

**HISTORY OF THE
CHICAGO ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGIATE
ALUMNAE. 1888-1917**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649754427

History of the Chicago Association of Collegiate Alumnae. 1888-1917 by Marion Talbot

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

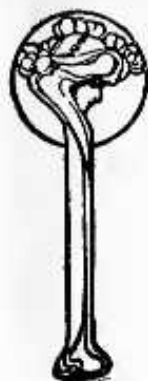
This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

MARION TALBOT

**HISTORY OF THE
CHICAGO ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGIATE
ALUMNAE. 1888-1917**

**History of the Chicago
Association of Collegiate
Alumnae**—*By Marion Talbot.*



1888-1917

Chicago, 1917

LC 1730
T3

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Committee appointed to prepare a history of the early years of the Branch presented its report in outline at a meeting held on January 19, 1918. Since that time the outline has been partially filled in and is now presented as a permanent record of a term of years rich in educational service.

A scrutiny of the records indicates that a college training does not necessarily result in making a young woman an archivist. The battered, but precious, Secretary's books contain slight evidence that the officers of the organization realized that in years to come their actions would be studied in an attempt to make an historical survey of the methods followed and the results achieved by the Branch. The minutes of one annual meeting are entirely missing; memorials ordered to be entered upon the minutes do not so appear; pledges to raise funds are voted without any indication of the final result; the phrase, "The recommendations of the committee were adopted," frequently appears without any indication of their content. There are no detailed financial records, but only here and there a statement as to an expenditure or a balance in the treasury. The significance of such a minute as, "It was moved and seconded and carried that a vote of thanks be tendered Mrs. Helmer for her herculean efforts," can easily be interpreted with the help of the memory of those who were conversant with Mrs. Helmer's generous and self-sacrificing efforts in behalf of the Branch during a long period of years, but many similar records would have to pass without comment from lack of information as to their meaning. In making this confession of the unbusinesslike methods of recording the doings of the Branch, the Committee surmises that this Branch is not the only offender. In case it must bear this burden alone, it has, as offset, the great distinction of counting as members of its present Historical Committee the two women who nearly thirty years ago were the leaders in organizing the Branch and who nurtured it with care and wisdom during its early years, Mrs. Bessie Bradwell Helmer and Mrs. Gertrude B. Blackwelder.

MARION TALBOT,
Chairman.

HISTORY OF THE CHICAGO ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE ALUMNAE

In December, 1887, the Western Association of Collegiate Alumnae appointed a committee to confer with a committee to be appointed by the Association of Collegiate Alumnae concerning the advisability and basis of union.

In October, 1888, Mrs. Alice Freeman Palmer, Mrs. Helen Hiscock Backus, and Miss Marion Talbot, representing the A. C. A., and Mrs. Bessie Bradwell Helmer, representing the Western A. C. A., agreed upon a basis of union to take effect in October, 1889, which was later adopted by both organizations. The Western A. C. A. disbanded and the members residing in Illinois assembled in May, 1889, on the call of Mrs. Bessie Bradwell Helmer, State Director for Illinois, and organized the Chicago A. C. A., which thereby became the eighth branch of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae.

The fabric of the history of the Branch is made up of a body of threads into which is woven the pattern which shows from time to time the influence of the leaders or the compelling power of local issues.

Throughout the whole period, 1889-1917, there is a continuous record of discussions and actions relating to the following matters:

1. Place of meeting.
2. Character of meetings.
3. Methods of increasing membership.
4. Means of securing funds and filling a depleted treasury.
5. Changes in the Constitution.
6. Relations to the National Association.
7. Development of social features.
8. Means of carrying on effective educational work.
9. Form of publications.
10. Arrangements for meetings of the National Association.
11. Methods of interesting women graduating from colleges in the Association.
12. Co-operation with the committees of the Association and its Branches in special lines of work.

The maintenance of the fellowships was a constant subject of discussion and effort. This was undoubtedly due, in large measure, to the facts that the Branch inherited from

the Western A. C. A., a peculiar obligation to support the fellowship it had founded in 1888, and that the chairman for many years of the National Committee on Fellowships, Mrs. Helmer, was an active member of the Branch.

The meetings were naturally held in Chicago, but in 1897 the Branch held its annual meeting at Northwestern University. In 1898 it met "at the usual time and place." The records for 1899 are missing, but beginning in 1900, the annual meetings were held either at Northwestern University or at the University of Chicago. For many years the women of the graduating classes of the neighboring universities have been guests of the Branch at a spring meeting.

Another noticeable feature during a long series of years was the counsel and active interest freely given by a group of notable women, Jane Addams, Julia C. Lathrop, and Florence Kelley, a record which is probably unparalleled in any other Branch. In the records of the first annual meeting, held November 3, 1889, appears for the first time the name of Miss Jane Addams. "A committee of three ladies was appointed to communicate with Miss Addams and ask in what way the Association could be of assistance to her." In February, 1890, this committee reported that Miss Addams wished a resident alumna to assist in her work. In May Miss Addams was present by invitation and "gave an exhaustive account of her work with Miss Starr with the poor people in South Halsted Street." In November, 1890, it was proposed that the Branch should support a resident, but it was not until February, 1893, that formal action was taken, and in March, 1893, Miss Julia C. Lathrop was appointed as the Hull House fellow. Miss Jeannette C. Welch held the fellowship for the year 1893-4.

During the first winter the Branch had a number of papers presented on different phases of a subject which went under the general term, "Americana," and study classes were formed to take up different special topics. The records indicate that some very learned papers were presented. Mrs. Alice Freeman Palmer, President of the A. C. A., was present at the meeting in February, 1890, and as usual contributed greatly to the significance of the meeting.

In April, 1890, Miss Emily F. Wheeler gave a paper on Women in College Instruction, in which she called attention to the fact that discrimination against women existed even

in State institutions and that only subordinate appointments on the faculties were given to women. The years which have passed have not brought about any very signal change in the conditions, but it was significant that at the same meeting Mrs. Helmer urged the support of the fellowships and in this way strengthened the movement which for many years she led to unite college women for the promotion of high scholarship.

In June, 1890, an Authors' Reading was proposed, but it was not until March 7, 1891, that it took place—the first Authors' Reading to occur in Chicago. The sum of \$459.64 was netted towards the fellowship funds.

In October, 1890, the A. C. A. held its annual meeting in Chicago and was entertained by the Chicago Branch, as it was on several occasions in later years, viz., 1893, 1899, 1906, 1913 (Council), 1916 (Council).

In February, 1891, an inquiry was made in the Branch as to the reasons why so few graduates from the city high schools attended college. Under the chairmanship of Mrs. Harriet T. Braimard an investigation was made concerning the actual conditions in the Chicago schools. There was abundant evidence that measures should be taken to interest the students in carrying on their studies. Active steps, however, were not taken in this direction until the spring of 1896, when 150 high school girls from the senior classes attended a special meeting of the Branch. This was the first of a series of meetings conducted annually through the year 1907. During the later years the guests were the juniors rather than the seniors. The special features of these meetings were exhibits from the different colleges of the Association, addresses descriptive of college life and its subsequent interests and opportunities, singing of college songs, serving of refreshments and the opportunity for the older and younger women to become personally acquainted. These meetings were abandoned when the numbers became too large to maintain the personal quality, and as a substitute the Branch carried on for a series of years a system of sending out representatives to the different public and private high schools to give addresses to the graduating girls, and also invited the senior class of women of the neighboring colleges to be guests at a meeting in the spring.

In November, 1891, appears the first record in regard to the World's Columbian Exposition, which, from that time for two or three years, was destined to prove a very absorbing interest in the Branch. Mrs. Potter Palmer personally appealed to the members of the Branch for their interest and support in securing proper representation of the scientific work of women and general attendance at the educational congresses. Mrs. Rho Fisk Zueblin became chairman of a committee to co-operate in developing the system of Columbian guides. Two members of the Branch, Mrs. Mary Whitney Chapin and Mrs. Harriet Tilden Brainard, were chairmen respectively of the Committees on Exhibition and Headquarters and on Representation of the Higher Education of Women at the World's Fair Congresses. The members of the Branch assumed a large part of the responsibility of caring for the national headquarters in the Woman's Building and of explaining the exhibit. It was fitting that for a time the Branch should become in 1897 the custodian of the medal and diploma awarded the A. C. A. by the authorities of the Exposition.

Arrangements were made in March, 1892, for a series of lectures on Domestic Science by Prof. Lucy M. Salmon, the proceeds of which went to the fellowship fund. In April the suggestion appears for the first time that a room be taken to be used by all the College Associations. A lecture for the fellowship fund was also given by Mrs. Alice F. Palmer on "The Influence of College Education Upon Our Homes." This lecture netted \$180.77.

It is interesting to note that in April, 1893, an address was given on the Significance of the Recent Opening of Graduate Courses of Study to Women at Yale University, The University of Pennsylvania and Brown University, by Prof. William Gardner Hale, of the University of Chicago, while in the following January Mrs. T. J. Lawrence, the wife of a Professor at Cambridge University, England, gave an address on "The Possible Union of Womanliness and Intellectuality Under College Influences." The year 1893-1894 was particularly significant for many reasons. The University of Chicago had graduated its first class and the University was from that time on a source of strength in maintaining and increasing the membership of the Branch.

In December, 1893, Mrs. Florence Kelley of Hull House,

chief inspector of factories in the State of Illinois, spoke on the "Formation of a Purchasers' League to Protect Women and Children." A committee of three was appointed to confer with other committees in regard to the formation of such a league. The records show little of what action was taken until 1897, when, under the leadership of Mrs. Jane E. Smoot, the work organized by the joint committee was developed, and on December 18th the provisions of a constitution for the Illinois Consumers' League were presented and the Branch expressed its approval of the formation of such a League. It was not, however, until 1898, that the Branch ceased as an organization to have any official responsibility for the League.

In the same winter, 1893-4, visitation of the public schools by members of the Branch was organized. Miss Julia C. Lathrop, of the Illinois State Board of Charities, directed the interest of the Branch to the need of giving intelligent concern to the State institutions.

In April, 1894, attention was called by Mrs. Alice Bradford Wiles, chairman of the Committee on School Visitation, to the need of arousing public opinion to the importance of securing appointments to the Board of Education without regard to partisan politics. It was moved that the Committee be instructed to draw up a memorial addressed to the Mayor, who made the appointments to the Board of Education, this memorial to be presented to the Association and then made public. The motion, however, was lost by a vote of 6 to 10. This seems to be the first record of any attempt to use the influence of the Branch upon public officers in educational matters. The later history of the Branch shows that the members soon outgrew the timidity which was shown on this first occasion. Indeed, in the following November there is a minute that a committee of three was "appointed to frame a petition to the local senators and representatives," but there is no record to indicate the import of the petition. The following is a partial record of official actions taken by the Branch in regard to legislative and executive measures:

January, 1896. Protest sent to the Board of Education against the proposed reduction of salaries of teachers in the public schools.

April, 1898. The Education Commission of Chicago urged to provide manual training and household economy for girls.

December, 1898. Endorsement of the action of the Mayor in