



Chicago Branch AAUW Celebrates the Life of Our Illustrious Member Jane Addams

**From THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS (1889 – 1939)
by Janet Miller**

**Prepared for the AAUW Chicago Branch Centennial
October, 1889**

In 1892, the Branch had over 100 members, ranking in size behind only Boston and Philadelphia. At the December 1892 meeting, Bertha Honoré Palmer spoke on the Columbian Exposition and the Executive Committee agreed to aid in “scientific research work” and assist with guides for the Exposition, for which it received a diploma and a medal of appreciation. Along with other women’s organizations, the Branch exhibited materials at the Exposition.

At the same meeting the question of supporting a Hull House resident was raised. In January 1893, the Branch voted to support a Hull House fellow, with the selection to be made by Jane Addams, who was a Branch member and a Branch Committee [Chair]. Illinois born Julia Lathrop, a close associate of Addams, was selected. Julia Lathrop is best known for her local, state and national reform of hospitals, schools and mental institutions and her work with juveniles and immigrants in Chicago. The Branch did much to aid her early work and the work of other members of the Hull House group.

In December 1893, Florence Kelley, also a Hull House resident and chief inspector of factories in Illinois, spoke on *The Formation of a Purchaser’s League to Protect Women and Children*. An “earnest discussion” followed Kelley’s presentation and “the formation of such a league was urged by all.” The minutes continue:

It was suggested by members that a committee should be appointed from the A.C.A and that this committee with other committees appointed should correspond with the large stores and ascertain where their goods are made. This plan was thought to be helpful in instructing the large buyers and inciting them to take more care in having their goods made in sanitary surroundings.

Florence Kelley’s activities were supported financially by the Branch via the Consumer’s League until 1899, when the League ceased to be a Branch committee and became an independent organization. The Branch took great interest in Kelley’s fight against

employment of child labor by Chicago's notorious sweat shops and some members served as volunteer factory inspectors...

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Founded by Jane Addams and Ellen Starr, Hull House offered activist women the opportunity to commit one's whole life (domestic and professional) to working for social, political and economic justice. Hull House residents, many of them also Branch members, gave guidance and support to shared causes. Meanwhile, the Branch meetings offered Addams, Kelley, Lathrop and others a podium from which to educate and advocate for change.

The topic for the meeting of December 19, 1896, was "The Future of Social Settlement Work." Jane Addams and Graham Taylor were among the speakers. Addams thanked the Branch for formerly supporting an "excellent" resident. Taylor spoke of the "lack of opportunities for sociability among the poor." Taylor "spoke earnestly for closer association and sympathy of classes and of the great middle class and the many strangers in the city among them whose loneliness was as hard to bear as physical want."

University of Chicago Settlement House resident Mary McDowell spurred Branch interest in vocation schools at an 1895 meeting. Jane Addams spoke on the "Socialization of Educational Methods" at a tea for 350 college preparatory women on February 17, 1900. Likewise, at a 1902 meeting held at Hull House, Julia Lathrop pleaded for neighborhood and school reform during her presentation *The Public Schools and their Proper Future...*

That much of the common focus was directed to hygiene, domestic science and manual training in the public schools for adolescent and preadolescent girls was probably due to several factors: the incorporation of sanitation and home economics in settlement programs, the participation of Branch members Grace and Edith Abbott in daily Hull House life and the influence of two members of the University of Chicago faculty, Sophonisba Breckinridge and Marion Talbot.

Marion Talbot received degrees from Boston University and from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and she, her mother (Emily), and Ellen Richards are generally credited as the founders of ACA. In a 1937 speech entitled *Looking Backward and Forward*, Talbot stated, "Clothes and Italian lessons and balls and speedy marriage did not fit" into her scheme of life; instead, she wanted "that working together for the advancement and improvement of education [for women, with the result being] the best possible foundation for real friendship, better certainly than teas and bridge parties."

As Instructor in Domestic Science at Wellesley College (1890-1892), Marion Talbot worked closely with Alice Freeman Palmer, then President of Wellesley. When Mrs. Palmer relocated to become Dean of Women at the University of Chicago, her acceptance of the position was contingent on residing only three months a year in Chicago and having Miss Talbot as Deputy Dean.

Marion Talbot succeeded Alice Palmer as Dean and had a major role in establishing the curriculum and in the construction and operation of women's residence halls. One of the founders of domestic science, she also served as Assistant Professor of Sanitary

Science. In 1894, Miss Talbot was offered and refused the deanship of Barnard College and in 1895 she was made Associate Professor of Household Administration at Chicago. She was named full Professor in 1905. In 1902, she clashed with William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago, over the University's plan to sexually segregate classes. For many years she served as ACA national secretary and president (1895-1897), and twice was Chicago Branch president (1899-1901 and 1903-1904). Her many publications include *The Modern Household*, coauthored with Sophonisba Breckinridge and *The Education of Women...*

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2007 Editor's Note:

More of this early history is available in Jane Addams' memoir *My Friend, Julia Lathrop*. Originally published in 1935, the "First Illinois edition" was published by University of Illinois Press in 2004 with a new introduction by prominent women's history pioneer Anne Firor Scott.

Jane Addams By One Who Knew Her by Louise V. Molkup

**From JANE ADDAMS: A TRIBUTE
Prepared by AAUW Chicago Branch Members in 1972**



Louise in 1989

In the early 1920's I was an undergraduate at the University of Chicago. Marion Talbot, one of AAUW's founders, was our dean of women and there were at that time on the faculty a score or more of other brilliant women. Miss Talbot had a coterie of friends destined to become world famous; it included Sophonisba P. Breckenridge, Jane Addams, Edith and Grace Abbott, and Julia Lathrop.

These gentlewomen were imbued with the ideals of altruism and service. They believed they had a duty to share the fruits of their superior education. Each contributed greatly in the field of social service: teaching, founding schools and establishing settlement houses.

But Jane Addams began her social service at the grassroots. In a neighborhood of immigrants she became personally concerned with the health and education of the people, especially the young. She believed children younger than age fourteen should not be permitted to work; nor should their non-English speaking parents be exploited. Along with working increasingly for the passage of child labor laws and the establishment of unions, Jane Addams was concerned for the quality of life of her neighbors. She invited them into Hull-House as she would have invited them into her own home. She and her associates taught the women English, cooking and sewing. The men were given tools and a workbench and were encouraged to speak English to each other. The young had materials for crafts of all kinds, for art work, for social games, for music and for drama. There was always a comfortable, quiet place to sit and read books, magazines and newspapers.

Two members of the Chicago Branch – Augusta Woolf and Nell Lathrop Fortstall – were resident assistants and we students came in for several hours each week. We helped wherever we could, usually assisting in the class work. It was a most inspiring experience. The neighbors all came in as if they were entering a church – quiet, dignified and eager. We saw no rowdiness or vandalism, which seemed largely due to the gentleness, dignity and warm friendliness of Miss Addams herself. Her kind yet firm direction seemed to draw out the best in everyone.

August Woolf tells of being on duty as a hostess in the drawing room on a dreary Sunday afternoon. No one was there, so she took out her mending. Suddenly Miss Addams entered the room. Augusta quickly put her sewing under a pillow on the lounge and rose to greet Miss Addams. As she approached, Miss Addams noticed Augusta's embarrassment and confusion and said, "That's all right, Augusta, I'm a Quaker. Take out your mending and finish it." "And," says Augusta, "she always remembered me after that. When I was married she presented me with a brass door knocker that had been in her old home."

We students who spent an afternoon once a week helping out wherever needed returned to campus inspired to greater diligence in and appreciation of our own advantages. Some of us returned to the classroom of "Teddy" James Weber Linn, professor of English at the University of Chicago, a devoted nephew of Jane Addams and author of the best biography of his aunt.

1972 Editor's Note:

Jane Addams was not formally a Quaker. She was a self-styled friend of the Friends and often acknowledged her respect for Quaker thought and her indebtedness to it.

2007 Editor's Note:

Louise Viehoff Molkup was a member of Chicago Branch for over 50 years, right up until her death in 1992. She served two terms as branch president from 1970 to 1972 and from 1978 to 1980.

Citizens of Illinois:

Join us in celebrating the FIRST annual Jane Addams Day on December 10, 2007!

To read more about AAUW-Illinois' role in the Jane Addams Day legislation, read our press release on PRWeb:

When Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich signed HB 5243 naming December 10 "Jane Addams Day" in Illinois, he brought to fruition two years of dedicated work by Dongola (IL) Unit School teacher Cindy Vines and an eager team of eighth-graders. Their project received a major boost when Lelia Marvin, President of the AAUW Carbondale (IL) Branch entered the loop. HB5243 takes effect January 1, 2007, making December 10, 2007 the first "official" commemorative day. According to Jan Lisa Huttner, Director of International Relations for AAUW-Illinois, "our goal is to make sure everyone knows to mark December 10, 2007 on their calendars right away; great things will happen in Illinois on that date!"

<http://prweb.com/releases/2006/12/prweb489011.htm>

