

A History of Questers International

The year 1944 was full of misery for many people. Everyone was so weary of the War, and many had lost loved ones. Morale was slipping, and anything that would give it a boost was needed. This is what Jessie Elizabeth Bardens (founder of The Questers), had in mind when she asked a group of her co-workers to come to her home. They were to "bring an antique and a sandwich". This started a whole stream of small antiques being brought to work by her co-workers, just so Mrs. Bardens could give her knowledge and opinion.

This convinced her that something was needed, so on April 6, 1944 she invited fourteen people to come to her home for more discussion and study. By the end of that year, there were 35 people meeting to learn more about antiques. At that time, most homes were too small to accommodate this many people, so Mrs. Bardens encouraged all those wanting to join to form their own study groups.

In March 1950, six groups were organized into a national organization and in 1953 it was incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a non-profit corporation. Mrs. Bardens was the first National Quester President, serving from 1950-1956.

Before Mrs. Bardens passed away in 1963, she was able to attend the first National Quester Convention and see the Questers organization grow to 149 chapters located in 22 states. At the present time, there are almost 900 chapters in 43 states and two Canadian provinces.

When Mrs. Bardens was asked, "What is a Quester?" she gave this answer:

"A Quester is a socially well-adjusted intelligent person who has curiosity, enthusiasm, imagination and a good memory. For the powers of the mind are memory and imagination, for without memory we have no past, without imagination, no future... A Quester spends time constructively, does research about the history of antiques and collects knowledge. Sooner or later the 'bug bites' and they have acquired a hobby and are a collector."