

# GERMANTOWNE *CRIER*



Y.W.C.A. COOKING CLASS, 1905

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THE FIRST ONE HUNDRED YEARS  
OF THE  
YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF GERMANTOWN

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When the 100th Anniversary Committee under the enthusiastic leadership of Marguerite L. Riegel, Chairman, began its overall planning of the celebration which opens November 2, to honor the founding of the Young Women's Christian Association of Germantown, there was immediate agreement that, as a permanent commemorative, nothing could be more fitting than an accurate, well-written history of the Association's first hundred years. A record of those experiences, it was felt, would add immeasurably to the better understanding of the present and could be of valuable assistance in the critical decisions concerning the approach to the second century.

To the delight of everyone, Miss Lucy P. Garner, author of the interesting and comprehensive story of *The Settlement Way in Philadelphia*, accepted the responsibility for the task. The past months have found her diligently perusing old minute books, Annual Reports, area newspaper files, and, particularly, the records at the Germantown Historical Society Library. The results of her research appear in an attractively illustrated volume entitled, *The First One Hundred Years of the Young Women's Christian Association of Germantown*, which will be made available to the public this fall.

FROM its very inception, the history of The Young Women's Christian Association has been profoundly and inextricably enmeshed with that of Germantown itself, its changes and developments. Throughout the years there flows a consistent pattern of early identification with area problems followed by earnest attempts to share in the community's efforts at solution. In fact, it was just such an urgent problem in 1869 that prompted a group of local women to initiate action which later led to the founding of the Women's Christian Association of Germantown.

At that time, it must be remembered, Germantown was known as a "mill-town"—"the first distinctly manufacturing town in Pennsylvania." An article in the *Germantown Guide* of May 26, 1917, entitled, "Well-remembered Mills," listed more than fifty. Troubled by the "rough and unseemly behavior at night on the streets of the young women workers in the mills who had no place to spend an evening, except on the street or in their dreary boarding houses," a meeting of a small group of women "was called in 1869 by Elizabeth P. Smith at her residence, 45 East Penn Street. With no time lost, rooms were opened in 1870 at 5413 Germantown Avenue for 'social pleasures, classes, and Bible Readings.' Edward W. Hocker, in his book, *Germantown, 1685-1933*, thus records the beginning of the YWCA of Germantown: 'The former (YWCA) was organized late in 1870 under the name of Women's Christian Association, being the first body of that name in Philadelphia. It first occupied the house at 5425 Germantown Avenue, later to make way for Masonic Hall.'"

"One year after the opening of the rooms, the Association was officially organized and incorporated. The minutes of the Board meeting, February 8, 1871, tell the story: 'The same spirit which has been moving in the hearts of women across the water and in our own coun-

try put it into the heart of one of His servants here in Germantown, Ellen Matlack, to extend and enlarge the influence of the work she was already doing in Wakefield and Fisher's Hollow. Five years after the Boston YWCA was founded, a group of ten women met at the home of Elizabeth Smith on Penn Street, February 8th, 1871 . . . There were present A. Bayard, Emily Dunning, Abby S. Folwell, Martha H. Garrett, Ellen Matlack, Harriet C. Thomas, Rachel P. Namah, E. J. Smith, Elizabeth Smith, and Mary C. Whitehall. A resolution was passed that the association be called the Women's Christian Association of Germantown and plans were made for beginning work at once.'"

"The original rooms had been soon outgrown and, according to the first printed annual report (dated 1872), 'Six rooms were rented at 4777 Main Street, the second door below Church Lane . . . Two were fitted up with desks and a teacher was engaged for two evenings a week. The school from the first was so popular that they were soon at a loss for room enough to accommodate the girls.' 'Pine Cottage' became also the first boarding home operated by the Germantown Association. The following public announcement was made:

COME AND WELCOME

It may not be generally known that two rooms at 4777 Main Street have been furnished for the accommodation of those girls who work for their support, where they may spend a social evening with sewing, book, or game; or, if they wish, improve themselves in the schoolroom.

Every Monday and Thursday, and occasionally other evenings, the rooms are open and cheerfully lighted from 7½ to 10 o'clock. A few boarders can also be pleasantly accommodated at three dollars per week.

The record states that 'the first year the work was supported by gifts of money and furniture and there was



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a long list of loaned articles.' . . .

Donated articles included: periodicals (from the YMCA), dishes, wood, reduction of coal prices, several pounds of tracts, matting, carpet, window shades, tables, games, sugar plums. Among the loans listed were: a handsome magic Lantern, a clock, an umbrella stand, 2 tea kettles, a coffee pot, and a tea pot, two blue plates, pictures.

The next move to larger quarters took place when the Association acquired the building at the northeast corner of Mill and Main Streets on Market Square . . . During its early years board was as high as \$3.00 per week, which included room, breakfast, portable lunch, heat, light, and laundry privileges. Transients were charged ten cents overnight and ten cents for breakfast.

These immediate and practical services expresses in concrete terms the purpose of the Women's Christian Association of Germantown: 'The object shall be the temporal and religious welfare of young women, especially young women dependent on their own exertions for support.'

Fortunately for posterity, the founders of the YWCA of Germantown were scrupulous in keeping records. Minutes of the Board of Managers and Annual Meetings, carefully written in longhand, tell the story of the early years. Unostentatiously, they reveal also, the devotion and the self-discipline of the 'managers.' For example, they agreed to fine themselves fifteen cents for absence from a board meeting and ten cents for lateness. They raised money by laborious person-to-person pleas for funds for the new enterprise. They involved themselves personally in service to the girls who came to the rooms and in seeking out others in need. They called on those who were ill or whose families were in trouble."

"Quoting from the first Annual Report: 'At some suitable time the Bible is read and is often accompanied by prayer. We observe a manager often seating herself near a group of girls to talk of God's love to them, His

nearness and willingness to hear their prayers, illustrating the truths by a little story of home life.'"

Always alert to the community's needs, the Board of Managers of the YWCA present established a nurses agency. In 1881 an employment bureau for girls and women was opened.

In 1883 free baths were established and proved popular. "The 1896 Annual Report gives a significant insight into the ways of that period of our history: 'The free baths for women and children have been well patronized this past year. The Committee undertook the care of the bathrooms, and by advertising made known the privilege and luxury thus afforded by our Association, so that about nine hundred baths were taken during the season. One room is set apart for colored women and children, and there were fifty patrons of this room.'"

"The national financial panic of the 1870's affected those whom the Association aimed to serve, and therefore, the management of the new home. A restrained statement in the minutes records that 'insufficiency and uncertainty of millwork in which most of our inmates are employed, has lately interfered with prompt weekly payment of board.'"

"Another national event of this decade brought a degree of prosperity to the home. It was opened to visitors to the Centennial Exposition at a 'moderate board,' although to be recognized as 'not merely a low-priced boarding home.' The prices for the Centennial visitors were '\$1.00 per day for lodging and all meals; 75 cents if not dinner; 50 cents for lodging only.'"

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The vast contrast between the early beginnings related in the foregoing excerpts from the history, and the Association's current, far-reaching, diversified program to meet the challenges of today, suggests the great wealth of experiences, the successes and the failures, that marked the intervening years.

**YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION  
of  
GERMANTOWN  
100th ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM  
EVENTS OF THE WEEK**

**SUNDAY, November 2nd**

3:00-6:00 p.m.  
At the YWCA, 5820 Germantown Avenue  
**ART EXHIBIT**

of paintings and sculpture by women of  
the Germantown—Chestnut Hill area.  
Presentation of Jury Awards.  
Tea will be served  
Exhibit will remain for two weeks

**TUESDAY, November 4th**

1:00 p.m.  
At the YWCA  
Price \$1.50  
**LUNCHEON AND PANEL DISCUSSION  
"SALUTE TO WOMEN"**

**PANEL MEMBERS:**

- Law
- Fashions
- Literature
- International  
Relations
- Education
- Medicine

- Mrs. Sadie T. M. Alexander
- Mrs. Lauralou Bates
- Miss Carolyn Haywood
- Mrs. Ruth Weir Miller
- Dr. Marechal-Neil Young
- Dr. Alma Morani

Moderator Dr. Helen C. Bailey

**THURSDAY, November 6th**

6:30 p.m.  
Washington Room, Williamson's Restaurant  
Barclay Building, City & Belmont Aves.  
Price \$5.00

**INTERNATIONAL DINNER**

"The YWCA Around the World" Miss Marguerite  
Spurgeon, *Chairman, World Fellowship  
Committee*

Address: Arthur C. Kaufman, "*Philadelphia's  
unofficial Ambassador.*"

**SUNDAY, November 16th**

3:00-5:00 p.m.  
At the YWCA

**CLOSING OF ART EXHIBIT  
PRESENTATION OF POPULAR VOTE AWARD  
PROGRAM BY THE CHOIR OF THE  
GERMANTOWN FRIENDS SCHOOL**

Tea will be served



**BASKETBALL TEAM**



**CAFETERIA, HARKNESS HOUSE**

**SAMPLE MENUS OF LUNCH ROOM.**

The Lunch Room is open from 11.30 A.M. to 1.00 P.M.,  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.  
The privileges of the Lunch Room are free to a young woman  
bringing her luncheon from home.

**A JANUARY MENU.**

Pepper Pot .....	5c.
Vegetable Soup .....	4c.
Roast Pork and Baked Beans .....	8c.
Roast Lamb and Browned Potatoes .....	8c.
Peas .....	2c.
Apple Sauce .....	2c.
Rice Pudding .....	4c.
Washington Pie .....	4c.
Tea, Coffee, Cocoa, Milk .....	3c.
Bread and Butter .....	2c.

**A JUNE MENU.**

Chicken Soup .....	4c.
Meat Pie and Potatoes .....	8c.
Liver, Potatoes and Onions .....	8c.
Chicken and Tomato Salad .....	6c.
Tomato and Cucumber Salad .....	5c.
Scalloped Tomatoes .....	2c.
Strawberries .....	5c.
Banana Ice Cream .....	5c.
Drop Cakes, each .....	1c.
Pineapple Tapioca .....	4c.
Tea, Coffee, Milk .....	3c.
Roll and Butter .....	2c.