-day event that requires the commitment of over 500 volunteers. We won’t be having a fortune teller this year, but there will be over 70 boutique vendors, a wide array of food vendors, entertainment, our antique carousel, children’s rides and games, and much more (including flowers – of course). For more about Flower Mart 2019 go to our Flower Mart webpage.