

GOD'S OWN CORNERSTONES:
OUR DAUGHTERS:
THE SASKATOON YOUNG WOMEN'S
CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,
1910-1939

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1989

"God's Own Cornerstones: Our Daughters":
The Saskatoon Young Women's Christian Association,
1910-1939

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of History
in the
Department of History
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

by

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October, 1989

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Abstract

This study examines the activities of the Young Women's Christian Association in Saskatoon from its organization in 1910 to the end of the Depression. The Association was organized to further the Travellers' Aid work that had been started in the city by Deaconess Millicent Simcox, but it soon encompassed much more. Within two years a residence building was built, an Employment Bureau was in operation, and an educational program including classes and clubs was initiated.

The women of the YWCA believed that young women living on their own in the city were vulnerable to the immoral influences found in the city. In order to combat these influences, the YWCA women believed that young women needed to be built up physically, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. This four-fold aim formed the purpose of the Association. All the services and activities of the Association were geared to draw young women to the Association building. Once there, the process of character-building could be undertaken.

Young women in 1910 may have needed the protective services offered by the YWCA, but their daughters should have been in less need. Twenty years after the organization of the Association, a greater number of young women were in the work force and the experiences of travelling alone and

finding work in a city were no longer uncommon. Despite these changes, the women of the YWCA were unwavering in their belief in the purpose of the Association. Had it not been for the problems of the Depression, the YWCA might have found their protective services to be outdated.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Professor J. R. Miller for his expert supervision of my thesis work. His insightful commentary and unerring eye for detail made this a much better product. I am especially grateful to Nadine Small for her sounding-board service and her perceptive commentary. I also owe her special thanks for her discovery of several files in the City records pertinent to my topic. I must also thank my husband and son and the rest of my family for their constant support of me and my work.

I also wish to acknowledge my gratitude to the College of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Saskatchewan for their financial assistance and to the Committee on Grants for the J.S. Ewart Memorial Fund for the award that funded my trip to the National Archives in Ottawa.

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PREFACE

This study was suggested by the Saskatoon Young Women's Christian Association to mark the 75th anniversary of the local Association. Though a study of the entire 75 years was originally contemplated, a cut-off date of 1939 was chosen in order to allow the organization and the early years of the Association to be covered in depth. The beginning of the Second World War is a logical point to conclude this study because the changes in society and the role of women brought on by the war have a profound effect on the YWCA and are worthy of separate study.

The sources for this thesis are the Saskatoon YWCA papers and minutes at the Saskatchewan Archives, reports to the Saskatoon City Council found in the City of Saskatoon Archives, local newspapers, and the Dominion records of the YWCA at the National Archives. The material on the early years of the Association is very sketchy. Many of the minute books for the first fifteen years are missing, and the existing minute books are incomplete with notations such as "The Travellers' Aid Secretary gave a splendid report", but without a report attached. Consequently much of the background to crucial decisions is not available. Some of the gaps in the minute books can be made up by the newspapers, but here too, these reports were limited to the activities of the Association and the decisions made by the

Board of Directors. None of the controversy leading up to the decisions was reported, so we are left knowing the Board's conclusions, but not the details leading to those conclusions.

In addition, the scope of the work of the Association was difficult to study. The activities of the Association aimed at the majority of young women -- the clubs, classes, socials, and other activities -- are well-documented. This is not true of the work with young women who were termed "problem girls", or the girls whom the YWCA women thought were going to get into trouble. The newspaper reports and board minutes do not deal with the unwed mothers, delinquent girls, and prostitutes who were frequently dealt with by the Association secretaries. That these women came in contact with YWCA workers is evident from a few reports to the City Council, but in these reports descriptions and details are obscured by the polite terms of the time. For example, there is no use of the word "pregnant" or even "expecting". An unmarried, pregnant woman's condition was described in terms such as "facing a time of great stress". This decorum is unfortunate since most of the programs of the YWCA had the specific aim of preventing young women from getting into trouble, and rescuing women on the verge of taking "the wrong path in life". It is difficult to assess the success of the YWCA programs when the details of their successes and failures do not survive in the records.

Millicent Simcox cast a glance at her watch as she rushed around the room. It was difficult to read the hands in the darkness, but she did not want a light in case it woke the two girls sleeping at the other end of the room. Both had arrived on the evening train just before midnight, and one had to be up in a few hours to catch an early train. Millicent squinted at the time. She was late. Grabbing her purse and cape, she dashed out the door into the chilly night air.

With a quick step, she made her way along the Saskatoon streets to the train station. She chose her route carefully, but she had to pass by one brothel, still lighted and busy even at 4:00 a.m.. Strains from a piano and snatches of laughter could still be heard on the opposite side of the street. She hurried on to the station, stepped inside, and gave a relieved sign. She did not often run into problems, but in the past she had had to deal with a few drunken males emerging from the brothels.

The train from Winnipeg was right on time. Millicent checked with the station master for messages and cast an eye around looking for any young girls waiting for the train. There were none, so she rushed to the platform and carefully watched each passenger alight. A young girl stepped hesitantly off the train. Millicent hustled over to her and introduced herself as the Travellers' Aid worker. The girl was expecting a friend to meet her, but no one was at the

station. Millicent offered her a place to rest and assistance with finding her friend in the morning.

Millicent escorted the young girl back to her rented rooms. En route she discovered that the girl had travelled alone from England and planned to stay in the city and look for work. Her friend was working as a domestic and had found a job for her. Millicent showed the girl to a cot in the corner, and then lay down herself for a few hours of sleep before the next train arrived at 7:30 a.m..

Chapter One

Great Expectations

The organization which Millicent Simcox helped to found, the Saskatoon Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), was established as a result of civic pride and the reform ideas of the Protestant women of the city. These women were as enthusiastic and optimistic about Saskatoon's potential as were the men; however, the women's vision was tempered by their ideas of the changing role of women in society and their desire to influence the morals of others. The YWCA's three-fold aim of physical, intellectual, and spiritual development appealed to some of these reform-minded women, and a branch of the Association was founded in 1910, with a building erected by 1912.

That a YWCA was established in 1910 is remarkable considering that a mere nine years earlier Saskatoon had been a village of 113 people. The community's rapid growth and the citizen's expectations that their city would continue to grow was one of the factors that led to the founding of a YWCA. By 1905, Saskatoon was vying to become the capital of Saskatchewan. Boosters in the town promoted Saskatoon for this honour by pointing out that it was a natural market centre for the province, all the railways would be coming through the city, and with the number of immigrants heading north, it would soon be the centre of the

province's population.¹ Though Regina won out as the capital city, the citizen's enthusiasm for their town was not dampened. In the same year, Saskatoon became a city, and a boom gathered force.

It was during this boom that the ground work was laid for the formation of a YWCA. Archdeacon G. E. Lloyd perceived that there was a need for social service work to be done among the young women in the province. If Saskatoon flourished in the manner that its citizens expected, there would be many young women arriving from the rural areas, or migrating from Eastern Canada and overseas. Accordingly, Lloyd invited Millicent Simcox, a Deaconess, to come to Saskatoon "to look after on behalf of the Church of England the stream of English girls coming out to find work."² Simcox started the "Girls' Welcome and Employment Office", which was the first Travellers' Aid and Employment Service for women in the city.

The conditions facing young women in Saskatoon in its early years made the advent of social work welcome. The town was growing rapidly, but the population was growing faster than could be accommodated. Young women often found little lodging available, and when they were lucky enough to

¹ Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, Saskatoon: The First Half-Century, (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), pp.37-39.

² Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), Saskatoon YWCA, A553-53, Travellers' Aid, n.d., letter to F. Buckle from Millicent E. Simcox, May 12, 1950.

find a room at a hotel or boarding house, it was often priced beyond their means. Because the population was predominantly male, women often felt isolated in their hotel rooms, lonely for company and afraid to venture out, even to the hotel lobby, because of the raucous noises filtering in from the halls or the street. Trips out of the hotel to look for work or to shop often involved running a gauntlet through groups of young men, sometimes inebriated, lounging around outside hotels and on street corners.

Even as a town, Saskatoon was already displaying some of the features that reformers disliked in a city. Bars and brothels, catering to the large numbers of single males working on construction crews in the area or passing through Saskatoon on the way to their new homesteads, proliferated.³ The presence of these establishments was a visible sign to the reformers of the disregard for the Christian way of life. Prostitution especially embodied a challenge to Christian values and was the target in a purity campaign for the general reformation of the nation's morals.⁴

Many of the reformers in Saskatoon had experienced the problems of urban life in other cities. The densely

³ See James H. Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), pp. 87-95.

⁴ Carol Bacchi, "Race Regeneration and Social Purity: A Study of the Social Attitudes of Canada's English-speaking Suffragists" in J.M. Bumsted, ed., Interpreting Canada's Past, Volume II, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 199-200.



View looking south on 2nd Avenue at intersection with 21st St., ca. 1913. Visible are the Union Bank of Canada, Western Hotel, and Saskatoon Business College. The YWCA was home to many of the women attending the College. The groups of young men, such as the ones shown lounging on the street corner, concerned the matrons of the YWCA. Photo courtesy of Saskatoon Public Library -- Local History Room.

populated areas in urban centres accentuated the problems of poor sanitation and disease, concentrations of factories led to pollution and filth in the areas surrounding them, and social problems such as intemperance, crime, delinquency, and prostitution appeared to increase.⁵ The ills of urban life challenged the view reformers had of the nation's

⁵ Alison Prentice, et.al., Canadian Women: A History, (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), p. 109.

future, and unless the problems could be rectified, traditional social values would be lost.

Coupled with these social ills was the additional threat posed by immigration. This threat was acutely felt in Western Canada because the opening of the West had been heralded as an opportunity to establish British institutions -- both governmental and social -- on a grand scale.⁶ The arrival of increasing numbers of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants after 1896 led the British settlers to believe that the nature of their society could be changed. The British saw themselves as being surrounded by immigrants with strong, strange cultures and attachments to their "old world" values and customs. The larger families and higher birth rates of some of the groups left the British settlers with a fear of being overwhelmed by "foreigners". These prejudices were augmented by the supposedly lenient attitudes of non-Anglo-Saxons towards alcohol and prostitution.⁷ The nativists' solution to the problems of non-Anglo Saxon immigration was the assimilation of the foreigners. The teaching of the English language and British customs would alleviate the threat of the British becoming overwhelmed by the non-British.

⁶ Doug O'ram, Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900, (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 125-6.

⁷ Prentice, et.al., pp. 192-3.

Organizations interested in reform suggested changes to the political, religious, and educational systems to combat the perceived problems caused by urbanization and immigration. Women began to play an important role in these reform movements, often forming their own organizations where they could work with other women to achieve reforms.

The role of women as guardians of their homes determined the role they played in the reform movement. It was commonly believed that women's maternal abilities and experience could be put to use to make society more homelike and to establish well-being and order. Many women argued that the social ills of urban life infringed on their ability to raise their families, and that well-being and order in society as a whole were a necessity if it was to be established at home.⁸

These maternal feminist beliefs manifested themselves in various ways in the women's movements. Some groups, such as the Equal Franchise League, wanted to use the power of the vote to reform the world. They believed that the granting of woman's suffrage would result in political pressure being applied to bring about the desired reforms. Other groups sought change with a different approach. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) took a motherly approach to end the victimization of wives and children caused by alcohol. This organization eventually turned to

⁸ Prentice, et.al., p. 169.

supporting political rights for women when their efforts failed -- a failure which they blamed on the political powerlessness of women.⁹ The YWCA also adopted a maternal approach with their use of educational programs, with their focus on young women, as their means of assimilating non-British immigrants and of reforming society. The women of the YWCA believed that young women were the key to preserving traditional values because of their role as the future mothers of the nation. The changes in society brought on by urbanization jeopardized these future mothers.

Prior to the twentieth century the danger to young women was not as great. Women were sheltered in their fathers' homes until they married and the responsibility for their welfare passed on to their husbands. This began to change when young women sought work outside the home prior to marriage. Reformers feared that women living on their own away from the influence of their families were more likely to descend to the ranks of "fallen women" or worse, be drawn into the white slave trade.

The use of the euphemism "white slavery" left the indelible impression on the minds of reformers that prostitution was not a voluntary occupation, nor was it explained by social or economic depravation. Instead it was seen as a result of coercion by one of a large league of

⁹ Prentice, et.al., pp. 172-174.

male exploiters.¹⁰ The other victim of male licentiousness was the fallen woman. If a girl went astray either by falling prey to white slavers or by being promiscuous, it was believed by middle class reformers that the fault lay in the moral code she acquired from her parents, her environment, and above all, her upbringing.¹¹ Reformers believed that a young woman, properly raised by her parents, was safe from unscrupulous males since she could not be easily led astray. However, the challenges of life in a city could erode even the best upbringing.

Young women were attracted to Saskatoon despite the lack of a strong industrial sector. Urbanization meant there were opportunities for women to work as clerks and domestic servants that did not exist in the rural areas. The only assistance being extended to young women alone in the city was through Simcox's Girls' Welcome and Employment Office. Though the women's groups supported this work, they were not set up to provide further guidance to young women meeting the challenges of city life. One women's group found in other cities that was organized specifically with this goal was the YWCA. The women of the YWCA worked on the assumption that if young women could be protected from

¹⁰ John P.S. McLaren, "Chasing the Social Evil: Moral Fervour and the Evolution of Canada's Prostitution Laws, 1867-1917", Canadian Journal of Law and Society, Vol. 1, 1986, pp. 130-1.

¹¹ Bacchi, p. 202.

unscrupulous men, and especially "white slavers", they would not be led astray. Most of their programs were designed with this protection in mind. The Travellers' Aid and Residence provided a haven, while the clubs and classes built up a woman's character so she would not fall prey to unscrupulous individuals.

The women who formed the Saskatoon YWCA were aware that besides the practical benefits of having a residence and meeting place for young women, a YWCA added to the prestige of a city. Largely as a result of fund-raising campaigns across Canada in which the YWCA was "sold" to businessmen and boosters as an asset that would reflect well on the community, a YWCA was widely regarded as a necessity in a city conscious of its reputation.¹² Thus the establishment of a Saskatoon YWCA had the two-fold benefit of appealing to the reform spirit of Saskatoon women and to their, and their husbands', spirit of boosterism.

The group of women who banded together to organize the YWCA represented what can be termed the "instant elite" of Saskatoon. The new, raw nature of the city precluded many of the social structures of older cities where family connections dictated social standing. Though the old standards were not entirely abandoned, the elite of

¹² Diana Pedersen, "'Building Today for the Womanhood of Tomorrow': Business, Boosters, and the YWCA, 1890-1930", Urban History Review, Vol. XV, no. 3, (Feb. 1987), pp. 231-2.

Saskatoon included wealthy businessmen and professionals who may not have achieved entry into high society elsewhere.

The booster spirit that infected the men of the city's elite was present in their wives as well. Of the thirty-five women who organized the YWCA,¹³ twenty-one were the wives of businessmen and eleven were the wives of professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Three of the women's husbands also held government positions at the local and provincial levels. The wives of most of the major businessmen were represented.¹⁴ Like their husbands, they seemed to be compelled to contribute to the future of the city.

Civic pride and the desire to put reform ideas into practice motivated the women of Saskatoon to form the YWCA. They believed the future of society was in jeopardy unless Christian values could be preserved, and the young women who would raise the future generations had to be protected and imbued with traditional values. The YWCA's program, which built up young women physically, spiritually, and

¹³ See Appendix A for a list of the original members of the YWCA and their husbands' occupations.

¹⁴ Kerr & Hanson, p. 96. The authors identify J.F. Cairns, Fred Engen, W.C. Sutherland, A.P. McNab, James Clinkskill, James Wilson, A.H. Hanson, and Malcolm Isbister as the economic elite of Saskatoon. These men were all recognized as leaders in business or real estate; all were interested in public affairs, and most had come to Saskatoon by 1903. Four of the wives of these men were founding members of the YWCA and at least two more of the wives of this elite group joined the YWCA soon after it was organized.

intellectually, suited the Saskatoon women's desire to help shape the community.

Chapter Two

"Dedicated to the Cause of Christian Womanhood"

The women who founded the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Saskatoon perceived a need in the community that was not being met by existing organizations. Their immediate concern was the continuation of the Travellers' Aid work already under way in the community, but they also wanted to launch an organization through which they could provide other assistance and guidance to young women. The YWCA, with its three-fold aim of building up women physically, mentally, and spiritually, appeared to be the ideal organization to the needs of the both the matrons founding the Association and the young women it would serve.

The Travellers' Aid work which sparked the interest in establishing a YWCA in Saskatoon had been carried out by Millicent Simcox since she responded to Archdeacon Lloyd's invitation in 1906. Using her own money, she started a Travellers' Aid service, rented rooms over Norman's Printing Establishment on 20th Street, set up cots, and started to meet every passenger train arriving in Saskatoon, including one that arrived at 4:30 a.m.. Women travelling alone were met at the train station by Simcox, and if they did not have a place to stay, they were offered a cot in her rooms. Assistance was also extended to women who were looking for their family, friends, or a job in the city. To facilitate

job hunting, Simcox operated a registry office every evening where girls could meet with employers. On Sunday's she offered a Bible Study class.

Millicent Simcox's dedication to her work -- which entailed her meeting trains around the clock every month of the year -- must have been born of a belief in the necessity of the work. Saskatoon in 1907 was a rapidly growing young city. When Simcox stood at the train station and observed the scene that would greet the young women she dealt with every day, she saw several hotels and houses that were home to brothels, and their patrons milling in the streets at all hours of the day and night.¹ She believed that unescorted young women were vulnerable in these surroundings. Without her Travellers' Aid service, women requiring accommodation would have had to try to find a safe room in a city where hotel and boarding rooms were at a premium. When rooms were available, they cost more than most working women could afford to pay. The possible fate of these women when no rooms were available, or when they were naive enough to accept assistance from unsavoury individuals, was what gave Simcox the conviction to carry on her work.

Other people in the city shared Simcox's belief that young women were in need of assistance upon arrival in the city. Saskatoon residents were optimistic about the future

¹ James H. Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), pp. 87-95.

of their city and believed that the population would swell to 50,000 by 1915.² Included in this number would be young, single women travelling on their own and planning to take up residence and work in the city. The number of young women taking jobs in the area steadily increased. Already in 1911, 6938 women under the age of 25 were working in the province, many of them in Saskatoon.³ In addition to the female residents of the city, women came to Saskatoon to find jobs, attend University or Normal school, get medical treatment, visit friends and relatives, and shop. With more and more women arriving in the city, the Church of England and Saskatoon's women's organizations quickly began to perceive the Travellers' Aid offered by Simcox as an essential service.

The importance of the work done by Simcox was not fully appreciated until the summer of 1909, when Simcox returned to England for a visit and the Travellers' Aid work fell through. No one else would assume responsibility for the service. On Simcox's return to the city, "a better spirit evolved" and a group of women, led by Christina Murray,⁴

² Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, Saskatoon: The First Half-Century, (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), p. 105.

³ 5th Census of Canada, 1911, Areas and Population by Provinces, Districts and Sub-districts, Volume I, Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, King's Printer, 1912.

⁴ Mrs. W.C. Murray, wife of the first president of the University of Saskatchewan.

"volunteered all financial resources if I [Simcox] would do the work."⁵ Consequently, in the fall of 1909, Simcox met with the Golden West Chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) and the Women's Auxiliary of Christ Church to establish an organization that might better meet the needs of the growing city.

The women of both organizations were concerned about the young women arriving in the city.

Girls coming in from the country seemed to disappear and parents wrote into the city to try and locate them. It was felt very strongly that there was need of a place where girls and women coming into the city could turn for advice, find a room in which to stay, and look for work.⁶

With these concerns in mind, the women contacted the Dominion Council of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and requested that a representative be sent to Saskatoon. This was the logical organization to turn to since it operated Travellers' Aid Departments across Canada, and had an Immigration Secretary who worked with the British girls arriving on ships in Quebec and referred them to the local Travellers' Aid secretary at their destination. The YWCA representative met with a few women's groups early in 1910 and spoke about the work and goals of the YWCA at an informational meeting open to the public.

⁵ Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), YWCA Saskatoon, A553-53, Travellers' Aid, n.d., Letter to F. Buckle from Millicent E. Simcox, May 12, 1950.

⁶ Ibid.

The YWCA had its origins in England in 1855. The first Canadian YWCA was established in Saint John, New Brunswick in 1870 and other Canadian branches were founded soon after. The branches of the YWCA were started by middle-class evangelical Protestant women in response to the changing social conditions in Canada in the late nineteenth century. The migration of large numbers of young, single women to the cities in search of employment and educational opportunities caused concern because of the independent lifestyle of the women. Living unsupported and unsupervised by family, community, and church, the young women, who were the future mothers of Canada, needed a substitute for parental and religious influences so that they would not become alienated from the traditional values of home and church.⁷

Unlike the British YWCA that created a centralized administrative body, the Associations in Canada were independent of each other. By the 1890s the Associations realized the benefits of comparing methods and programs and sharing information and solutions to common problems. In 1893 steps were taken to co-ordinate various YWCAs across Canada into a central advisory body. A constitution was drawn up and approved by the majority of Canadian YWCAs on January 23, 1895. The Executive of the Dominion Council of

⁷Diana L. Pedersen, "Keeping Our Good Girls Good: The Young Women's Christian Association of Canada, 1870-1920", (M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa, 1981), p. i.

the YWCA consisted of eight elected officers and the presidents of the affiliated Associations. A Dominion Secretary was appointed who could visit existing Associations and extend practical help to communities wanting to serve their young women by organizing a local Association.⁸

Once the constitution was in place, no group could organize as a YWCA except under the guidance of a Secretary of the Dominion Council. Any local Association desiring to affiliate with the Dominion Council of YWCAs of Canada had to apply to the Executive Committee and file a copy of the constitution as adopted in that city. Only those Associations whose active (ie. voting and office-holding) membership was limited to members in good standing of Protestant Evangelical churches could be admitted to the Dominion Association.⁹

The Dominion Council served in an advisory capacity to each local Association and provided a clearing house for

⁸ For a history of the YWCA in Canada, see Josephine P. Harshaw, When Women Work Together: A History of the Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966); Mary Q. Innis, Unfold the Years: A History of the YWCA in Canada, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., 1949), and Diana Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, 1870-1920: A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need", (Ph.D. dissertation, Carleton University, 1987).

⁹ National Archives of Canada (NAC), YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 21-16, Constitution of Young Women's Christian Association in Cities and Towns, 2nd edition, pp. 23-4.

information and advice relating to the work of the YWCA. It planned the conferences and conventions, maintained a Publications Department that published the national YWCA magazine, and kept a book depot where books related to social and religious work, both technical and inspirational, could be obtained. The relation of the local Association to the Dominion Council was through affiliation. Each local Association was a self-governing body, though every Association subscribed to the same basis of membership.¹⁰

It was to this established Association that the women of Saskatoon turned when they wanted to initiate an organization that could oversee and finance the Travellers' Aid work being carried out by Simcox. The Association's three-fold aim of ministering to the physical, mental, and spiritual requirements of girls and women appealed so strongly to Saskatoon's women that a branch was quickly organized.¹¹

The Saskatoon branch of the YWCA was launched in April, 1910 under the guidance of a Board of Trustees. The constitution stated:

The immediate purpose of this organization shall be the development of Christian character by means

¹⁰ SAB, Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, B2 III - 12, Pamphlets and Publications, "The Young Women's Christian Association in the Community", pp. 6-7.

¹¹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553, File #64, Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, (a) 1914-1930), Newspaper article "Saskatoon YWCA: Local Association Has Been Helpful in Face of Difficulty". nd. 1917.

of the advancement of the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual interest of young women.¹²

The Association was not a substitute for the church. Rather it was a means of involving women with the church. The women of the YWCA believed that by involving young women with a Christian association, they could further the interests of the Evangelical churches. The clubs, classes, and social events offered by the Association all had an underlying theme -- Christian fellowship. If young women enjoyed the fellowship available through the Association, they could be persuaded to further their spiritual development by joining a church.

The Association was administered by a Board of Directors. The first board was composed of the thirty women who were the founding members of the Saskatoon YWCA. After the first year of operation, elections were held at the annual meeting to fill vacancies on the board. The executive positions included the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Travellers' Aid Secretary, Residence Secretary, and the heads of Committees. The committees were set up to administer the various departments of the Association, as well as for the fund-raising and social committees.

¹²SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553, File #15, Building, Original, Adopted Constitution for Young Women's Christian Associations in Saskatoon.

The first order of business for the new executive was to attract members to the Association. Membership was open to all women of 'good moral character'. Regular membership fees were one dollar and there were two classifications of membership. Active memberships were available to any woman member of any Evangelical Church.¹³ Associate memberships were for all other women in sympathy with the work of the association. Only active members could become board members or vote at general meetings. Sustaining memberships for those who wished to support the association financially were \$5.00.¹⁴ There was an honorary membership for men costing \$10.00 which, Christina Murray, first vice-president of the YWCA, explained at the organizational meeting "to the

¹³ The definition of an Evangelical Church according to the constitution of the YWCA is: "We hold those churches to be evangelical, which, maintaining the Holy Scriptures to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice, do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily, who was made sin for us though knowing no sin, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, as the only Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved from everlasting punishment" NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 21-16, "Constitution of the Young Women's Christian Associations in Cities and Towns of the Dominion of Canada", c. 1902, p. 25. Examples of Evangelical churches according to this definition are Methodist, Baptist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Congregational.

¹⁴ SAB, YWCA, Saskatoon, A553-1(1) Annual Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report 1914-1915, p.7.

amusement of all present ... did not entitle them to any privileges."¹⁵

In return for the membership fee the Association offered:

1. The privilege of belonging to an organization which stands for the highest ideals of service and unites all women of all classes in the common cause of womanhood.
2. Enrolment in all educational classes ...
3. Use of circulating library.
4. Membership privileges in Associations of other cities and countries.¹⁶

Membership in the Association served two separate groups. On the one hand there were the girls¹⁷ of the community who were the recipients of the services of the Association. On the other hand were the women of the community who were "sympathetic and desirous of helping."¹⁸ These women, the matrons of the Association, were usually from the middle class, married, and had already raised their families. They supported the work of the Association,

¹⁵ "YWCA Launched", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, April 20, 1910, p. 8.

¹⁶ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1) Annual Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report 1914-1915, p. 7.

¹⁷ The terms 'girl' and 'young woman' are used interchangeably. The YWCA working definitions of a girl is an unmarried female person between the ages of approximately 14 and 25. Starting around World War I, the term girl was also being used to refer to adolescents aged 13 to 17, although the term still applied to all unmarried women under 25.

¹⁸ SAB, Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, B2 III-12, Pamphlets and Publications, "The Young Women's Christian Association in the Community", p. 2.

served as board members, and determined the policies of the local Association.

The girls of the community could not be served unless the YWCA had programs and facilities that would attract them as patrons. Once the girls were participating in the activities of the Association, the work of reinforcing or teaching Christian values could be undertaken. The matrons of the newly formed Association moved quickly to set up the programs of the YWCA.

The first work of the Association was the expansion of the Travellers' Aid service. This work prompted the organization of the YWCA and was extended so that more follow-up work could be done among the new female residents of the city. Simcox merged her work with the YWCA and took on the position of Traveller's Aid Secretary under the auspices of the Association.¹⁹ An employment bureau was set up to assist young women who were looking for work, and a Boarding House was established. Socials, Bible studies, and educational classes, were also introduced.

In order to attract as many young women as possible to the Association, the fees charged for the programs and facilities had to remain low enough to be afforded on the

¹⁹ Simcox continued her Travellers' Aid work and provided other services to the young women at the YWCA, but she was not paid by the Association. The Church of England continued to support her while the YWCA financed the Travellers' Aid and provided an office for Simcox.

small salaries of most working girls. Consequently, fund-raising was always a high-priority for the board members, and major projects, such as building a permanent residence, required ambitious campaigns.

Traditional methods of fund-raising by women such as teas and bazaars did not yield sufficient funds to operate the YWCA.²⁰ Other methods had to be found to raise money, and the YWCA began to rely heavily on public support both to fund their services and build a residence. The first appeal to the public began after the Board of Trustees of the YWCA insisted that the Association raise \$2000 before they could start on plans for a YWCA building. One of the first attempts to raise the required amount was undertaken in August, 1910. The YWCA executive attempted to increase the honorary membership roll from four to 200 men.²¹ This campaign achieved a small measure of success and by November 1910 the number of honorary members had increased to 81.²² In addition, the executive attempted to increase the number of life members and sustaining members. Life membership was granted to those women who paid a \$25 fee, and by the end of

²⁰ Diana Pedersen, "The Photographic Record of the Canadian YWCA, 1890-1930: A Visual Source for Women's History", Archivaria, No. 24, Summer 1987, p.24.

²¹ "Y.W.C.A. New Office", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, August 23, 1910, p.2.

²² "Membership and Building Fund Increase Steadily", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, November 2, 1910, p.2.

1910 there were five women with life memberships.²³ Other women's organizations, such as the IODE, contributed towards the building fund, and many of the members of the YWCA made donations of a few dollars each to the fund. A lecture series was held and raised \$220.²⁴

One scheme that was unique to Saskatoon and proved to be very successful was the 'Purple Bag Fund'. Small purple bags were handed out to members and other interested people, and proved to be popular ornaments in the parlor or boudoir.²⁵ The women were asked to put a cent a day in the bags. In the autumn of 1910, 483 bags were distributed²⁶ and by March 1911, \$338.78²⁷ had been raised. Thereafter between \$50 and \$100 was raised every month, with higher amounts being collected when the YWCA opened their competition for building plans.

The required \$2000 was raised by May, 1911, and the executive went ahead with their plans to build. The first

²³ "Furnishings Showered Upon Y.W.C.A. Home", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, November 29, 1910, p.2.

²⁴ "Musical Program Closes Lecture Series", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, April 28, 1911, p.2.

²⁵ "A Fortunate Society", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, October 26, 1910, p.8.

²⁶ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553, File #15, Building, Original, 1910-1917 (1), "Report of the Purple Bag Department of the YWCA", December 6, 1910.

²⁷ "At End of One Year YWCA have \$2,106", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, March 3, 1911, p. 8.

step was to buy the lot on the northwest corner of 3rd Avenue and 24th Street. Mrs. John Ashworth, the first president of the Saskatoon YWCA, offered the building lot to the Association at the same price for which she had purchased it before the building boom in Saskatoon.²⁸ The next and largest step was to raise the funds necessary to design and build the structure. In meeting this formidable challenge the Association had the good fortune to benefit from the fund-raising efforts of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

The YMCA in Saskatoon was planning a permanent structure for their organization at the same time as the YWCA. The leaders of the YMCA planned a whirlwind campaign to raise \$100,000, a type of campaign that had been used successfully by other YMCA's in North America. Rather than raising money for big projects over a period of several months or even years, a short campaign lasting only a week was undertaken. With the co-operation of the newspapers, intense excitement and enthusiasm in the campaign was

²⁸ "YWCA to Build Part of Final Home", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May 3, 1911. This was a substantial donation. The lot had been purchased prior to the land boom in 1910. Between 1910 and 1912 building lot prices downtown rose dramatically. For example, a building lot near the corner of Second Avenue and Twenty-third street was purchased early in the century for \$125. In 1913 the property was estimated to be worth \$1500 a front foot. See Kerr and Hanson, p. 111.

aroused.²⁹ The campaign was front page news in both local newspapers for the entire week. Canvassers visited every business in the city to ask for pledges. Businesses or individuals who donated large amounts had their names mentioned in the news items, and the most generous had their pictures printed on the front page as an example for others. The campaign was so successful that over \$80,000 were raised a mere three days into the campaign. Once this sum was reached, there was talk of a campaign for the YWCA.³⁰ The organizers decided to use the final day and a half of the campaign to raise funds for the YWCA and a total of \$27,078 was raised and turned over to the YWCA.³¹

There is no evidence that the YWCA planned a campaign on the same scale as the one undertaken by the YMCA. There was support in the community for the work of the YWCA, but it was nowhere near the level enjoyed by the YMCA. The funding for the two Associations came largely from the business community, whose sympathies leaned strongly towards the young men's organization. The difference in the level of support for the two associations can be seen by examining

²⁹ Aileen D. Ross, "Organized Philanthropy in an Urban Community", The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. 18, no. 4, Nov. 1952, pp. 475-6.

³⁰ "Y.W.C.A. Campaign is Now Talked Of", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May 19, 1911, p.1.

³¹ "\$27,078 Raised for the Y.W.C.A. in Day and a Half", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May 22, 1911, p.1.

the list of subscribers to the YWCA portion of the campaign. The front pages of the newspaper boasted of donations of hundreds and even thousands of dollars from individuals and businesses in the opening days of the YMCA campaign. The majority of donations to the YWCA were under \$200, with only a few exceeding \$1000.³² Ten thousand dollars of the money raised for the YWCA was overrun from the YMCA campaign, so while \$110,000 was pledged to the YMCA, only \$17,000 was pledged to the YWCA.

The funds from the YMCA campaign, along with a \$5000³³ grant from the City Council, enabled the YWCA to start their building immediately. However, they were unable to raise sufficient funds to build a structure equipped with all the facilities they had envisaged. Unlike the YMCA building, the YWCA structure was built without a gym or a swimming pool.

The new YWCA building opened on April 15, 1912. Its dark green terra cotta front was an innovation in Western

³² SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553, File #15, "Building, Original, 1910-1917" This file contains several copies of the list of subscribers. Some of the larger donations from businessmen could have been intended for the YMCA since approximately \$10,000 of the money turned over to the YWCA was solicited for the YMCA.

³³ Five thousand dollars was granted to the YWCA, but evidence indicates that only \$2000 of this amount was actually paid to the YWCA. See SAB, Saskatoon YWCA, A553, File #15, Building, Original, 1910-1917.

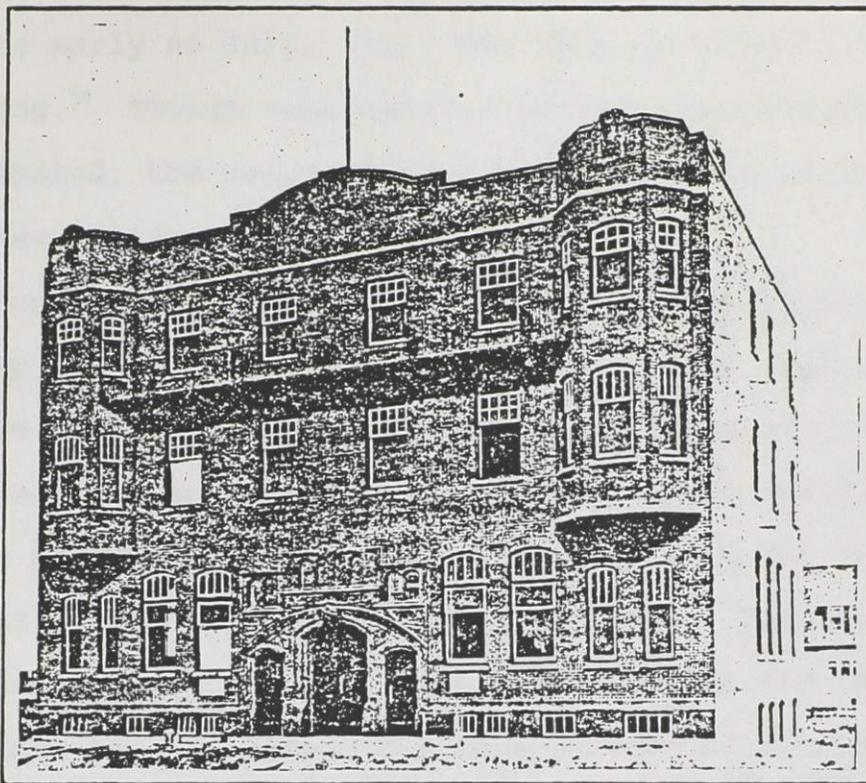
Canadian architecture and attracted much interest in the city.³⁴ Special stones were laid on either side of the entrance. Mayor Clinkskill placed the stone inscribed "Erected by the generosity of the citizens of Saskatoon," and the YWCA president, Christina Murray, placed the stone inscribed "Dedicated to the cause of Christian womanhood."³⁵ The building was planned with three wings. The centre wing was built in 1912 and the other two wings were left for future expansion.³⁶ The new facility could accommodate fifty women and had a dining room which could seat thirty-six.

Fund-raising did not halt once the building was complete and funding the Association during the period from 1910 to 1939 proved to be difficult. In addition to making

³⁴ "The Y.W.C.A. Front", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, January 19, 1912, p. 10.

³⁵ "Raising Funds for the YWCA", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, September 6, 1911, p. 2.

³⁶ The YWCA building was completed well before the YMCA building. Some women saw the irony of this and could not resist poking fun at the men. "The [YMCA] is older than the sister society, has had a roaringly successful campaign for funds, ... -- yet in the shape of lodgings or welcome for the stranger who hits town, there's only an unroofed excavation overlooking the Saskatchewan." University of Saskatchewan Archives (USA), J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907-1916, newspaper clipping, Irene Moore, "YWCA Progress in the West", Canadian Courier, n.d., 1912.



The Newly-opened Home of the Young Women's Christian Association at Saskatoon.

Saskatoon YWCA Building, 1912. (USA, J.E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907-1916, Irene Moore, "YWCA Progress in the West", Canadian Courier, p. 17.)

mortgage payments until 1925,³⁷ unexpected expenses were incurred, the highest of these being building repairs.

³⁷ A long-term mortgage had not been anticipated since most of the building costs had been covered by grants and pledges, but the building and furnishing costs exceeded the estimates, and not all of the pledges were paid in full. Over \$5000 of the pledges from the whirlwind campaign remained unredeemed in 1925. "YWCA Needs \$1000 to Apply on the Building Fund", Saskatoon Phoenix, December 15, 1915, p. 6.

From as early as July, 1912, the YWCA was plagued by flooding.³⁸ Though expenses for building maintenance were anticipated, the board did not expect to have major repairs in a new building.

Despite the difficulties the YWCA encountered in raising funds to cover their building costs, they managed to support 70% to 80% of their services from their operating revenue. The major services provided by the residence and dining room usually paid for themselves from the fees charged to the recipients of the services. The dining room even made a small profit on occasion. Books for the library and linen for the residences were donated by members and other women's groups in the city. There was a linen shower every year to restock the linen closets, and until the mid 1930s, the showers provided all the linen needed to run the residences.³⁹

The non-revenue-generating services were the Travellers' Aid and Employment Bureau. Funds for these services, and for paying off the mortgage, were raised through grants from the city and annual fund-raising

³⁸ "YWCA Work", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, July 3, 1912, p. 3. This flooding is thought to be the primary reason that many early records of the Association are not available.

³⁹ For examples see: "YWCA Linen Shower", Saskatoon Phoenix, April 7, 1913, p. 4; SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-64(c), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, (c) 1930-1939, newspaper clipping, "Supply of Linens at YW Replenished by Shower on Saturday", February 22, 1932.

campaigns during which the entire city was canvassed for donations.⁴⁰

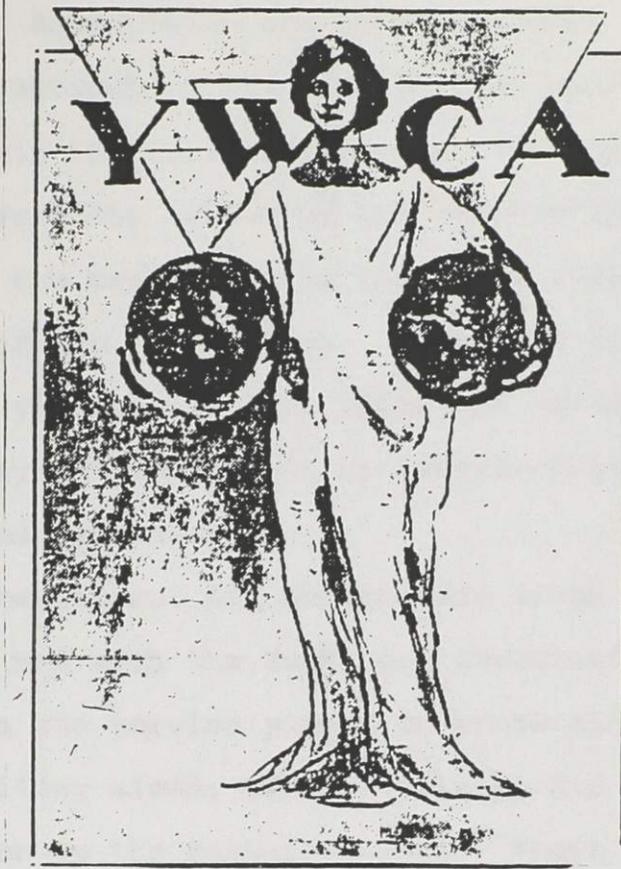
Nominal fees, which did not cover expenses, were charged for the various clubs organized by the YWCA. The matrons of the Association believed that higher fees would have prevented women from joining the clubs. The shortfall in revenue was made up by having the members of the club raise the funds needed for their activities through a variety of projects. The most successful fund-raising activity for the girls' clubs was an annual tag day. Each year the members of the girls' clubs would sell tags or flowers in exchange for donations. One year they sold individual pieces to a giant jigsaw puzzle that was laid out on the sidewalk at Second Avenue and 21st Street. For every ten dollars raised during the tag day, a piece of the six foot high puzzle was put into place.⁴¹

Throughout the year the Girls' Work Department and other departments of the YWCA held fund-raising activities such as teas, dances, gymnastic displays, and open houses. These activities raised only small amounts of money towards

⁴⁰ For an example of an annual campaign and the type of newspaper coverage see "YWCA Campaign \$2000 Next Week", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, March 17, 1917, p. 4. Most campaigns were given newspaper coverage including newspaper editorials as well as extensive articles on the work being carried out by the Association.

⁴¹ "Help Build this Puzzle", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, April 28, 1933.

Help Build This Puzzle



More than six feet high this picture will provide a public jig saw puzzle on the sidewalk at Second Avenue and Twenty first Street Saturday, when the Y.W.C.A. holds its annual tag day and will add one piece to the picture for every \$10 collected. The money is for the girls' work department.

**"YWCA to Put on Novel Appeal", Saskatoon Star Phoenix,
April 28, 1933.**

the operating costs of the Association but played a large role in familiarizing the public with the activities and goals of the YWCA as well as attracting new members.

The objective of attracting new members to the Association was part of every program offered by the YWCA. The women of the board believed that if they could get women

to come to the YWCA building they could interest them in the work of the Association and in membership. This applied equally to attracting the middle-class women who were interested in the work of the Association and the young women who were the target of the Association's programs. Attracting the membership of the young women was not the only goal of the Association. Even more important was having the young women come under the influence of the YWCA so that they could be built up intellectually, physically, morally, and spiritually.

The Travellers' Aid service was often the first contact that women had with the Saskatoon Association. In addition to the role the service played in protecting young women who were travelling alone, the Travellers' Aid served as an introduction to the Saskatoon YWCA. Women planning to stay in the city were extended an invitation by the Travellers' Aid to visit the YWCA. Those women requiring accommodation were sent to the YWCA building. Follow-up work was attempted by the Travellers' Aid secretary after the women took up residence in the city. This gave the secretary a second opportunity to invite the girls to come into the YWCA building and join in the fellowship of the Association and the opportunity to check on the girls' situation in the city. If their accommodations were unsatisfactory, the secretary could attempt to persuade the girl to move to a safer environment.

The YWCA residence was one of the best known services offered by the Association. The inexpensive rooms and home-like surroundings of the building were an attraction which brought in large numbers of young women.

Protecting the young women when they arrived in the city and when they needed accommodation was only the beginning of the influence the YWCA wanted to exercise. Their services were designed specifically for young working women, and with this in mind, the Saskatoon Association began to operate an Employment Bureau. Women seeking employment could get assistance through the YWCA. Employers listed openings with the Bureau, and women looking for work applied through the YWCA. The Bureau secretary screened both the employer and the applicant. Women were not sent to fill jobs that the Bureau secretary considered unsafe, so the protection afforded young women by the YWCA extended to the workplace.

The most effective department of the YWCA for influencing the lives of the young women of the city was the Education Department. This department attempted to utilize the leisure hours of the young women of the city by offering both educational and physical culture classes as well as organizing clubs and social activities. Once the Association had moved into its new home, the executive concentrated on expanding the services of the YWCA to draw more young women to the building. Between 1910 and 1912 the

YWCA had started a needlework class and a Bible Study group and established a lending library. One of the main objectives of the YWCA was to provide education to young women, so once the Saskatoon YWCA had a permanent home, classes were started in history, literature, and dressmaking. English classes for foreigners⁴² were started later in 1912 with YWCA boarders helping out as tutors. In 1913 a French conversation class was started, and the first club, the Strangers Welcome Club was organized in October. This club was set up as a means for young women who were new to the city to make friends.⁴³ Other clubs such as the Old Country Club for British brides, the Business College Girls Club, a club for girls working at Woolworth's store and another for those working at the Flanagan Hotel, were quickly added to the services of the YWCA.

Clubs were viewed as a tool for providing supervision to the young women of the city. If the young women were actively involved in clubs and other activities at the YWCA, they were more likely to be kept out of trouble. The clubs were also the means of watching over the social and intellectual well-being of the young women of Saskatoon.

⁴² The term "foreigners" was used by the YWCA to mean people from countries other than Britain and the United States. The term could also include second-generation immigrants, especially if they did not have a good command of the English language.

⁴³ "October at the YWCA Proved Eventful", Saskatoon Phoenix, November 10, 1913, p.4.

Their value to the Association was so great that a Girls' Work Secretary was hired specifically to oversee the clubs and co-ordinate their activities. In 1929 an entire program of clubs was initiated in an effort to involve all the young women of the city. Existing clubs were reorganized and new ones were created in an effort to offer a club for every interested group of girls.

The physical well-being of the young women of the city was looked after by the establishment of a number of physical culture classes. Physical culture classes were started in 1913 in the dining room of the YWCA. The demand for the classes almost always exceeded the spaces available in the classes. In 1914 the YMCA loaned the use of their gym and pool and swimming and physical culture classes were given by the YWCA at the YMCA facilities with the women 'heavily chaperoned'.⁴⁴ Providing gym and swimming classes was seen as a way of reaching young women who would not otherwise come to the Association. Without the physical culture classes, the YWCA had little to offer to their members directly in return for their membership. The classes were a tangible benefit of membership since all members were eligible to take any of the classes.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Frances Croome, ed., Building Fellowship: A History of the YWCA in Saskatchewan, (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1955), p. 132.

⁴⁵ "YWCA Board Holds Monthly Meeting", Saskatoon Phoenix, September 21, 1915, p.6.

With the Travellers' Aid, residence, Employment Bureau, and Education Department in place, the YWCA could effectively achieve what they believed to be their role in the city. This aim was stated in the Annual Report of 1914:

The Honor and Welfare of Any City Depends Largely Upon:

A Womanhood

Protected from Danger

Built up in Health

Trained for Usefulness

Broadened in Life Interests

Encouraged in Right Living

Developed in Character

This is the Aim of the Young Women's Christian Association.⁴⁶

In meeting this aim, the YWCA in Saskatoon had constantly to reevaluate its role in dealing with the young women of the city. When the Association opened its doors in 1910, women were just starting to venture into the workplace in the city. Very few had attempted 'untraditional' jobs. The women who were instrumental in starting the Saskatoon branch of the YWCA believed that young women alone in the city required shelter and guidance. The traditional ideas of society, with the woman being sheltered in the home until she married and established a home of her own, were still quite strong. The YWCA was put in place to help preserve traditional values.

⁴⁶ USA, J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907-1916, Young Women's Christian Association Souvenir Report, May 22, 1914.

The First World War did not change the role of women in Saskatoon to the same extent that it did in other major cities in Canada. Without a strong manufacturing industry in the city, there was little demand for women to take over the jobs of men other than as bank tellers or store clerks. After the war was over and prosperity returned in the 1920s, there was a demand for women to fill jobs in the clerical and service sectors of the workforce. Society and the YWCA still believed that the primary place for women was in the home; however, it was becoming increasingly evident that women would move in both spheres. When the Travellers' Aid work began in Saskatoon, the YWCA was attempting to shepherd the young women who had decided to come to the city to work. They tried to provide the same influences that the women would have found at home.

By the 1920s, the attitude of the women of the YWCA had changed so they encouraged young women to find work in the period between when they finished school and when they married. The experience of working was seen as beneficial to the role that women would take on as wives and mothers; however, the fundamental belief that young women required guidance during these years remained unchanged. Also, the YWCA did not advocate that married women work unless it was necessary for the support of their families.

The Depression of the 1930s put pressure on women in the workforce. The rate of unemployment made it difficult

for women to continue to work when married men with dependents were without work. However, many married women found it necessary to keep, or try to find a job because their husbands were either without work or did not make a sufficient wage to support the family. The YWCA attempted to provide day work for married women who needed to support their families. Though they did not encourage married women to seek employment, they accepted the fact that the Depression altered the pattern of employment in the family.

Changes in society during the period from 1910 to 1939 did not cause a change in the fundamental outlook of the women of the YWCA. The increasing number of women in the workforce and the new confidence and independence of the young women entering the workforce were not accompanied by a change in the attitudes of the middle-class matrons who oversaw the activities of the YWCA. They still believed that young women needed guidance. Without the YWCA's efforts to build up the physical, spiritual, intellectual and moral character of the women, the young women would stray too far from the traditional values of the home and church.

Chapter Three

FROM SHIPPING HENS TO SAVING SOULS: THE TRAVELLERS' AID DEPARTMENT

The protection of young women travelling alone through the provision of a Travellers' Aid service was the primary reason for the establishment of a Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Saskatoon. Anxious parents could be put at ease with the knowledge that a Travellers' Aid worker would meet their daughter at the train station and see her safely to her destination. This contact with a Travellers' Aid Secretary at a girl's final destination served as an introduction to the YWCA and was the start of a process that would draw the girl into the fellowship of the YWCA and extend the protection offered a traveller to all facets of a girl's life in the city.

Travellers' Aid Departments were an integral part of the YWCA's across Canada in the early twentieth century and the Saskatoon YWCA Travellers' Aid Department became part of a nation-wide and even world-wide network of Travellers' Aid societies which were working to protect young girls travelling alone.¹

¹ The necessity for special care of girls travelling was realized by several organizations in England, including the YWCA, in the 1870s. In 1885 the London YWCA at 17 Old Cavendish Street started a Travellers' Aid Department with its own secretary. Other societies continued their efforts to help girls and women. "But with clearer knowledge of the terrible dangers to which they were exposed came the desire for more organised effort." The press made public the

(continued...)

The motivation behind the initiation of Travellers' Aid work was the fear of white slavery. Local branches of the YWCA across Canada set up Travellers' Aid departments during a time of "a sustained campaign in various Canadian cities by the reformers and their allies to have the prostitution laws enforced and institutional prostitution suppressed."² Part of this campaign was a concerted effort by the YWCA women to provide a steadying influence to young girls away from home for the first time.

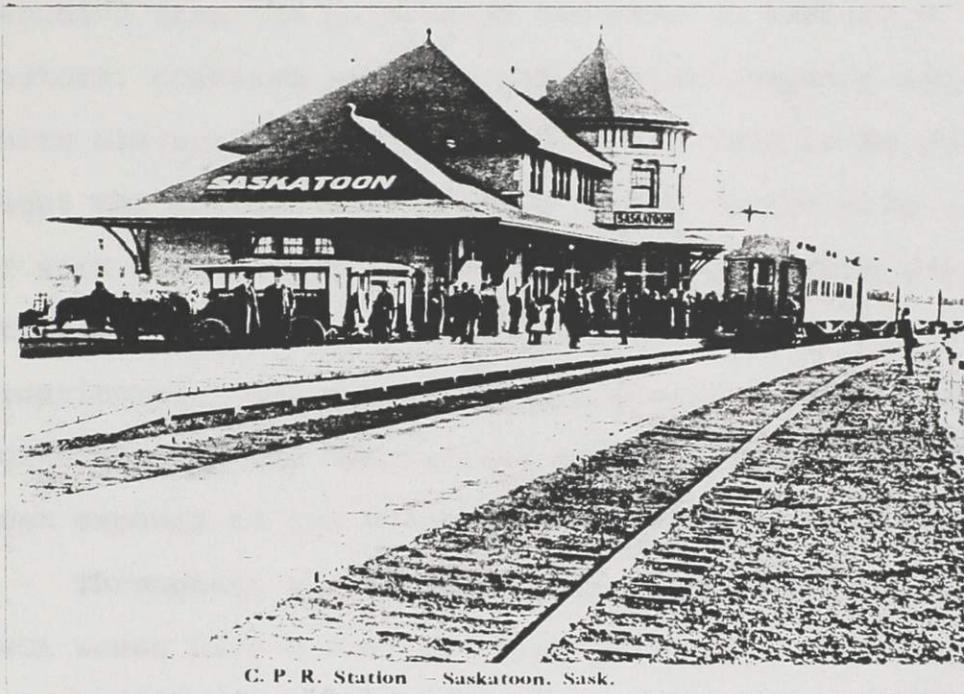
Travellers' Aid services were preventive in nature since the workers took direct action to prevent young women from 'taking the wrong path in life'. The women of the YWCA viewed girls as being incapable of acting in their own best interests when surrounded by the chaotic conditions at ports and train stations. A kindly, matronly woman was needed to

¹(...continued)

strong need for protecting girls and the necessity of the movement to unite the forces of those willing to help. A special conference of the twenty-two different societies engaged in work amongst women and girls was organized. The result was a united society called "The Travellers' Aid Society" to work under the auspices of the YWCA. (Lucy M. Moor, Girls of Yesterday and Today: The Romance of the YWCA. (London: S. W. Partridge and Co., Ltd., 1911(?)), pp. 102-104.) The Canadian YWCA tended to emulate the British organization and they, too, started Travellers' Aid work based on the British example. See Josephine Harshaw, When Women Work Together, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1966); and Mary Q. Innis, Unfold the Years, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., 1949.)

² John P.S. McLaren, "Chasing the Social Evil: Moral Fervour and the Evolution of Canada's Prostitution Laws, 1867-1917", Canadian Journal of Law and Society 1 (1986), p. 147.

greet the girls and lead them out of the confusion.³ This belief resulted because few women had travelled alone prior to the twentieth century, so they lacked the experience of handling themselves when they were out on their own.



C. P. R. Station - Saskatoon, Sask.

CPR Station on Avenue A, ca. 1911. The Travellers' Aid Secretaries attempted to assist all unaccompanied women arriving or departing on the trains. Photo courtesy of the Saskatoon Public Library -- Local History Room.

In Saskatoon this preventive work seemed to be particularly necessary. During the time in which

³ Diana Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, 1870-1920: 'A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need'", (Ph.D., Carleton University, 1987), p. 225.

Saskatoon's women were attempting to establish the organization there were a dozen brothels within a five-minute walk of the C.N.R. station, and there was overt prostitution on the streets of the city. The Protestant clergy delivered sermons against rampant boozing and wenching from the pulpits of churches in Saskatoon.⁴ These factors, combined with the nation-wide campaign against white slavery caused the women of the YWCA to be concerned about the welfare of the girls coming to the city in search of work and to fear they would be abducted from the railway station or from a boarding house and coerced into becoming prostitutes. Country girls were viewed as being especially vulnerable to the temptations of the city since they had not been exposed to the vices of the city while growing up.

Throughout the period between 1910 and World War II the YWCA women were concerned about protecting the morality of the girls in the city. Though the concerns the YWCA women had about white slavery were not often expressed in the surviving literature,⁵ they could be seen in the work carried on by the Travellers' Aid workers. Girls who were

⁴ James H. Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), pp. 91 & 97.

⁵ The case files of the Travellers' Aid workers have not survived in the Saskatoon YWCA papers on file at the Saskatchewan archives. This appears to be the case for most branches of the YWCA in Canada, and is somewhat ironic considering that the first rule in the Travellers' Aid Manual is "Preserve all Travellers' Aid records -- they may be needed desperately the day after you destroy them."

alone when leaving the train were approached by a Travellers' Aid matron and offered assistance. The matron did not wait for the girls to find her. Girls alighting from the train with a male companion were placed under close scrutiny. A Traveller's Aid worker approached the girl directly or investigated her situation by questioning the conductor or other passengers. If a girl refused the overtures of the matron and attempted to leave the station with a stranger, the matron would watch her closely and even trail her out of the station, an action which usually resulted in a nervous male deciding to leave well enough alone.⁶

The extent to which Travellers' Aid workers would go to prevent a girl becoming a victim of white slavery can be seen in the case

... of a girl of 17, one of the number who had gone to work at the Humboldt Hotel. Upon coming into the station the day after her return from Humboldt, I found her with grip in hand, ready to go on the train again. At first she refused to tell me where she was going, but gradually I learned that she was on her way to Melville, and that a man who was to meet her on the train, would have a ticket for her. To find out more about her movements, I boarded the train, and from the rear of the coach, watched proceedings. Scarcely was she seated, when a coloured man appeared, and sat beside her. As the train was about to pull out, and I had to get out, I immediately got in touch with Mr. Wright. He wrote to the Chief of Police at Melville, requesting him to investigate, and

⁶ For a description of the type of work carried out by the Travellers' Aid Secretaries see National Archives of Canada (NAC), YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 24-5, Manual of Travellers' Aid Methods and Practices, n.d.

locate the girl if possible. A few days later, word came that the girl had arrived at Melville at midnight with the negro. He took her to the Waverley Hotel and left her. The Chief found her there next day, working for her board, and sent her on to Buchanan where he had found work for her.⁷

This type of protective station work was only a small part of the Secretaries' work; however, cases such as these served to demonstrate to the public the importance of the work.

Though the intent of the Travellers' Aid work was to protect girls from the white slave trade, most of the work was more prosaic. The YWCA workers realized that assisting young girls gave them the opportunity to expose the girls to the work of the Association.⁸ The women hoped that a good moral character could be maintained by providing the same influences that a good Christian family provided to its daughters. This influence could be exercised to a greater degree on members of the Association, so every effort was exerted to interest the new arrivals in joining the YWCA.

⁷ City of Saskatoon Archives (CSA), D500.X.398, Grants - Miscellaneous(140), 1923. Letter to M.C. Tomlinson, City Clerk, Saskatoon, from Lillian Wilson, Travellers' Aid Secretary, January 22, 1923. Wilson suspected that the proprietor of the Humboldt Hotel was carrying on white slave traffic. A girl who had worked at the Humboldt Hotel came into her care, bearing the marks of teeth and nails on her shoulder which she claimed were a result of her struggle to get away from the proprietor.

⁸ NAC, YWCA of Canada Records, MG28 I198, vol. 46 -22, "How to Interest Association Members in the Real Work of the Association", Association Outlook, vol. XVI, No. 2, February 1917, p. 31.

The assistance the travellers required varied. The Immigration and Travellers' Aid Department of the National Council of the YWCA classified the levels of assistance into major, minor, and informational. Major services included such work as requests to meet or investigate arrivals; immigration and emigration cases; cases requiring cooperation of another organization; personally conducting a girl to her destination; all cases of money or ticket difficulties; protective station work; care of sick; mental cases; charity cases; police cases; runaways; and desertion cases. Any service which took more than a half hour was also considered a major service.

Minor Services, those requiring less than half an hour, included directing a traveller to her destination; giving definite advice when needed; telephoning for a person; finding rooms from the list kept at the station; taking time to plan tours; and actually placing a girl on the train when the Travellers' Aid worker considered it necessary.

Informational services were those which required only a moment's contact such as answering questions as varied as how to ship a crate full of hens and where to buy a train ticket, directing a person to various parts of the station, street cars, taxis, or a railroad official, and giving arrival and departure information.⁹

⁹ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 24 - 5, Manual of Travellers' Aid Methods and Practices, n.d..

All of these services were extended by the Saskatoon Travellers' Aid secretaries. The role of Travellers' Aid workers was to "safe guard inexperienced or confused travellers, meeting them at the train to provide information, advice, guidance, protection and aid to all in need of assistance."¹⁰ Millicent Simcox, the Church of England Deaconess who had been providing a Travellers' Aid service on her own, merged her work with that of the newly organized YWCA. Part of her duties included meeting the trains, though this work was shared with Miss Jones, the deaconess of the Third Avenue Methodist Church; the residence Matron; and other officers of the YWCA.¹¹

In 1912 the YWCA Board decided to appoint a full-time Travellers' Aid agent who would devote her whole time to the work of the department. This decision was made once the principal Protestant churches came to the aid of the YWCA and promised regular subscriptions after staff shortages had endangered the Travellers' Aid program.¹² Mrs. MacPhail was appointed as the first Travellers' Aid agent in September, 1912 and when Mrs. MacPhail became superintendent of the

¹⁰ "The Year's Work of Travellers' Aid Department", Saskatoon Phoenix, May 27, 1915, p. 6.

¹¹ University of Saskatchewan Archives, (USA), J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907-1916, YWCA Annual Report, 1912-1913, p. 6.

¹² USA, J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907-1916, YWCA Annual Report, 1912-1913, p. 6.

residence in January, 1913, Miss McLean was appointed to the vacant post.

The fears of white slavery seemed to be borne out in the first few years of operation. In the Annual Report for 1912-13, the YWCA President, Mrs. Florence C. Calder, alluded to the issue when she praised McLean for her tireless efforts in aiding many weary and needy travellers. McLean had "even saved many an innocent girl from what might have caused her sickening remorse."¹³

The precautions the Travellers' Aid workers took with the girls travelling alone on trains appeared to be necessary. They warned girls about the undesirable men who would try to befriend them. A girl could also be put in the care of the conductor on the train if the Travellers' Aid worker thought she was too young or too naive to be trusted on her own. This was the case in 1914 with one fourteen-year-old girl from a farm "30 miles from anywhere" who was travelling alone to friends in order to go to school. The Travellers' Aid worker approached her at the station:

When asked where she was going she murmured something of which the only word audible was "Forget". "You forget where you are going?" "No,

¹³ Saskatchewan Archives Board, (SAB), YWCA, Saskatoon, A553-15, Building, Original, 1910 - 1917, "President's Address, 1913". The rhetoric used by the women of the Association reveals their conviction that the girls in the city could not be trusted to take care of themselves. Calder could not know how many girls, if any, were 'saved' from 'sickening remorse'. What she would have been aware of is the number of women who praised the work and the public demand for maintaining the Travellers' Aid service.

I am going to Forget." This turned out to be Forget on the C.P.R., and she had to go on by the mid-night train. She was glad to stay at the Y until train time and was then put in charge of the conductor on the train. Later we heard that an undesirable man and woman had tried to persuade her to go with them, but owing to the precautions taken, their attempt was frustrated.¹⁴

The Travellers' Aid workers also had to take direct action to rescue girls who had already been led astray. A French girl was brought to the city in the summer of 1914 by a man who promised her work.

Apparently he had no good intentions, and after a couple of days he gave her some money and left her. She could not speak much English, and after wandering about for some time she was accosted by a man who offered her work in a country hotel and sent her to the Grand Trunk office to get her ticket. The clerk there thought something was wrong and telephoned to us. The Travellers' Aid secretary went down at once and after some discussion found the girl had a brother in Winnipeg to whom she would like to return.¹⁵

The girl was put on the next train to Winnipeg under the charge of the conductor, who promised to hand her over to the Travellers' Aid secretary in Winnipeg.

In 1914 the Association was again having difficulties funding the Travellers' Aid work. No charge was made for the Travellers' Aid service so the work had to be supported by the other departments of the YWCA and by donations from individuals and other organizations. The Travellers' Aid

¹⁴ "Travellers' Aid Work Done by the Y.W.C.A.", Saskatoon Phoenix, April 8, 1914, p. 4.

¹⁵ "Some of the Young Girls Helped by Travellers' Aid", Saskatoon Phoenix, July 11, 1914, p. 4.

Committee was expanded to a total of twenty members with the addition of representatives from the Women's Auxiliaries of the churches, appointed by their own organizations to the Committee.¹⁶ This change in the Committee may have been designed to promote the continued support of the Travellers' Aid work by the churches since the Women's Auxiliaries would be more likely to support the service when they had a place on the Committee.

Also in an effort to meet the expenses of the department, the YWCA applied to the city for help. The women of the YWCA board thought that the Travellers' Aid Department should be partially funded by the city because it was carrying on work which would otherwise have to be undertaken by the city. They applied for a grant of \$1000 on the following grounds:

1. During the past 9 months we have advanced money to the amount of \$205.10; board and room for 58 people \$198.80; transportation for 5 people \$11.30; and of this only \$22.25 has been returned.
2. Through our Employment Bureau we have obtained work for numerous women and girls without means...
3. Letters are received daily asking for information concerning conditions in Saskatoon. At least 150 letters a month are written in reply encouraging suitable young women to come to the City.
4. These and others are met on arrival by our Travellers' Aid Secretary, and with the least possible delay are enabled to make a good start towards becoming useful citizens.

¹⁶ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports 1914-1953, Annual Report 1914-1915, p. 19.

5. As a means to this end evening classes in English are being held for foreign immigrants.

6. Since the opening of our building, April 1912, 2475 have been accommodated with board and room.¹⁷

The City decided to fund the work of the Association, though the funding for the first year was only half of the amount requested. Despite this, the Travellers' Aid work continued.

The Travellers' Aid Committee also planned to expand their work to the district surrounding Saskatoon. To support this proposal, the Travellers' Aid Secretary, in her 1914-15 report, quoted from the Canadian Woman's Annual and Social Service Directory: "Travellers' Aid Work to be effective must touch every city, town and rural community in the Dominion."¹⁸ The Saskatoon Department planned to have a corresponding member appointed in each town and village surrounding the City. The representatives of the Women Grain Growers' Association were asked to cooperate with the Travellers' Aid Department in this work.¹⁹

¹⁷ CSA, D500.X.384, Grants - YWCA (149), 1914. Letter to the Mayor and Council of the City of Saskatoon, from the YWCA Board, February 14, 1914.

¹⁸ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports 1914-1953, Annual Report 1914-1915, pp. 19-21.

¹⁹ "Co-operation between Y.W.C.A. and W.G.G.A.", Saskatoon Phoenix, December 21, 1915, p. 6.

Other measures were taken to increase the effectiveness of the Travellers' Aid Department. Until 1914 the Travellers' Aid workers wore gray uniforms so travellers could easily identify them. There appeared to be some concern that other people dressed in gray could pose as Travellers' Aid workers because in 1914 the Canadian Travellers' Aid Society designed and registered a Canadian Badge for Travellers' Aid workers. Only properly authorized Travellers' Aid workers could wear the badge. In 1914 the Society also displayed posters in most railroad stations, warning women not to seek or to accept information from strangers and to take advice only from railroad officials and Travellers' Aid workers. The address of the nearest YWCA was given, or if there was no YWCA in the city, the name of a specially appointed local woman.²⁰ The Saskatoon association had cards printed "for the guidance of young women travelling alone." The cards, with a message similar to that on the posters, were put in public places in the smaller towns around Saskatoon and the addresses of resident women who were available to assist travellers were printed on the cards.²¹

²⁰ National Council Y.W.C.A., The Story of the Y.W.C.A. in Canada: National Work, 1893-1933, (Toronto: The Bryant Press, Ltd., 1933), p. 15.

²¹ "Travellers' Aid Work at 'Y' is Growing", Saskatoon Phoenix, May 6, 1915, p. 6.

The work carried out by the Saskatoon Travellers' Aid worker changed with the seasons. In the spring her case load increased dramatically with the arrival of immigrants. Many of the immigrants had been introduced to the Travellers' Aid service by a YWCA Immigration Secretary at their port of arrival in Canada. These secretaries distributed a printed message of welcome from the Canadian YWCA that included a directory of all City Associations, money exchange tables, pertinent information on train travel, and information on the YWCA and Travellers' Aid.²² The Secretaries' gave immigrant women a card of introduction to the Travellers' Aid worker at their final destination. This established the first point of contact between immigrant women and the YWCA "so at their destination they will be in sympathy with the YWCA."²³ The work with immigrants extended beyond station work when they arrived in Saskatoon or the surrounding district. The Travellers' Aid secretary ensured that the new immigrants were not left without assistance in starting their new life, and extended an invitation to join the fellowship of the YWCA. English

²² NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 24-5, Traveller's Aid Pamphlets, n.d., "Canada Welcomes You". This pamphlet was printed in several languages.

²³ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 13-17, Immigration Committee, 1912-1916, "YWCA Policy" [as outlined by Mr. Lee, YWCA Immigration Secretary].

language classes were available to immigrants who required them.²⁴

Starting in March, especially during the height of immigration to the West, the number of people requiring assistance would double or even triple. The family groups needing assistance came to the attention of the Travellers' Aid secretary very quickly because the women quite often travelled alone with their children while their husbands travelled with the freight in order to be able to care for the stock en route. The Travellers' Aid workers helped by watching the children while the mothers rested or went to a nearby store to buy food, and by assisting the families with luggage, buying tickets, and finding accommodation.²⁵

In summer, the tide of immigrants usually slowed, but the workers were kept busy with the influx of visitors to the city. Women came in from the farms and small towns and villages around Saskatoon to shop, attend the fair or the circus, or to visit friends. The Travellers' Aid workers were kept busy ensuring that women were met by friends, or directed to their destination. Women in need of shelter were directed to the YWCA residence, or to a boarding house approved by the YWCA Travellers' Aid Secretary. Of special

²⁴ See Chapter 6 for a description of the English language classes and clubs for immigrants.

²⁵ "Families Seeking New Homes Helped By Travellers' Aid", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, April 4, 1928, p. 7.

concern to the workers during exhibition week were the unaccompanied girls who came into the city to go to the fair.²⁶ In August the harvesters' excursions brought more work for the Travellers' Aid. Many of the men brought their wives, who also wanted to find employment on the prairie farms. These women were directed to the Employment Bureau at the YWCA.²⁷

The coming of fall was heralded by the arrival of students in Saskatoon. The girls coming to the city to attend Normal School or the University were watched over when they arrived at the train station. The Travellers' Aid matrons made sure that they all had a respectable place to live, and that they all were aware of the fellowship they could find at the YWCA residence. The start of the school year also brought the return of two groups of students who passed through the YWCA residence going to and from their school. These were a group of blind children and a group of deaf children. The Travellers' Aid Secretary oversaw their stopover in Saskatoon at the start and end of every school term.²⁸

²⁶ "Proceeds of Tea To Be Given in November Will Help Work of Travellers' Aid Committee", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, October 4, 1923, p. 7.

²⁷ Ibid. See Chapter 5 for details on the Employment Bureau.

²⁸ Ibid.

During the fall, girls looking for work in the city started arriving in greater numbers. These girls were of special interest to the YWCA for two reasons. Country girls were considered to be vulnerable to the temptations of the city and therefore needed more guidance than girls who had grown up in the city. Secondly, working girls were the primary target of the work being done by the YWCA, so every effort was made to recruit these girls as members of the YWCA.

Christmas time brought some increase in the work of the Travellers' Aid because of the number of holiday travellers. The first week of January was busy again because of the return of the students.

Throughout the year the Travellers' Aid workers dealt with common problems of travellers. The poor communications of the time were the cause of many of the problems. It was quite common for the workers to have to assist women whose husband, employer, or family was not at the station when they arrived. This was the case when a young girl arrived in Saskatoon in June, 1915, expecting to meet her fiancé. She had sent him a telegram the previous day announcing her arrival, but he had not received it.²⁹ Often connections were missed because travellers did not realize how long the trip to Saskatoon would take. People would come to the

²⁹ "The Practical Work that is Done by T.A. Dept.", Saskatoon Phoenix, June 3, 1915, p. 6.

station expecting to find the new arrival only to have them show up days or even weeks later.

Another common problem occurred when women who arrived in the city expecting to go to a friend's house either lost or neglected to bring the address, had an incorrect or incomplete address, or the friend had moved since the last communication. When these types of cases came to the attention of the Travellers' Aid matron, she would attempt to find the correct address. In some instances, the person could not be located and the traveller either went back home, or was assisted by the YWCA Employment Bureau in finding work in or around the city.³⁰

The Travellers' Aid workers also watched for individuals or families that needed special assistance either from other agencies, such as the Children's Aid, or in the form of warm clothing. The YWCA often received donations of used clothing and was asked to pass them on to needy people in the city or at the station.³¹

The Travellers' Aid workers also devoted some of their time between trains to girls they felt needed extra

³⁰ For example, "YWCA Employment Bureau and Travellers' Aid Work", Saskatoon Phoenix, October 13, 1913, p. 4; "Unable to Find Sister Girl Goes to Y.W.C.A.", Saskatoon Phoenix, March 21, 1914; "Travellers' Aid Gives Help to More Than 400", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May 3, 1922, p. 7.

³¹ For example, "Phases of Month's Work Illustrated in T.A. Report", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, February 2, 1927, p. 7.

guidance. This was the case with one unmarried mother who was working as a domestic and paying for the board of her child at the Babies' Home. Lillian Wilson, the Travellers' Aid Secretary, described the girl as "mentally below normal, and very easily led." For several months, Wilson spent time with the girl trying to be a 'big sister to her' because the girl "showed by her actions and lack of judgment that she might again be led astray if she were left entirely to herself."³²

When employment was difficult to obtain in Saskatoon, the Travellers' Aid Secretary attempted to deter girls from coming to the city. In 1926, and throughout the Depression, the newspapers published warnings to girls planning to come to the city to find work. The first year that warnings were issued, the Secretary "strongly advised" girls who had a home in the country to stay there if at all possible until at least the spring.³³ During the Depression, "when it was found that a girl had come from a good home every effort was made to induce her to return to it."³⁴

³² CSA, D500.X.398, Grants - Miscellaneous (140), 1923. Letter to M.C. Tomlinson, City Clerk, Saskatoon, from Lillian Wilson, Travellers' Aid Secretary, January 22, 1923.

³³ For example, "Nearly 300 Helped by Travellers' Aid During November", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, December 8, 1926, p. 7; and Travellers' Aid Secretary Warns Girls Against Seeking City Employment Until Spring", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, March 2, 1927, p. 7.

³⁴ "Girls Come to City in Search of Employment", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, April 8, 1930, p. 8.

Though the number of travellers assisted by the YWCA decreased during the Depression, Lillian Wilson, the Travellers' Aid Secretary, found that the workload did not diminish. Though there were fewer travellers, each case seemed to require more help since more of the women travelling were problem cases and required special advice and assistance.³⁵ Most of the problem cases resulted from travellers having little or no money. The Travellers' Aid workers were continually dealing with

...children being sent alone from one parent to another or to friends or relatives because of financial conditions, very elderly and physically unfit women going alone to live with married sons or daughters, girls sent to live alone with men because mothers have to work.³⁶

Because of these types of cases, the numbers of major cases handled by the YWCA increased in proportion to the number of minor cases.

The Depression brought a new dimension to the YWCA's continuing battle to protect young girls. Joining the army of unemployed transient men was a new type of girl almost unheard of prior to the Depression -- the girl hobo. The YWCA women were particularly distressed by the onslaught of girl hoboes. The activities of these girls were completely

³⁵ "Young Women Urged Not To Come To City", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, December 3, 1930, p. 9.

³⁶ City of Saskatoon, City Clerk Files, Travellers' Aid Reports, 1938, "Travellers' Aid Report for the Month of December", p. 2.

outside of the 'normal' behaviour of young women.

Unemployed women living away from home were thought to be in a more difficult situation than jobless men because "they cannot rough it, beg meals, sleep in freight yards, or adopt the other expedients open to a man on his beam ends."³⁷

At least this was what the Travellers' Aid workers believed until they began to encounter women doing just these things. The Travellers' Aid workers made every effort to have the girl hoboos return to their homes, or to find work. They were successful in some of their efforts, as in the case of a girl who came to the city in 1932. Wilson told of

...one particularly attractive girl of seventeen, an orphan, who with four other girls had ridden in box cars from Vancouver on their way to an eastern city. The other three were chased by police in Edmonton and she came on alone to Saskatoon. When spied by the travellers' aid her abundant curls were plastered down with vaseline under a boy's cap. Her only baggage was a grey blanket in which she slept at night while during the day the blanket held a black georgette party dress. The spike heeled slippers she wore with the overalls. At the Y.W.C.A. she was provided with food and lodging for a few days and given suitable clothes. Then a job was found for her as a domestic in a good home at a small wage. She is now saving her money for a ticket to her home city having proudly refused to accept money from a friend who offered to advance the fare.³⁸

³⁷ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-64(c), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, (c) 1930-1939, newspaper clipping, "Unemployed Women", November 29, 1930.

³⁸ "Girl Hoboes Problem for Travellers Aid Official", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 13, 1932, p. 1. Another girl hobo was reported a few days earlier by Wilson. This
(continued...)

In order to help the girl hoboos and to solve the additional problems faced by women during the Depression, the Travellers' Aid had to adjust to the changing views of the girls it was attempting to serve.

In 1910 the girl was just starting to make her place in the working world. By the 1930s women had made a place for themselves in the working world, but the Depression brought changes in society that resulted in a different kind of assistance being required by travelling women. Other changes to the department were made because of technological changes. The changing modes of travel in the 1930s began to cause difficulties for the Travellers' Aid Department. More people were arriving in the city on foot, by car, trucks, and freight cars. Some of these people were in need of assistance, but were not helped immediately because the Travellers' Aid was not equipped to assist them unless they came to the train station or to the YWCA residence.³⁹

³⁸(...continued)

girl travelled from Toronto and was removed from the train in Saskatoon by a station constable. She was taken to the YWCA and provided with room and board, and the Employment Bureau found a position as a domestic servant for her. Instead of taking work, she attempted to jump a freight train and was caught again. When given a second chance, she took the job she had been offered. "Miss Wilson Reports on Station Work", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 6, 1932, p. 8.

³⁹ "Report of Travellers' Aid Secretary Tells of Splendid Service", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 5, 1933, p. 8.

The assistance afforded the young women arriving in the city was generally viewed by the citizens of Saskatoon as beneficial and worthy of support. Fund-raising drives were usually successful; tag days brought in several hundred dollars each year, and donations from other organizations and individuals were continually renewed. These funds, however, were not sufficient to support the work of the department. After 1914, the YWCA relied heavily on an annual grant from the city. In 1923 this grant was revoked. The dispute between the YWCA and the city over this grant reveals much about how the work, including Travellers' Aid, of the YWCA was presented to the community. The exact nature of the work being done by the YWCA was put under scrutiny.

The problem began when Alderman Bolton independently began an investigation of the operations of the YWCA.⁴⁰ At the February 22, 1923 meeting of The Special Committee of the City Council he took the Committee by surprise when he raised objections to the funding of the work of the Association on the grounds that it was illegal. Bolton had secured the services of the city solicitor to look at

⁴⁰ The motives for Bolton's attack on the YWCA are unclear. He was an insurance man who had been a Council member for six years. Politically, he was a Conservative, and he belonged to the Anglican Church, which supported the Travellers' Aid work. He was also involved at the same time with an attack on the funding proposed for the YMCA.

Sections 204 and 205 of the City Act and to render his opinion on whether the YWCA fell under the Act's provisions for funding. That no objections had been raised in the past to the funding of the YWCA was evident by the comments made by Mayor Howard McConnell. The mayor

...thought that Alderman Bolton was perhaps taking advantage of a statute that should not be taken advantage of, and that it seemed to him too much emphasis could at times be placed on varied provisions which should in the best interest of all concerned, be treated with a different interpretations as a result of local circumstances and in accordance with past procedure.⁴¹

Five members of the YWCA Board were present at the meeting and all of them addressed the Committee. The delegation explained that the grant was required to permit the carrying on of the Travellers' Aid work and that the work was strictly for community welfare and met a real need in the city. The Committee questioned the delegation, Bolton leading off the discussion with a barrage of questions and criticisms. The Committee members wanted to know how many employees were maintained, how many meals were served, whether or not the overhead charges were not away too high, and if, "with more systematic management, the institution could not be made to stand on its own feet and

⁴¹ "City Act Forbids Grant to YWCA, Ald. Bolton Holds", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, February 23, 1923, p. 3.

even be able to reveal a substantial surplus over the cost of operation."⁴²

The committee queried the total of funds lost by the Association in caring for indigent cases. The YWCA advanced money to women who could not pay their expenses, or provided food and shelter. They always treated the money as a loan, and a substantial portion of the money was usually returned to the Association. In 1922, the Association had lost only \$78. Alderman Dickson remarked:

I was under the impression that the YWCA was doing a good work in looking after the poor, but since the delegation has appeared before us I have not got that idea now when they tell me that but \$78 was spent in services to indigent cases during the past year.⁴³

The question of whether to fund the YWCA was held over for the next Council meeting. Once the matter was made public, there was an outcry against the tactics of Alderman Bolton. The Daily Star printed an editorial which stated "if the council denies the Y.W.C.A. a grant the citizens will regard that action as an example of shortsightedness

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

and lack of vision."⁴⁴ The Star also printed articles in which the YWCA rebutted the criticisms of the Council.⁴⁵

The YWCA Board consulted a lawyer of their own to see if the Council had the power to grant financial aid to the Association. The opinion of this lawyer was that under the Statute respecting Benevolent Institutions and from a legal point of view, the YWCA was a charitable institution. Also, the class of work being done by the Travellers' Aid Department came under the heading of "morality and welfare" and that the Council was within its powers in granting financial aid. The scope and nature of the work being done by the rest of the institution was not material provided the institution was one whose duty it was to do work of a moral or charitable nature.⁴⁶

Despite the efforts of the YWCA women, the Council rejected their application for funding on the grounds that the Association did not come within the category of a

⁴⁴ "Y.W.C.A.", Saskatoon Daily Star, February 24, 1923, p. 4.

⁴⁵ For example, "Y.W.C.A. Defends Its Dining Room Service", & "For Travelers' [sic] Aid Work Only", Saskatoon Daily Star, February 27, 1923, p. 3.;

⁴⁶ CSA, D500.X.398, Grants - Miscellaneous (140), 1923. Letter from Borland & McIntyre to Mrs. H. S. Potter, Corresponding Secretary, YWCA, February 23, 1923.

charitable institution. The Council decided that they had to abide by the opinion of the City Solicitor.⁴⁷

It is interesting to note that despite the criticisms that the Aldermen had of the services of the YWCA, they reportedly were not generally against the funding of the Travellers' Aid. The Mayor was of the opinion that an interpretation could be made that would bring the YWCA within the realm of a charitable institution. However, this interpretation was not made by the Council. City funding of Travellers' Aid was only reestablished in 1929 after the Regina YWCA was successful in having Section 214 of the City Act amended with the insertion of clause "7(a) Granting aid to the Traveller's Aid Department of the Young women's Christian Association" into the list of possible grants.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ "Council Throws Out Y.W.C.A. Item From List of 1923 Grants", Saskatoon Daily Star, February 28, 1923, p. 7. Other organizations which had received funding were also affected by this ruling. The first to lose funding was the Saskatoon Horticultural Society. Some organizations such as the Victoria Order of Nurses and the Women's Christian Temperance Union could not be given direct aid because of this change in policy. Instead they were funded by the city providing 'out-door aid' and paying the institutions the cost of the relief.

⁴⁸ The Regina YWCA approached their City Council for funding and were informed that the Council could not legally fund the work, but would be willing to do so if the City Act were amended. The Regina YWCA successfully petitioned for a change to the Act. See SAB, Samuel J. Lotta Papers, M-5, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Letter to Lotta from the Regina YWCA. There is no indication in Lotta's papers or in the Saskatoon YWCA records that the Saskatoon Association took part in requesting the change to the City Act.

This funding dispute shows some of the misconceptions about the YWCA. Many people assumed that the purpose of the YWCA was to provide relief to the poor. Although the YWCA did not turn away the indigent, the residence was not set up as a rooming house for the poor. The women of the YWCA clearly intended that the residence be for young working women, or women attending school in the city. If a higher residence fee had been charged in an effort to fund the Travellers' Aid Department, the purpose behind providing inexpensive rooms to working girls would have been defeated.

The dispute also brought to light an identity crisis within the YWCA. The type of work being done by the matrons at the train station was preventive. Instead of rescuing fallen women, the Travellers' Aid was preventing the need for rescue. The women of the YWCA seemed unsure whether this type of work was "charitable" or simply of a moral nature. When their work was under criticism by Alderman Bolton they did not try to defend the moral nature of the work, nor did they attempt the argument that their work precluded the need for funds being spent on charitable relief for fallen women at a later date. Instead, they stolidly maintained that the institution was of a charitable nature because they did not turn away women who could not pay for room or board.

Perhaps the defence of the work of the YWCA Travellers' Aid suffered because of the surprise of the attack. Bolton

had carefully prepared his case against the YWCA. The women appeared to be unaware that there was any planned opposition to their funding. Also, the work being done by the department was of such obvious benefit that perhaps the YWCA women could not conceive of anyone disagreeing with the goals of the work.

The funding from the city was to cover the wages of the Travellers' Aid workers, yet the council attacked the work of the entire association. The fact that it took almost one week for the YWCA Board to publish a statement correcting the assumptions of the Council that the rest of the work was funded by the city shows that the women were not yet accustomed to having to move in a "man's world." The one-week delay allowed time for council members to become convinced of their own view of the work of the Association, and the YWCA statement on the eve of their final decision had little or no effect.

The YWCA had never had to justify the need for their work, and never had to articulate it in a manner that would convince the uninitiated that the work was necessary. There had always been public support for the work, and there had always been funding. Perhaps a better defence could have been mounted if the women had pointed out that although the Travellers' Aid work was nominally under the auspices of the YWCA, in reality it was run almost as a separate organization. This could have been supported by the fact

that the Travellers' Aid had a separate board which included representatives from other organizations and they produced an annual report independent of the annual report put out by the YWCA. At the very least, the women of the YWCA should have countered the argument made by the Council that the rest of the organization could be more efficiently operated to produce enough surplus to fund the Travellers' Aid Department. The work of the Association would suffer if this was attempted.

It is clear that the work of the Association as a whole was not understood by the men of the City Council. The reasons for this misunderstanding probably stem from the fact that the reports of the work being done by the association were printed on the woman's page of the newspaper. Also, though the YWCA relied to some degree on the largesse of the business community, businessmen did not have a great deal of interest in the day-to-day work of the Association. They viewed the YWCA as a charity and contributed their money without investigating if their assumptions about the YWCA were correct.

The fact that the Council and other members of the community did not understand the nature of the work being done by the Travellers' Aid calls into question the legitimacy of that work. If the public was donating money to further what they thought was charitable work, should the YWCA have been providing more charity in conjunction with

their Travellers' Aid work? Clearly the YWCA intended the work to be altruistic. The Travellers' Aid Secretary was present at the train station to avert tragedy, not to dole out relief in the forms of free rooms, meals, or train fares.

Despite the lack of charity, the services of the Travellers' Aid matrons were fully utilized by the travelling public. At the height of immigration to the Canadian West, the Saskatoon Travellers' Aid matrons provided substantial assistance to over 4000 people a year. (See Appendix B) The numbers of people that the Travellers' Aid assisted gives some indication of the need for the service. However, numbers alone cannot be used to justify the need for the Travellers' Aid.

The main purpose behind the Travellers' Aid was the protection of young girls arriving alone in the city and especially from the perceived threat of white slavery. Though there was some justification for the fear of young women being unwittingly misled by unscrupulous men, the majority of the women assisted by the Travellers' Aid workers were not doomed to a life of prostitution if the workers had not been at the station. Most of them could have managed on their own; the assistance of the Travellers' Aid workers just made their life a little easier.

The most beneficial work done by the Travellers' Aid was with the immigrants arriving in the city. These people

required more guidance and assistance than most travellers, and the YWCA women played a large role in assisting the immigrants in learning the language and finding work in the city.

The argument that the YWCA should have provided more services to the poor of the city is not a valid one. The women of the Association did not set it up to be a charity. They clearly intended to assist the working women of the city. No one was turned away who needed a room, or a meal, but the YWCA did not make a practice of extending charity to all comers. They expected the women who were assisted to make an effort to repay the YWCA for the rooms or meals. If someone needed more assistance than a few days of room and board, the women of the YWCA would direct them to the appropriate charity. The women never misrepresented the purposes of their services; the misunderstandings stemmed from a lack of information on the objectives of the YWCA.

The Travellers' Aid Department met a need in the community. In the early days of its service, the women assisted by the matrons were venturing into unfamiliar territory. The changes in society that resulted in more women living on their own in cities and supporting themselves were still quite new, and the Travellers' Aid provided a transition from the comfort and security of home to the more uncertain life in the city. By the time the daughters of these first female workers were taking their

place in the working world the situation had changed again. The Depression wrought great changes in society, and the women who were travelling required a different kind of assistance. They needed emotional support and assistance in finding work or relief. These were provided by the Travellers' Aid matrons.

Though the primary reason for establishing the Travellers' Aid service was to protect young women, the services offered by the YWCA to meet this end benefitted more women than the just the naive few who needed guidance to avoid taking the 'wrong path in life'. The friendly hand extended by the YWCA welcomed the working girl taking her first step into the male-dominated business world.

Chapter Four

KEEPING THE WORKING GIRL SAFE AT HOME ... : THE YWCA RESIDENCE

The major incentive for organizing the Young Women's Christian Association in Saskatoon was the concern that Traveller's Aid work be continued. However, carrying out Travellers' Aid work did not completely solve the perceived problems with young women arriving alone in the city. The ladies of the YWCA felt their responsibility did not end with meeting new arrivals at the train station. If young girls could be led astray while travelling alone, there were even greater dangers facing them when they settled in the city. The new experiences of working, living away from their parents, and being alone in the city could overwhelm these young girls and leave them vulnerable to immoral influences. Through the services offered by the YWCA, the women of the city could contact the working girls of the city and provide the guidance they considered necessary for the welfare of the girls. The services designed to attract the working girls of the city to the YWCA were the residence, boarding house referral service, cafeteria, lending library, and social evenings. The women of the YWCA hoped that one or more of these services would bring them into contact with each working girl in the city.

Though more women than just the working women of the city made use of the services of the YWCA, the working girl

was the target of the services. The Travellers' Aid service helped all women, who were travelling alone but the other departments of the YWCA were set up specifically for the working girl. These girls were the object of attention because their independent lifestyle, away from their parents and supporting themselves, threatened woman's traditional ties to her home, family, and church. These ties had to be safeguarded during the formative period of their lives when young women ventured out into the working world. By providing a substitute for parental supervision and the environment of a 'Christian family home', the women of the YWCA believed they could provide a steadying influence that would protect the physical, moral, and spiritual well-being of these future mothers. In this way they could safeguard the moral and spiritual standards of the next generation.¹ The YWCA women held that the best substitute for the environment of the family home could be provided in a YWCA residence.

The rapid population growth early in the twentieth century in Western Canada made for a shortage of suitable housing for women. This was the situation in Saskatoon. Not only were hotel rooms and boarding houses in short

¹ Diana Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, 1870 - 1920: 'A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need'", Ph.D. Dissertation, Carleton University, 1987, p. 1.

supply, but many women could not afford to pay for good accommodation.

... [T]eachers and stenographers and dressmakers and servant-girls must have a place to sleep, and sometimes their purses are lean and lank and can't hold their own with hotel rates.

And then for eleven months of every year, the hotels are as full as sardine cans and the drummers knowing the trails to the hotels better than foreign girls do, the girls arrive last to find no beds to spare.²

Faced with a situation such as this, young women were at great risk of "finding themselves inmates of boarding or rooming houses which are run for immoral purposes."³

Prior to 1915, the boarding houses in Saskatoon were not licensed,⁴ and anyone looking to profit from the demand for rooms could operate a boarding house regardless of the physical condition of the building or the morality of the residence's manager. New arrivals to the city, faced with full hotels and boarding houses, were likely to take the first available room, without due regard for their personal safety. Even if the fear of a young woman unwittingly becoming an inmate of a brothel did not manifest itself,

² University of Saskatchewan Archives (USA), J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907 - 1916, newspaper clipping, Irene Moore, "YWCA Progress in the West, Canadian Courier, n.d., 1912.

³ National Archives of Canada (NAC), YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198, Vol. 26-27, Association Outlook, Vol. XVIII, no. 6, June 1919.

⁴ City of Saskatoon Archives (CSA), D500.XI.541, Licensing, Hotels and Places of Public Accommodation (225), 1915.

there was still concern over the immoral influences of the other patrons of the residence. Non-English-speaking immigrants were at greater risk since the language difficulties and cultural differences made them vulnerable to unscrupulous individuals.

The first line of defence against this type of 'tragedy' was the provision of safe accommodation at the YWCA. The residence was perhaps the best known feature of the YWCA, and women familiar with the Association would look for the residence when they arrived in the city.

Prior to the establishment of the Saskatoon YWCA, Deaconess Millicent Simcox provided some accommodation for girls in rented rooms. In 1910, the newly formed association took up residence for a few months in a cottage on 4th Avenue where six girls could be housed. A housekeeper was "placed in charge to cater for the occupants and to look after their comfort generally."⁵ The rooms were modestly priced so they could be afforded by women just starting work.

That first home was available on a short lease so by August the Association was looking for new quarters. The board members had the foresight to realize that the fair in

⁵ "To Help Young Women", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, April 25, 1910, p. 4. Stella Tuckey, who later became the Saskatoon YWCA General Secretary, was the first resident. Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), Saskatoon YWCA, A553-54, Travellers' Aid, n.d., "A History of the Travellers' Aid".

August would draw large numbers of women to the city and to meet the demand for rooms they rented a building from the YMCA that could accommodate eighteen women. During the ten days they rented the building, forty women were accommodated.⁶ After the closing of the fair, the YWCA had to move again to a new office in a room in the MacBeth block. The only accommodation for women at this location was an alcove, screened by a thin board partition, which housed one cot.⁷ Simcox, who was serving as the Travellers' Aid Secretary, found accommodation for the girls arriving in the city at other boarding houses.

Short-term leases and inadequate space forced the Association to move every few months. This, along with the demand for rooms at the YWCA and the growing number of women in the city, prompted the women of the board to move quickly on their plans for building a permanent home for the Association. Until the new residence was available, the Association continued to rent quarters.⁸ With the opening

⁶ "Are Still Houseless", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, August 16, 1910, p. 2.

⁷ USA, J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907 - 1916, newspaper clipping, "25 Years of Service to Girls in Saskatoon will be Observed by YWCA at Shower and Tea", n.d., 1935.

⁸ There were suggestions from some board members that the YWCA should buy an existing building, or quickly build a 'temporary' residence as an interim measure until a full-scale YWCA building could be planned. Instead, the board decided to continue to rent quarters until the residence could be built. From the MacBeth block, the YWCA moved into
(continued...)

of the YWCA building in 1912, fifty women could be accommodated in the new residence, and, if necessary, cots could be set up to squeeze in 10 or 12 more.

The new building was hailed as a symbol of the progress of Saskatoon. The year-end review in the newspaper hailed the opening of the YWCA building as a milestone in the city's growth, with its services and accommodation filling a void. Reverend W. W. Abbott of the Methodist Church, on congratulating the YWCA women at the opening ceremonies, stated that "he had often been approached by young women who were at a loss to find accommodation in the city and pointed out that now he would be in a position to have some place to direct them to."⁹

One thousand, one hundred and seven women were housed in the residence during its first year of operation. Most of these women stayed for only a few days; others were allowed to stay up to six months. When Stella Tuckey, the General Secretary, gave her report after the first year of operation of the new residence, she described the women who passed through the doors of the YWCA residence as:

⁸(...continued)
a home owned by J. F. Cairns on 4th Avenue. He provided the house rent-free for six months. The Association then moved into W. J. Bell's residence on Spadina Crescent, which they rented for \$25 a month. They were able to stay in this building until their residence was completed.

⁹ "New YWCA Building Dedicated to Service", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May 6, 1912, p.3.

... old and young, prosperous and poor, happy and miserable, capable and helpless, strong and weak. Many have come from the old lands some of them seem to fall on their feet directly they arrive others perhaps just as good and capable are sadly disappointed at first and it needs all our optimism and firm faith in the West to keep up their spirits until they too find their footing. Some come from Eastern Canada and these are often more homesick than those who come from across the sea. Some come from the States and the greater number from outside points in Saskatchewan.¹⁰

Women were arriving in the city in increasing numbers to look for work or to attend school. In the six-month period from August 1, 1913 to January 31, 1914 over 550 women new to the city or passing through found a temporary home at the YWCA. These women, who were classified by the YWCA as 'transients', included:

- 157 Domestic
- 111 Women staying over to make train connections
- 81 Teachers
- 62 Children
- 31 Women going to or coming out of Hospital
- 23 Nurses
- 23 Stenographers
- 21 Attending Doctor or Dentist
- 18 Normal School Students
- 8 Business College Students
- 6 Women arriving in the city to be married
- 6 Store girls
- 5 Milliners
- 2 Dressmakers.¹¹

¹⁰ USA, J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA, 1907-1915, YWCA Annual Report, 1912-1913, pp. 5-6.

¹¹ CSA, D500.X.384, Grants -- YWCA (149), 1914. Letter to the Mayor and Council of the City of Saskatoon, from the YWCA Board, February 14, 1914. In addition to these women, there were married women, with or without children, who were in the city to shop. The YWCA did not record the exact number in this category.

A survey of the women boarding in the YWCA residence on February 14, 1914 showed:

- 12 Stenographers
- 7 Domestic servants employed by YWCA
- 6 Students, Normal, Business College, and School.
- 3 Store girls
- 3 YWCA Secretaries
- 2 Dressmakers
- 1 Music Teacher
- 1 Office Clerk.¹²

The residence was designed to accommodate two types of boarders -- transients and regular boarders. Transients were the women who were passing through the city, or who were newly arrived in the city and were looking for employment. Many of these women were sent to the YWCA by the Travellers' Aid secretary after she contacted them at the railroad station. Some were eager to stay at the YWCA, either because of the haven it offered, or because of the moderate price of the rooms. Other women had to be persuaded that it was in their best interests to board at the Association residence. The women who arrived in the city to find employment usually stayed at the YWCA for a few days until they secured work. Many of the women who found work as domestics moved into their employers' houses. Other domestics who came in for the day only, as well as women who took jobs as secretaries or store clerks, found their own accommodation in other boarding houses after finding

¹² CSA, D500.X.384, Grants -- YWCA (149), 1914, letter to the Mayor and Council of the City of Saskatoon, from the YWCA Board, February 14, 1914.

employment. A few transients stayed on to become regular boarders.

Regular boarders were the women who stayed at the YWCA on a long-term basis. These women had to be members of the YWCA. In addition to the working girls, some students lived at the YWCA while attending Normal School, Business College, or University. The regular boarders had some limits placed on the length of time that they could stay at the YWCA, and if there was an overflow of residents, the women who had stayed longest were expected to find other accommodations. Preference was given to the younger girl and the beginning worker whose salary was not high, and to the girl who had only lately arrived in the city.¹³

The demand for rooms at the YWCA was so great that in 1913 the Association rented the Chubb house on 21st Street for a period of nine months as an annex where travellers could find lodgings. The annex housed transient boarders while the main residence housed longer term residents with a few rooms left vacant for travellers inquiring about rooms at night.¹⁴

The early years of the Great War brought a decline in the number of women using the boarding house and the dining

¹³ USA, J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA, 1907-1915, YWCA Annual Report, 1912-1913, p. 6.

¹⁴ "Annex Rented for YWCA Home", Saskatoon Phoenix, May 5, 1913, p. 4.

room. This was a result of the decrease in immigration during the war years and of the poor economy in the area.¹⁵ The high levels of unemployment in Saskatoon in 1915 were a deterrent to young women leaving their homes in search of employment. A dramatic shift occurred towards the end of the war when a recovery in the economy by 1917 resulted in more women looking for work. The end of the war meant an increase in immigration and an increase in people travelling through the city. In addition, the YWCA took on extra work by taking care of returning soldiers' dependents. These women and children were met at the train station and provided with temporary shelter at the YWCA residence.¹⁶

The post war boom in immigration to the West kept the YWCA residence busy with transient residents until the mid-1920s. When the level of immigration declined, the number of regular boarders was increased and the residence continued to show a profit from its operation until the early 1930s.

The economic conditions during the Depression caused a decrease in the number of women boarding at the YWCA. Women

¹⁵ "Year's Work at the YWCA is Reviewed", Saskatoon Phoenix, May 22, 1915, p. 6. For details on the economic situation in Saskatoon at the beginning of World War I, see Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, Saskatoon: The First Half-Century, (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), pp. 146 ff.

¹⁶ CSA, D500.X.1012, YWCA Re: Soldiers' Dependents Returning to Canada (343), 1919. Letter from Mrs. Russell Roome, Corresponding Secretary to Mayor and City Council, February 18, 1919.

staying in the residence had to pay for their meals either in the Association dining room or at a restaurant. Even though the price of meals at the YWCA was very modest, more and more women found they could not afford the cost. Realizing that they stood to lose both revenue and the opportunity to assist young women, the local Association departed from the usual accommodation provided at YWCAs and reorganized many of the residence rooms into bed-sitting rooms with facilities for women to cook their own meals. The Saskatoon Association was the first in Canada to try the arrangement, and it proved to be a success. Women responded to the changes and returned to the YWCA to board.¹⁷

The accommodation at the YWCA was intended for working girls. The prices of the rooms in the residence were kept at a level that could be afforded even by girls just starting out in a new job.¹⁸ Even with the modest rates, the boarding house usually ran at a profit. It was not the

¹⁷ "YWCA Changes Residence Policy: Bed Sitting Rooms Where Girls May Entertain Being Adopted Here", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, June 29, 1933, p. 5. See also SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-64(c), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, (c) 1930-1939, newspaper clipping, "Miss Hutchison Tells How YWCA Solves Present Day Problems", November 30, 1933. The suggestion that YWCA's should consider light-housekeeping residences was made at the YWCA National Convention in 1932. See NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 47-12, "Association Relationships", YWCA Notes, Special Edition, July 1932.

¹⁸ In 1917 the price of a room was \$7 per week. SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (a) 1915-1918, Meeting, July 16, 1917.

intention of the YWCA matrons to run the boarding house as a charity; however, there were often women who needed a room and could not pay. In the early years of the Saskatoon Association these women were advanced the price of a room. The women were expected to reimburse the YWCA after they found work, and the Association lost very little revenue from this policy. In 1923 only \$78 was not reimbursed.¹⁹

More indigents were advanced funds, rooms, and meals in 1926 than in previous years. One hundred and three rooms and 203 meals were provided without charge to 149 indigents.²⁰ During the Depression, the YWCA greatly increased the number of rooms and meals it provided to women in need. In 1930-31, 383 free beds and 1134 free meals were provided. The YWCA board still hoped that women who experienced a positive change in their financial circumstances would repay the Association, but less emphasis appeared to be given to reimbursement.

¹⁹ "Council Throws Out YWCA Item From List of 1923 Grants", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, February 28, 1923, p. 7.

²⁰ "Reports of YWCA Activities Presented at Public Meeting ...", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, March 19, 1927, p. 7. The YWCA was in the process of trying to get city funding reinstated, and the method of reporting the charitable side of the work of the Association may have been changed to deflect some of the criticism about their previous low level of lost revenue. The economy in the city in 1926 was stronger than in 1922-23, [see Kerr & Hanson, pp. 213-215], so there should not have been an increase in the number of women requiring free rooms.

As the Depression continued, the YWCA residence played a greater role as a charity, even though the YWCA denied that they were a charitable institution. The YWCA was the only building and institution in the city where women could secure food and lodging without pay.²¹ Still, the board tried not to lose sight of the objectives of the residence. In 1939, the President of the Saskatoon Association again pointed out that:

The YWCA is not a charitable institution. We have not the accommodation or facilities to be such, although owing to lack of any such accommodation for girls and women in the city, we do try to take care of extreme cases when brought to our notice. Our residence is to be a home for the young girl particularly away from home where proper supervision and guidance are available.²²

Proper supervision and guidance were crucial in the poor economic times. It was far better to have women stay at the YWCA, even if they could not pay, than to leave them to their own devices. The YWCA matrons feared that destitute women would be more likely to be seduced into becoming prostitutes, or at the very least exposed to undesirable influences. It was better to bring the women into the residence where they would be watched over and offered guidance.

²¹ "YWCA Secretaries Present Interesting Reports of Activities", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, May 15, 1935, p. 9.

²² SAB, A553-33(1), Minutes, Annual Meetings, 1937-1973, Annual Report of the President - 1939, p. 1.

Considerable influence could be wielded by the YWCA women over the girls in residence. Many of the girls were living away from home for the first time and "... perhaps at no time in her life is she so much in need of advice and sympathy and the comforts of a home."²³ The YWCA Board members carefully chose a residence matron who would be in charge of the boarders. This 'mother substitute' looked after the welfare of the girls, enforced the residence rules and provided a sympathetic ear to lonely or troubled girls.

The rules of the residence were designed to emulate the conditions of a young woman living at home. Men could only be entertained in the drawing room. There was a curfew, and the exterior doors were locked at 11:00 p.m. weekdays, and 10:30 p.m. on Sunday. The women had to make special arrangements to obtain late keys. Smoking was not tolerated.²⁴

The women of the YWCA were well aware of their opportunity to influence young lives. The National Association occasionally reminded residence secretaries of their sphere of influence. In one article in the YWCA Notes, the value of the residence was again stressed:

One thing must be clearly kept in mind if a Y.W.C.A. Residence is to be of permanent value.

²³ NAC, YWCA of Canada Records, MG28 I198 Vol. 44-?, Scrapbooks, 1912-1915. "The Work of the YWCA", The Globe, Aug. 7, 1915.

²⁴ SAB, Saskatoon YWCA, A553-64 (a), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, a) 1914-1930, Room notices and applications, n.d..

Good meals, a safe place to sleep in, healthful surroundings, are all important, but throughout all branches of the Y.W.C.A. our main object is character building. In no department is there a greater scope than in a Residence. Into our towns and cities modern youth comes surging, restless and eager for new experience. Many of the girls will find their way to the Y.W.C.A., some to stay for a few nights, others for months or years. Students, teachers, business girls, some from splendid homes, others with little or no background, all part of this complex, modern world, are hurrying along the road of high adventure, eager to grasp all that life holds out, and light-heartedly laughing at the pitfalls. For many weeks their path will run through our houses, and we may walk with them if we will. It's a great opportunity for the Residence Secretary, in spite of many heartbreaks, for these young moderns are often wonderfully eager to follow a leader who is willing to see life through their eyes, and then will advise them out of her own wider experience. The Head of a Residence has an advantage over other Secretaries in that she lives with her group day in and day out, and she learns to know girls as one only can after sleeping under the same roof.²⁵

Character building was an important goal in the residence. To aid in the process, the residents were expected to participate and assist in some of the activities in the residence. A short devotional service was held every evening for boarders.²⁶ Residents assisted the Fitzgerald

²⁵ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198, vol. 47 - 10, "The Association Residence", YWCA Notes, Vol. IX, no. 1, March 1930, p. 7.

²⁶ Attendance was not mandatory at the devotional service; however, there appeared to be the expectation that all residents would attend. Included in the list of rules on the residence application was the statement that "A short devotional service is held in the drawing-room every evening at 6:45." SAB, Saskatoon YWCA, A553-64(a), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, a) 1914-1930, YWCA Application for Residence.

Chapter of the IODE with English language classes for immigrants.²⁷ The regular boarders also took part in making up Christmas baskets and making toys for the less fortunate of the city.²⁸ At times the process of character building had to be safeguarded. At the end of the Great War, the building committee had the residence fire escape shortened so that illicit entries could not be made by that route.²⁹

The influence of fellow residents was also a matter that was carefully considered. 'Problem' or 'delinquent' girls who needed a room at the YWCA caused some concern because of the negative influence they could have on the 'good' girls. This same concern was raised with club work:

When a girl comes in who has had an experience, such as an unmarried mother had had, to a girl's club where perhaps they are more or less curious and flippant about certain things, there is a great danger, through her wider experience, of her talking about some of the things with the other girls and not exactly helping the atmosphere of the club.³⁰

The social atmosphere in the residence would make this concern more acute. If a 'problem' girl was staying more

²⁷ "Will Organise Sunshine Club", Saskatoon Phoenix, February 27, 1913, p. 4.

²⁸ "YWCA Board Holds Important Session ", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, April 17, 1917, p. 5.

²⁹ Frances Croome, ed., Building Fellowship: A History of the YWCA in Saskatchewan, (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1955), p. 139.

³⁰ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 46-7, YWCA Notes, vol. VI, no. 2, July 1927, "The Association and the Problem Girl", p. 14.

than one night, she would have ample time to make friends and participate in residence activities. Some Associations advocated reserving a definite space for transients.

Where this plan is followed, a girl who does not measure up to the standard required of our regular residents may still be accommodated, but in such a way that she does not come in contact with our house girls, until such time as we consider she may do so without any harm coming to our girls.³¹

The Saskatoon YWCA did not have a clear residence policy on segregating 'undesirable' women, but there is no doubt they experienced the same dilemma when housing these women with 'wider experience'.

Safe accommodation at the YWCA was considered by the board members to be the ideal solution to the housing problems in the city; however, the residence could not always accommodate all the women seeking a room, and it could not handle more than a few women who needed rooms on a long-term basis. In addition to managing a 'suitable home for young women', the residence committee had the additional responsibility of providing a list of rooms and boarding places for reference by girls requiring alternative arrangements. The committee was expected to stay informed "concerning the character and conduct of such places as are

³¹ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 46-28, Association Outlook, Vol. XIX, no. 5, May 1920, "How Can We Best Serve the Delinquent Girl?", p. 120.

recommended."³² The safety of the girl was of the utmost importance.

Prior to 1915 and the licensing of boarding houses in Saskatoon, the residence committee had the responsibility of judging the desirability of the rooms on their referral list without any information on the boarding houses being available from the city. Their job was made a little easier when the city issued licences. However, the licensing of boarding houses did not completely solve the problems of finding suitable accommodation for women. Residences operated by Oriental men were restricted to male residents, and the city licence clearly stated this prohibition. The police chief checked boarding house licence applicants for criminal records, or suspicion of criminal activity,³³ thus eliminating some of the YWCA women's fears of the houses being fronts for white slavery. These measures helped to eliminate some of the worst boarding houses in the city, but no standards were set to ensure desirable surroundings for women at all boarding houses.

The YWCA women could use the information available through the city hall to keep their list of available rooms, and to immediately eliminate some of the possible referrals.

³² NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198, vol. 21-16, "Suggested Constitution for YWCA's in Cities, n.d..

³³ CSA, D500.XI.541, Licensing, Hotels and Places of Public Accommodation (225), 1915.

Reports from the Medical Health Officer for the city were useful. One report in 1929 described a boarding house where "The accommodation is suitable to a class of people who would be refused at many other boarding houses."³⁴ If the residence committee had not yet investigated this residence, they could have dismissed it immediately.

The YWCA referral service was one solution to the perceived danger of girls finding their own housing. If a girl could not be accommodated at the YWCA, she could be referred to another boarding house where she would have safe accommodation. Two purposes were served: the YWCA women, and the girl's parents, were assured that the girl was safely housed, and the Association still had contact with young women arriving in the city who would not be staying at the YWCA residence.

Contact with working girls through the referral service was only one of the methods the YWCA had to draw girls into their sphere. Services other than just accommodation were provided at the residence to attract the working girls in the city. These services included a dining room, lending library, vesper services, and social evenings. These were

³⁴ CSA, D500.XI.865, Medical Health Officer -- Nuisances (260), 1929. Public Health Department, City of Saskatoon, Monthly Report of the Medical Health Officer for August, 1929, September 25, 1929. The boarding house in this report was at 227 Avenue A South, and was included in a report on the 200 Block of Avenue A. Other material on the boarding houses in the city can be found in the CSA files, III-20, Medical Health Officer, and VI-7, Licensing.

in place to serve the residents of the Association as well as to attract working girls from around the city to the safe confines of the YWCA building.

The dining room seated thirty-six people, and the price of the meals fit the modest budgets of working girls. The YWCA board set up the dining room to be an attractive area in which women could eat and rest during their lunch hours. The attached rotunda was a popular place to sit and read or visit after a meal. This was an important feature since the women of the YWCA believed that they could influence the character of young women if they could have some positive contact with them. The dining room was advertised as a place where scores of women could enjoy "Merry company at the table, lounging room and library and toilet rooms, telephone and ever so many privileges."³⁵ The women who came to the dining room tended to make use of the rotunda sitting area and the lending library. Information on all the services, classes, clubs, and activities available at the YWCA could be displayed to generate interest among the patrons. The YWCA board believed that once they were able to attract women into the building they could sustain their interest in the YWCA by offering a wide variety of programs and services. The time spent in the YWCA building was time that was not spent on activities unbecoming a young lady.

³⁵ "Bazaar Date Set", Saskatoon Phoenix, November 26, 1912, p. 4.

If the young women were at the YWCA, they would be in the company of other women who would provide good companionship and an example of the 'right' kind of behaviour. Also, if a young woman was troubled, the YWCA workers or the other women could intervene and offer assistance.

A lending library was established at the YWCA soon after the first cottage was rented in 1910.³⁶ The lending library was an effective tool for influencing the young women making use of the books. The books were carefully chosen for their value in the process of character building.³⁷ Many were books to be used as Bible study companions. Others were chosen for their educational value. A number of periodicals and newspapers were also included in the collection.

The Christian aspect of the Association was not overlooked. Vesper services and song services were an important part of the activities offered by the association. The YWCA was not intended as a replacement for the churches

³⁶ The Saskatoon Public Library was not established until 1913. Even after the Public Library was in place, the YWCA library was used extensively.

³⁷ Some examples of the types of books which would have been in the library are: "YWCA Bible Readings"; Edwards and Butler, A Life at Its Best; Houlter, Christian Discipleship and Social Life; Harris, Christian Standards in Life; Woodsworth, Strangers Within Our Gates; and Spencer, Hope of the Redemption of Society. For an example of a list of the books made available through the Dominion Council Office see NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 44-2, File #11, Scrapbook B, 1912-1916, Classified List of Publications Recommended for City and Student Associations, p. 4.

in the city. Rather, it attempted to foster an interest in church involvement. The vesper services were intended to be a stepping stone to joining a congregation, or as an addition to regular attendance at a church.³⁸

The social evenings were an important feature of the YWCA community. The evenings offered good, wholesome entertainment, which was chaperoned by the YWCA matrons. The girls could invite any gentlemen friends to the social evenings, or they could come alone. Young men, usually from the YMCA, were also invited to attend. The evenings consisted of dances, concerts, sleigh rides, skating, and other activities. The supervised activities of the young women included only those activities that were proper for young ladies. In the early years, card games were not allowed. The social evenings were also a method of controlling the lives of the young girls. If the YWCA activities could make up a significant part of the social life of a young woman, then they were less likely to become involved in improper activities such as frequenting movie houses or going to unchaperoned parties.

The residence building was the focal point of the activities of the YWCA. The matrons of the YWCA believed

³⁸ "YWCA Song Service", Saskatoon Phoenix, December 9, 1913, p. 4; "Many Attend First YWCA Song Service", Saskatoon Phoenix, November 9, 1914, p. 6; "The Song Service Much Enjoyed -- Guest from Finland", Saskatoon Phoenix, November 16, 1914, p. 6.

that young working girls in the city needed a place they could come for company, advice, and social activities. Though the YWCA matrons recognized the new independence of the working girl, they did not believe that this new breed of girl was capable of completely taking care of herself. Girls could not be trusted with the responsibility of making their way alone in the city. They had to be safeguarded from harm, through the provision of a substitute home, and a substitute family. The process of establishing their own residence and their own circle of friends was regarded as too important a task to be left to chance. The YWCA attempted to step in and assist in the process for all the working girls in the city. The modest price of the rooms and meals available in the residence and the social gatherings were all designed to draw the working girls of the city to the YWCA building. Even if girls were not initially attracted to the YWCA because of its safe atmosphere, once in the building the YWCA matrons expected the girls to be influenced by the congenial surroundings and the wholesome company, and become part of the YWCA community. As a part of this community, they would be sheltered from harm in the larger community of the city.

The young women of the city responded enthusiastically to the services offered in the YWCA residence from 1910 to the second World War. The Association had little difficulty in keeping the residence rooms occupied, and the dining room

and rotunda became a gathering place for many young women living in the city. The objective of the YWCA board of providing a home-like environment that would draw women to the building and provide them with suitable entertainment was met in the Association building.

Chapter Five

... AND KEEPING HER SAFE AT WORK: THE EMPLOYMENT BUREAU

As the self-appointed watchdogs of the working girl, the women of the Young Women's Christian Association believed that without supervision and guidance the young girls coming to the city to find work would be manipulated and exploited. If the potential workplace and employer were not scrutinized, the vulnerable girl could be easily misled and her innocence lost forever. Issues such as wages, work hours, and benefits were secondary to the concern over the personal safety of the girl. After guiding the girl through the dangers of travelling alone and finding a place to live in the city, the matrons of the YWCA were not satisfied that their influence over the girl was yet sufficient. In order to ensure the safety of the girl, the YWCA matrons believed some control over the workplace was necessary. This control came in the form of an Employment Bureau. The Bureau secretary assisted girls who were looking for work, ensured that they had a safe environment in which to work, and attempted to encourage young, single working women to become involved in the activities of the YWCA. The Bureau also served the matrons of the city since the majority of the job placements handled by the Bureau were for domestic servants. In some respects, the interests of the women looking for

domestics were served to a greater extent than the interest of young women looking for work.

The Employment Bureau was started at the YWCA in 1910¹ as a division of the Travellers' Aid department and was in operation until 1923 when funding from the city was cut off. The bureau was started again during the Depression when the board of the YWCA saw a need for an organization to handle the relief needs of women. The Bureau handled all types of job placements for women but the emphasis was on placing women as domestics. Very few placements were handled for other occupations.²

The Suggested Constitution for YWCA's in Cities stated that the Employment Bureau Committee should:

... organize methods for assisting girls and women to secure employment. It shall gather information in regard to suitable occupations, shall

¹ Millicent Simcox operated an informal employment service from 1907 to 1910 by providing a place for employers to meet with young women looking for work. See Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), YWCA Saskatoon, A553-53, Travellers' Aid, n.d., letter to Mrs. F. Buckle from Millicent Simcox, May 12, 1950.

² The reports that deal with the Employment Bureau almost all emphasize the jobs available for domestics, or that "Many have found good capable maids and housekeepers" through the service. For example see "Will Again Meet Trains", Saskatoon Phoenix, January 14, 1913, p. 4; "Many Get Work Through YWCA Agency", Saskatoon Phoenix, February 22, 1913, p. 4; "Planning for Annual YWCA Meeting", Saskatoon Phoenix, April 7, 1914, p. 4.

investigate existing bureaus and co-operate with those whose methods it approves.³

The women of the Saskatoon Association modified this somewhat by stating that their aim was to help young women to find suitable work as well as to help employers get good, capable workers.⁴

The Employment Bureau assisted the women already residing in the city, women planning on relocating to Saskatoon, and those newly arrived. The YWCA served as an unofficial ambassador for the city by handling correspondence with women who were planning to immigrate to Canada, or who were already in Canada and were planning to relocate. These women would contact the YWCA in various cities to find out what employment opportunities existed. The Employment Bureau secretary responded with a description of the city, the employment opportunities available, and, of course, a description of the services offered by the YWCA to young women in the city. Often she was able to guarantee them employment. Women arriving in the city by train were met by the Travellers' Aid secretary and, if they were

³ National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG28 I198, Vol. 21-16, Constitution & By-Laws - National, "Suggested Constitution for Young Women's Christian Associations in Cities", n.d., p. 23.

⁴ University of Saskatchewan Archives (USA), J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907 - 1916, Annual Report, 1912-13., p. 7.

planning on working, were referred to the Employment Bureau secretary.

Women looking for work in the city could contact the YWCA Employment Bureau and be referred to a prospective employer. The Employment Bureau secretary assessed the skills of the applicant and then referred her to the appropriate employer. In the early years of the operation of the Bureau, the demand for domestics often exceeded the number of women available. In 1913-14, 1182 employers registered for employees. Only 1055 women applied for work.⁵

The majority of the jobs listed with the Employment Bureau was for domestics. Most of these were in private homes, though the Bureau also supplied maids to the university and city hospitals, and to some of the hotels in the city.⁶ Occasionally there were openings for store clerks and stenographers listed at the Bureau, but these were rare enough to merit a mention in the monthly report on the activities of the YWCA.⁷ Employers who were looking for

⁵ USA, J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907 - 1916, YWCA Souvenir Report, May 22, 1914.

⁶ "Many Get Work Through the YWCA Agency", Saskatoon Phoenix, February 22, 1913, p. 4.

⁷ For example see "Employment For Women Secured by YWCA Office", Saskatoon Phoenix, December 18, 1914, p. 6; "The Month at YWCA", Saskatoon Phoenix, March 22, 1915, p. 6.; "Travellers' Aid Committee has Large Field of Work", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, October 3, 1917, p. 5. The YWCA did not profess to be anything other than a domestic

(continued...)

domestics through the YWCA had to apply in person to the Bureau office. A fee of \$1.00 per year was charged to be placed on the Bureau list.⁸ The name, address, phone number, and requirements were then kept on file and at any time during the year those on the register could apply for any kind of worker. In 1914, the policy was modified so employers looking for office help or day workers to clean and wash were not charged a fee. Women looking for work were not charged a fee if they were YWCA members or if they were looking for day-work. Non-members were charged 25 cents for obtaining permanent work. In 1915, fees charged to Saskatoon residents looking for work were dropped.⁹ The fees, though nominal, may have deterred some women from using the employment service.

The YWCA utilized the contact that the Bureau secretary had with both young women seeking work and the middle-class women looking for servants to invite them to become members of the Association. Women seeking employment were not

⁷(...continued)
employment bureau, though they did handle any positions for women that employers wanted listed. Quite often reports on the bureau indicated that they handled very few positions in occupations other than domestics.

⁸ If an employer listed at the beginning of the year and then had another position come open later the same year, a fee was not charged for the second listing.

⁹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-61, Newspaper Clippings, 1914-1977, "YWCA: Haven for Homeless Works Wonders for Saskatoon's Women and Girls", n.d., 1914.

charged a fee, but were encouraged to become members of the YWCA and "the majority [were] only too glad to do so when the matter is put before them."¹⁰ Women registering as employers were informed of the work of the Association and invited to become members.

The Employment Bureau did not just find jobs for women. The secretary also had the responsibility of ensuring that job offers were genuine and that the conditions for employment were respectable. The aim was to guard against young women being exploited by their employers, or lured into the white slave trade. The first defense against unscrupulous employers attempting to hire young women was the stipulation that the employer had to register at the YWCA in person. The Employment Bureau secretary met with prospective employers to ascertain their needs as well as to judge their character. If the employer was unknown to the Bureau secretary or YWCA board members, the secretary would make inquiries about the person. She would refer applicants only when she was satisfied with the good moral character of the employer.

It was more difficult to check into the positions offered in small towns and on farms.

Letters had been received from several country people asking for helpers, but many of them offer no wages; and many of them do not give enough

¹⁰ "Employment Bureau", Saskatoon Phoenix, January 10, 1913, p.4.

details about themselves or the position to make it safe to urge workers to go.¹¹

If a rural employer gave sufficient details to allow the Employment Bureau secretary to check out the situation, she would refer interested applicants to the rural positions. Some women with children preferred rural placements if they could bring their children with them.¹²

In addition to permanent job placements, the Bureau also handled placements for day workers. Women looking for work by the day were usually married, with children, and needed a few days' work to make ends meet. In some cases their husbands were out of work or ill. Others were single mothers who were unable to work on a regular basis but needed the income from working at least occasionally. The YWCA was very supportive of these women and made every effort to find work for them.

These women who work by the day are worthy of all possible consideration and encouragement, some of them have pitiful stories to tell, and their bravery and determination is a lesson. One woman is supporting herself and four children, another has six children and her husband is ill. It seems wonderful what a woman can do when she finds there is no one to do it but herself. We find that when these women are capable they get all their days

¹¹ "Many Women Looked After by Travellers' Aid", The Saskatoon Phoenix, November 4, 1914, p. 6.

¹² "330 Trains met by Travellers' Aid Sec'y During Month of March", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, April 5, 1922, p. 7.

filled up in a short time and very seldom return to us for work.¹³

Women passing through the city also sought day work. In the summer, some women looked for work in the city while their husbands hired themselves out as labourers during the harvest. When a woman wanted day work, she had to come to the YWCA before 9:00 a.m. and wait to see if any positions were available. Many of them had to walk a long distance to get to the YWCA, and they could never be sure if they would be able to work that day.¹⁴ The day jobs available included doing laundry, helping in the kitchen, waiting tables for dinner parties, cleaning house, looking after an invalid during convalescence, and sewing.¹⁵

When the number of women seeking day work exceeded the demand, the Bureau secretary took steps to try to find more day work positions. In December, 1913, there was a shortage of positions available, so the secretary made an appeal to the women of Saskatoon:

The association urges that those women of the city who can at all afford to pay a woman to work for a day or two each week should do so and in this way relieve many a need, and save families from having to ask for public charity. ... To the workers at the association who have become familiar with much of the serious side of the city's life, it looks as if providing daily employment for the women who

¹³ "October at the YWCA Proved Eventful", Saskatoon Phoenix, November 10, 1913, p. 4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Employment Bureau", Saskatoon Phoenix, January 10, 1914, p. 4.

have families and cannot go out to regular service is a very commendable way of helping relieve the need.¹⁶

In 1915 there was another shortage of positions, and the YWCA director suggested job-sharing to help a particular woman whose situation was brought to the attention of the city through the newspaper. The woman had two children to support and was quite often at the YWCA from 7:00 to 11:00 a.m. waiting for a chance to work. The YWCA director asked her own maid if she would accept a little less wages and make it possible to have the unemployed woman come once a fortnight. She urged other women to do the same in order to provide enough employment for this woman to be able to feed her family.¹⁷

The provision of day work by the middle-class women of the city to less fortunate women was viewed as a quasi-charity. Numerous requests for families who could afford to hire a worker for even a few days were publicized by the YWCA. The YWCA informed the city in 1915 in their annual request for funding that a large number of women whose husbands were out of work "... were enabled to support their families by their own work by means of our Employment Bureau. They were thus saved from the necessity of applying

¹⁶ "Women wanting Employment by Day", The Saskatoon Phoenix, December 9, 1913, p. 4.

¹⁷ "Deserving Case of Woman Who Needs Work", Saskatoon Phoenix, January 5, 1915, p. 6.

to the City for assistance."¹⁸ By giving the impression that providing day work for the less fortunate was an act of charity, the YWCA may have been able to persuade more women to hire workers. Work that could be handled without hired help could be turned over to another less fortunate woman with the knowledge that the extra hours of leisure were in a good cause.

The Bureau secretary did not confine her work to job placements. Part of her duties included follow-up work. Within a few weeks of placing a woman in a job, the secretary would contact the woman by either a personal visit or a letter. In addition to the friendly overture, the Secretary would check on the woman's situation and extend an invitation to join in the fellowship of the YWCA. A personal visit allowed the secretary to pass judgement on the living arrangements either at the employer's home or elsewhere if the woman had found alternative arrangements.

The Bureau secretary also tried to reach working women who were not placed in their jobs through the Bureau. In 1913,

... investigations [were] made ... into the work of a number of girls working in the mattress and garment factories and the two steam laundries on the west side and it is hoped soon to hold a

¹⁸ City of Saskatoon Archives (CSA), D500.X.386, Grants - YWCA (149), 1916. Letter to the Mayor and Council of the City of Saskatoon, from F. S. Tuckey, December 22, 1915.

social evening for them in order to get more in touch with this class of worker.¹⁹

Unlike other YWCA's in Canada, the Saskatoon Association did not take special steps to involve these women in Association activities. Cities with a larger industrial sector often had YWCA clubs and lunch rooms right in the factories.²⁰ After the investigations in 1913, the YWCA did not single out these workers for special attention. They attempted to reach them through the Educational Department and the Travellers' Aid work.

From 1910 to 1920 the YWCA Employment Bureau fulfilled a need in the city by assisting women in the process of finding work. In 1920, the Employment Service of Canada opened a Saskatchewan Employment Office in Saskatoon, and the YWCA women soon found their work was being duplicated. Early in 1923, the YWCA board proposed changes in the services offered by the Travellers' Aid Department since:

...applications for work are made both here and at the Government Employment Bureau, by the same people. This not only causes unnecessary work, but also makes it very difficult to follow up the girls, and find out if they are located, and where. It is often impossible to keep in touch with the girls, and also to have records that are up to date and accurate. With all the work handled from the Government Employment Bureau, as

¹⁹ "YWCA Employment Bureau and Travellers' Aid Work", The Saskatoon Phoenix, October 13, 1913, p. 4.

²⁰ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 44 (Part 1) - 4, Clippings, 1915-1925, pamphlet "The YWCA and the Industrial Girl".

it is in Regina, much of this difficulty would be done away with.²¹

Complete relinquishment of the bureau work was not contemplated by the YWCA board because of their concern about girls arriving in the city on Saturday afternoons when the Government Bureau was closed. Experience had shown them that many women wanted to find work immediately because they had arrived in the city penniless.²² A proposal was made to follow Regina's example and have Mrs. Halpenny, a Government Bureau worker, provide the YWCA with a list of positions available when her office closed on Saturday morning. This list would be placed at the disposal of any girl who required it on the weekend, and would be returned to the Government Bureau on Monday. In place of the Employment Bureau work, the bureau secretary would work as a Travellers' Aid secretary and meet some of the trains. The full-time Travellers' Aid secretary could then be free to do some of the follow-up work with new women in the city.²³

²¹ CSA, D500.X.398, Grants - Miscellaneous (140), 1923. Letter to M. C. Tomlinson, City Clerk, from Hazel McAdam, General Secretary, YWCA, January 22, 1923.

²² The YWCA provided women with room and board until new arrivals found work and could repay the Association; however, some women must have been reluctant to accept this arrangement, even for a weekend, and preferred to work immediately in a job where room and board was provided.

²³ CSA, D500.X.398, Grants - Miscellaneous (140), 1923. Letter to M. C. Tomlinson, City Clerk, from Hazel McAdam, General Secretary, YWCA, January 22, 1923.

The plans for revising the Travellers' Aid department coincided with the city's review of the YWCA funding in 1923.²⁴ The grant from the city paid the salaries of the Travellers' Aid secretaries and the Employment Bureau secretary, so when funding was cut off the YWCA board had to reassess its plans. They decided to dismantle the Employment Bureau, dismiss the secretary, and channel any excess funds from the Bureau into follow-up work in Travellers' Aid.²⁵ At the Annual Meeting in 1923, Lillian Wilson, the Travellers' Aid secretary, stated that because of the duplication of the service with the Government Bureau, "We felt that we were rendering inadequate service not only to those waiting for positions but also to the women wanting help."²⁶ Halpenny, the Government clerk in charge of the positions for women, agreed to send any women

²⁴ See chapter 3 for details on the Saskatoon City Council's review of the annual grant to the YWCA and their decision to cut off funding to the YWCA.

²⁵ SAB, A553-34, YWCA Saskatoon, File #34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive and Annual Meetings, 1915 - 1942, Minute Book, 1920 - 23, Executive Meeting, February 19, 1923. There is no mention in the minutes of implementing the arrangement to keep a list of available positions on the weekends; however, the plan was probably implemented since there was no cost to the YWCA in providing the service, and there was the precedent already set in Regina.

²⁶ "Travellers' Aid Activities for Past year are Reviewed by Secretary, Miss Lillian Wilson", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May 7, 1923, p. 7.

to the YWCA who had come to the city for the first time without money or friends.²⁷

After the closure of the YWCA Employment Bureau, women seeking employment through the YWCA were referred to the Government Employment Bureau. Until the Depression, the Travellers' Aid secretaries concentrated on meeting new arrivals in the city and doing follow-up work to check on the girls and women after they found employment. The secretaries had very little direct involvement with placing women in jobs.

Economic collapse in 1929 changed the degree to which the Travellers' Aid secretary was involved with employment. Widespread unemployment in the city meant that new women arriving in Saskatoon had little chance of finding a job. Wilson began to publish warnings to girls not to seek work in the city if they were able to stay at home.²⁸ Girls who were already in the city required more assistance with job hunting than they had in previous years. Wilson took a more active role with the unemployed girls. This was the case with one girl who had left home at the age of seventeen "in search of adventure." She stayed one night at the first hotel in Saskatoon that she could see from the train

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "Warns Girls Not to Seek Work in Town Now; Travellers' Aid Secretary Busy as 'Big Sister'", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, November 5, 1929, p. 8.

station, and when she went to pay her bill in the morning, it was so large that she began to realize that soon all her money would be gone. She decided to seek assistance at the YWCA, and Wilson was able to refer her to a woman who was looking for a domestic worker.²⁹

Despite the repeated warnings issued to women hoping to find work in the city, Wilson found herself dealing with increasing numbers of unemployed women who were arriving in Saskatoon looking for work. Whenever she found out a girl had come from a good home, she made every effort to induce her to return there. When this was impossible she helped the girl to find work.³⁰ The demand for domestics was at an all time low at the beginning of the Depression, and preference was being given to residents of Saskatoon when vacant positions were filled. In 1930, Wilson advised that women planning on coming to the city to work should try to secure work for their board on a farm instead.³¹

In 1930 the problem with unemployed women in the city was growing so acute that City Council requested the YWCA to convene an Unemployment Committee. The first action of the committee was to start an investigation and survey of the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Girls Come to City in Search of Employment", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, April 8, 1930, p. 8.

³¹ "Girls Advised Not To Seek Work in City", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, September 30, 1930, p. 9.

unemployed women in the city. The YWCA was careful to make no promise of jobs in the publicity of the registration.³² This was significant because the unemployment survey marked the beginning of the YWCA's de facto running of an Employment Bureau. Even though the Association repeatedly stated they were not finding jobs for women, they were inundated with women seeking work and relief. An emergency day work bureau was run for a few months in 1930 and 1931 and then closed, and in 1933 the YWCA Employment Bureau was reinstated and operated until 1939. During the time when no official employment work was being done by the YWCA, efforts were still made to find women jobs and calls from women offering to hire a worker were handled and job placements made. "Knowing the need we [the YWCA] cannot well refuse the required information in the case of employment, while the relief cases require the attention of being directed to the right sources at least."³³

The survey of unemployed women in the fall of 1930 was carried out for three days and 307 women registered. These included unmarried girls, widows, and the wives of disabled

³² CSA, D500.X.407, Grants -- Miscellaneous (140), 1930-1934. Untitled report on unemployment survey, February 10, 1931. The registration of unemployed women was advertised by a news item and a short notice in the "I See by the Star" column in the Star Phoenix and an advertisement in the "Female Help Wanted" section of the classifieds.

³³ CSA, D500.X.407, Grants - Miscellaneous (140), 1930-1934. Untitled report on unemployment survey, February 10, 1931, p. 5.

or 'idle' men. The Unemployment Committee thought this number represented approximately one-third of the unemployed women in the city, and that more did not register because no jobs were offered. The investigations conducted by the YWCA showed that the women wanted work and were optimistic about getting it. They did not want relief and would work for their room and board rather than go on relief.³⁴

After the initial survey was completed, the YWCA proposed that a supervised home be established for destitute women where relief could be given, and that the relief be part of the City Council's relief program. The YWCA was prepared to assume responsibility for the supervision of the home and would provide training to the women so they could seek work as domestics.³⁵ The city responded to this proposal by stating they were willing to pay one dollar a day to the YWCA to house and train destitute girls if the Association found upon further investigation that at least fifteen girls needed this type of relief.

To determine whether there was a need for this home, the YWCA investigated the cases of women they considered to be in urgent need in the initial survey. One hundred and

³⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁵ CSA, D500.III.895. Unemployment Relief (2), (370), letter to the City of Saskatoon, from Mrs. W. C. Perry, Convenor, Unemployment Committee & Board of Directors, YWCA, November 13, 1930.

twenty-eight of the registered women were investigated with the following conclusions:

- 14 destitute girls were without homes or work
- 20 women whose husbands were out of work
- 14 deserted wives, many with families
- 6 practically destitute widows
- 14 girls who needed work badly
- 12 girls who had obtained positions through our [YWCA's] efforts between two investigations
- 23 girls and women not in urgent need
- 4 not eligible as non-residents.³⁶

The fourteen destitute girls stated they would only enter the proposed home as a last resort. The Travellers' Aid secretaries were able to place all the 'destitute girls' and some of the other women as domestic servants for room, board, and pocket money. The YWCA Committee then informed City Council that the proposed home was not required, and that any cases which the Association thought deserved help would be reported to the Relief Officer.³⁷

In the course of the survey on unemployment, the YWCA determined that there were shortcomings in the city relief program as it pertained to women. The Unemployment Committee made a number of recommendations to City Commissioner Leslie as a result of their investigations. The first of these being that the YWCA bring to the

³⁶ CSA, D500.X.407, Grants - Miscellaneous (140), 1930-1934. Untitled unemployment survey report, February 10, 1931, p. 3.

³⁷ CSA, D500.III.895. Unemployment Relief (1), (370), Letter to Col. W. C. Macintosh, Com. Leslie, City Treasurer, Relief Officer, from City Clerk, December 10, 1930.

attention of the Relief Officer, F. G. Rowlands, the names of those people who could live through the winter if the husband or father were given steady work. They pointed out that deserted wives with children were not receiving adequate attention and should be given immediate and special relief. They further recommended that a Central Relief Committee composed of both men and women be set up immediately through which all relief in the city be administered. They had also found that many children were being deprived of milk that "... in our opinion is vital to the health of these children and will in future years have a bad economic reaction on the community," and advised that milk should be supplied to children of destitute families.³⁸

This is the first indication from the YWCA that they felt the relief program of the city inadequate. The city was just beginning its relief efforts, and the YWCA survey uncovered many shortcomings in the administration of relief to women in need. Though unwilling to take on the responsibility of relief for these women, the YWCA made sure the city realized some of the needs of the women surveyed.

In January, 1931, the Unemployment committee reported to the board of the YWCA that "married men with families were getting a fair share of work at the present time and

³⁸ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (g) 1930 - 1933, Minutes of the Unemployment Relief Committee, November 25, 1930.

that every girl who wanted to work for her Board had been placed."³⁹ This statement reveals the priorities of the women of the YWCA. The Association was in place to serve young, single women, and the first concern of the YWCA in times of unemployment was the welfare of the girl. "Every girl" included only those girls who were in the city on their own without a family. It was not until these girls were taken care of that the efforts of the Association turned to other women in need.

In January, 1931, the committee decided to send a

... sealed handwritten letter on YWCA stationery ... to the people in the following classes:
 Husbands out of work. Fathers out of work.
 Destitute widows & deserted women asking them to call at the "Y" between the hours of 10 and 11 and 2 and 4 o'clock if they are still not employed or still in real need & if the husband or father is not getting relief work from the city.⁴⁰

The committee hoped to find out the number of widows and deserted women in the city who were still in need and were not getting relief from the city. The women of the YWCA were especially concerned about these women because many of them were unable to both work and still care for their

³⁹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (g) 1930 - 1933, Monthly Board Meeting, January 5, 1931, p. 24. Every girl who wanted to be placed had been, but the women with families who needed work had not been assisted to a great degree.

⁴⁰ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (g) 1930 - 1933, Meeting of the Unemployment Committee, January 13, 1931, p. 31.

children. To assist these women, a day work emergency bureau was established early in 1931; 183 days of work were found for women needing help, and warm clothing, food and fuel were provided for women in need.⁴¹

To further assist unemployed women, the YWCA approached the city in March, 1931, to request a publicity campaign whose purpose was to increase the demand for day work as a means of providing a solution to unemployment problems. They wanted the people of the city to be aware of the following facts concerning relief and women:

1. [Unmarried women, deserted women and widows were not eligible for Dominion Relief] City Relief merely provides fuel & food. It does not provide clothing rent & light.
2. Statistics show that demands for day work are down 40 to 60% over winter months of 1929 - 30.
3. The following classes of women are in special need:
 - (a) Deserted women
 - (b) Women with husbands out of work.
 - (c) Girls who need work badly & whose fathers are out of work.
 - (d) Widows, especially those whose children are just outside pension limit & are out of work & [are] inexperienced young workers.
 - (e) Women whose husbands have had Government Relief work & have even then had insufficient to live on.⁴²

The YWCA pointed out that many women were too proud and independent to ask for City Relief so day work was the only

⁴¹ "Progress Reported in Every Branch of Work at Annual 'Y' Meeting", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, May 19, 1931, p. 8.

⁴² SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (g) 1930 - 1933, Unemployment Relief Committee Meeting, March 19, 1931, pp. 44-5.

means of helping them to help themselves. The women of the committee also suggested that the city obtain the figures on the number of citizens "seeking relief work who have never had to do so before -- those outside the 'professional beggar' class"⁴³ and use them to persuade people of the necessity of providing work to the destitute.

After taking steps to assist unemployed women over the winter of 1930-31, the YWCA attempted to ease out of running the employment bureau and providing relief and return the work to the City Relief Office and the Government Employment Bureau. The Travellers' Aid secretaries, other YWCA workers and volunteers had devoted many months of work to the unemployment survey and to assisting the women in need. The cost of this effort in both time and money was immense, as was indicated by the YWCA's General Secretary's warning to other YWCA's:

We feel it only fair to warn other YWCA's against undertaking too heavy a share in the serious problem of Unemployment and Relief now facing their cities, unless they see their way clear to carry it through. Certainly there seems to be no turning back once the hand is set to the plough.⁴⁴

The YWCA Unemployment Relief Committee members may have expected to carry out the survey for the city without getting involved in finding jobs for women. They

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ CSA, D500.X.407, Grants - Miscellaneous (140), 1930-1934. Untitled report on unemployment survey, February 10, 1931, p. 5.

continually stressed that the YWCA was not in the business of finding work for women. They did not want to reinstate an Employment Bureau and the spring of 1931 seemed to be the ideal time to hand the responsibility of relief for women back to the city. The investigation work on the unemployment survey was completed, and the coming of spring seemed to signal that the crisis was over. Warmer weather meant there would be more jobs, food would be more plentiful, and fuel was not required to warm the houses.

The YWCA completed its unemployment survey work and closed its emergency employment bureau on May 1st, 1931. Until January, 1933, the YWCA cooperated with the City when it established an employment service in connection with the City Relief Department.⁴⁵ Instead of the employment work, the YWCA attempted to assist individuals and groups of homeless and unemployed girls and women who were not being covered by any other organization in the city.⁴⁶ The Unemployment Committee advertised the activities of the Girls' Work Department⁴⁷ and stressed that there were clubs for every girl offered at no expense and with no entrance

⁴⁵SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-28 (1), History, Saskatoon YWCA, handwritten report entitled "Unemployment", n.d. (1931).

⁴⁶ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (g) 1930 - 1933, Unemployment Committee Meeting, November 20, 1931, p. 87.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 6 for more details on this Department.

fee. They particularly welcomed unemployed girls to join, and repeated the invitation at regular intervals.⁴⁸

Throughout the fall of 1931 and most of 1932, the YWCA attempted, somewhat unsuccessfully, to remove themselves from the business of providing employment for women yet women still turned to the YWCA for assistance in finding employment and relief. The efforts the YWCA took to supply food and shelter when necessary and to offer opportunities for friendship, recreation, and education to the unemployed were not sufficient to fulfil the needs of the women. Concerns about the welfare of the girl were now more far-reaching than the earlier concerns the YWCA women had over suitable housing, employment, and recreation. Though these matters were still considered important, it was far more important to assist young women in maintaining their independence by finding them work. In addition to the basic necessities of survival that paid work provided, there was still the underlying concern about the "distressing results which may follow when the destitute person is a young woman."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (g) 1930-1933, Unemployment Committee Meeting, November 20, 1931, p. 87.

⁴⁹ "Unemployed Women", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, November 29, 1930, editorial page. The 'distressing results' was the girl turning to prostitution to support herself. For an example of this see: Rebecca Coulter, "The Working Young of Edmonton, 1921-1931", in Joy Parr, ed., Childhood and Family (continued...)

The winter of 1932 brought with it the realization that the economic situation was not going to improve quickly. The unemployment and relief problems were growing so acute in Saskatoon that the City Council and two standing committees appointed to look after relief matters could no longer cope with the work. The Civic Relief Board was put in place to administer relief and investigate any complaints.⁵⁰ The hardships endured by the unemployed were increasing, and the relief measures were not meeting the needs of the citizens. In the fall of 1932, the unemployed people of the city took to the streets to protest the treatment they were receiving, and thirty women and children staged a sit-in protest in city council chambers on November 18, 1932, claiming they would stay until they got food.⁵¹ These problems of employment and relief for women had to be addressed by the YWCA if they were to live up to their mandate of assisting young working women. The Saskatoon YWCA, which had been taking partial measures for over a year to help find work for women, reorganized its Travellers' Aid department so it would encompass Employment Bureau work.

⁴⁹(...continued)
in Canadian History, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982), pp. 143-159.

⁵⁰ Alma Lawton, "Relief Administration in Saskatoon During the Depression", Saskatchewan History, Vol. XXII, no. 2., Spring 1969, p. 43.

⁵¹ Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, Saskatoon: The First Half-Century, (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), pp. 299-301.

The Bureau started to take job postings and to place women in both permanent and day jobs.⁵²

Reports of hundreds of girls living in the city in 1933 without food and shelter were circulating soon after the Employment Bureau was in place. A registration of the homeless girls was undertaken by the YWCA as an initial step towards assisting them, and as a means of informing the public that the YWCA was a place for women to go when they were unemployed.⁵³ The initial registration brought only 35 girls to the YWCA. Of these 35 girls, 26 had experience as domestics and efforts were made to find them work.⁵⁴

Unemployed women rapidly began to utilize the Employment Bureau. By May, 1933, 585 women had applied to the Bureau for jobs. Two hundred and one women were placed in either permanent or day jobs.⁵⁵ More women could have

⁵² The actual date of reorganization is not known, but by January 23, 1933 the Travellers' Aid department had been renamed the Travellers' Aid and Employment department, and monthly statistics for the number of girls looking for work and the number placed were being included in the monthly report.

⁵³ "Travelers' [sic] Aid Dept. of YWCA Continues Its Helpful Services", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, May 17, 1933, p. 8.

⁵⁴ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (g) 1930 - 1933, Monthly Board Meeting, January 23, 1933, pp. 129-31.

⁵⁵ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (g) Annual Meeting, May 15, 1933.

been placed, but they lacked experience.⁵⁶ The fact that experienced domestics could usually be quickly placed in jobs led the YWCA to start training programs in homecrafts.

The first attempt at training domestics began in November 1934. Twenty-seven organizations co-operated with the YWCA to set up the training and the instructors included graduates of Household Science programs and graduate nurses. The topics covered included care of children, laundry, mending, menu planning, invalid care in the home, cooking, social etiquette, recipes, table setting, and care of equipment.⁵⁷ Twenty-five girls enrolled in the course and fifteen tried the exams. Every girl from the group who wished to work was successfully placed.⁵⁸

The YWCA continued to offer training courses and advertised to the community when they had trained women to place in positions. In 1936, an advertisement to publicize the availability of trained graduates stated that:

We [the YWCA] realize that employers frequently have to contend with inefficiency, and have difficulty in finding the right type of girl, properly trained, capable of meeting the particular needs of their household.

⁵⁶ "Report of Travelers'[sic] Aid Secretary Tells of Splendid Service", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 5, 1933, p. 8.

⁵⁷ "Travelers'[sic] Aid Department Doing Splendid Work for Betterment of Community; Annual Fall Tea", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 5, 1935, p. 9.

⁵⁸ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (h) 1933 - 1938, Annual Meeting, May 14, 1935.

To meet this need, ... we have conducted training courses for household assistants.⁵⁹

The YWCA women went on in the advertisement to point out that in addition to the training in household duties, the YWCA course also had the purpose of 'inculcating a sense of responsibility' in the girl, and 'respect for contractual obligations'.⁶⁰

In 1938, the YWCA attempted to ease itself out of job placement. They had been willing to run the Employment Bureau to assist in the crisis, but had always indicated that this was a temporary measure. It is possible that, with no end in sight to the unemployment problems, this was a good time to divest itself of the work and allow the government to take responsibility for finding jobs for women again while the YWCA focused on the training of workers and the other services offered through the Education Department and Physical Department as its contribution to helping the unemployed women of the city. In April 1938, the YWCA board recommended that an advisory committee be formed consisting of the Supervisor of the Youth Training scheme, a representative of the Government Employment Bureau, the Social Work Convenor of the YWCA, and one other YWCA woman.

⁵⁹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (f) 1926 - 1930. Announcement found in minute book between pages 160 & 161, November, 1936.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The committee explored ways to maintain the existing link between the organizations and the YWCA social worker and to gradually relieve the YWCA of the responsibility of placing girls.⁶¹ At the 1939 Annual Meeting, the Travellers' Aid Secretary reported that some of the work of the Employment Service Department had been transferred to the Government Employment Bureau, and the services of the YWCA were limited to special cases and emergencies. In place of the work, the YWCA "accepted responsibility for assisting single unattached women in the city."⁶²

The abdication of responsibility for finding women jobs did not mean the YWCA was no longer interested in issues concerning employment. Employment conditions continued to be a concern. The unemployment survey of 1930 revealed a number of citizens were taking advantage of the unemployment situation by discharging their maids and trying to hire another woman for merely room and board.⁶³ The YWCA attempted to take measures to counter this by attempting to

⁶¹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (i) 1938 - 1942, Monthly Board Meeting, April 19, 1938, p. 12.

⁶² SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-34, Minutes, Board of Directors, Executive, and Annual Meetings, 1915-1942, (i) 1938 - 1942, Annual Meeting, March 10, 1939, pp. 39-41.

⁶³ CSA, D500.III.895. Unemployment Relief (2), (370), 1929-1931, Meeting of the Unemployment Committee, November 14, 1930. The Committee also reported that the employment of married women who had "husbands working [was] aggravating the citizens" of Saskatoon.

get at least ten dollars a month in addition to room and board when they placed domestics.⁶⁴ This action met with some measure of success, but it did not eliminate the problem. Exploitation of unemployed girls was still a problem in 1937 and the YWCA attempted to use public censure to combat it. When women tried to take unfair advantage of the unemployed -- as in the case of a woman who wanted to hire a trained domestic worker for five dollars a month with no room or board -- the Travellers' Aid secretary publicized the attempt.⁶⁵

Still, the women of the YWCA must take some of the responsibility for the practice of hiring domestics for room and board only. Their early response to the problems of destitute girls was to place them as domestics, and if necessary place them in positions that offered room and board only. It is not surprising that this practice proved to be popular among some employers. The Association attempted to correct the exploitation of domestics, but it was caught in a dilemma of providing some relief for destitute girls by placing them in non-paying positions, or

⁶⁴ CSA, D500.X.407, Grants - Miscellaneous (140), 1930-1934. Untitled report on unemployment survey, February 10, 1931, p. 5.

⁶⁵ City of Saskatoon, City Clerks Correspondence, File 5878, 408 YWCA, Travellers Aid and Social Work Report for the Month of October, 1937.

demanding that a fair wage be paid, and having no employers willing, or able, to hire the girls.

The National Council of the YWCA had demonstrated its concern for the working conditions of domestic workers by drafting a "Code for Household Workers and Employers" in 1936. The Code stipulated that household workers should work a maximum of 69 hours per week, including meal hours, receive a minimum wage and compensation for overtime, be provided with a separate room for sleeping, and be given every other statutory holiday and two weeks' vacation on pay after a year of employment.⁶⁶ The Saskatoon Association worked to adopt this Code at the local level, and asked for the support of the Local Council of Women in implementing the Code.⁶⁷ They also offered to cooperate with the Saskatoon Trades and Labor Council to work for minimum wages and hours for women.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 72-14, YWCA Miscellaneous Publications, 1933-1978, "Code for Household Workers & Employers". The minimum wages stipulated for a city of under 100,000 were \$15/month for inexperienced workers and \$20/month for experienced labour. Suggested working hours for the week were also given which included two half days off and an opportunity to attend church each Sunday.

⁶⁷ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-28(1), History, Saskatoon YWCA, 1910-1971, YWCA Report to Local Council of Women -- Annual Meeting, January 29th, 1937, p. 2.

⁶⁸ "YWCA Offers to co-operate with Labor", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 29, 1936.

When the YWCA was set up in 1910, the women of the YWCA saw a need for a woman's organization to run an employment service so that women looking for work could be assured of a safe working environment. After World War I, the general opinion expressed in YWCA literature was that it was beneficial for a young woman to work during the period between leaving school and getting married. The experience she would gain from working would serve her well when running her own household and raising children.⁶⁹ From the actions of the Saskatoon YWCA Employment Bureau it is apparent that the women of the YWCA thought it was good for women to work, as long as they worked in jobs that were an extension of the traditional female sphere. The job that was best suited to females, and the job that would best serve a young woman when she set up her household, was that of a domestic servant. In the period between 1910 and 1923, most of the positions handled by the Employment Bureau were for domestics.⁷⁰ The high percentage of domestics placed by

⁶⁹ For example see NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 46-22, "Marriage", Association Outlook, Vol. XVI, no. 3, March 1917, p. 55; "War and Reconstruction", Association Outlook, Vol. XVII, no. 2, February, 1917, pp. 34-5.

⁷⁰ An exact percentage is not available since the YWCA did not keep track of the number of women placed as domestics and the numbers placed in other positions. An approximation would be that in excess of 95% of the placements were domestics. This is based on the fact that almost all reports on the activities of the Employment Bureau mention placements and openings for domestics with an occasional reference to 'one stenographer' or 'one store clerk'.

the bureau could lead one to believe that the majority of women working in Saskatoon were working as domestics. In fact, this was not the case. The 1911 census showed that only 45 percent of women in the province worked as domestic servants. (See figure 5-1) In 1921, this percentage dropped to 32. (See figure 5-2) The percentage of domestics placed by the YWCA however did not drop appreciably in the early 1920s.

In the 1930s when the YWCA started training programs for domestics and reinstated their job placement service to assist women needing work to find it as domestics, the census figures showed that the percentage of women working as domestics in Saskatoon had dropped to 19 percent. (See figure 5-3).

Other jobs were being filled by women, but the YWCA was not involved with the placement of these women. It is possible that their involvement was limited outside of placing domestics because the businesses and industries of the city preferred to do their own hiring and their own advertisement of openings. Even if this was the case, the attitude of the YWCA is still clear when they set up Household Craft training programs. The only job training provided by the YWCA was for domestics. No effort was made to try to train women for any other jobs that may have been available. The Depression limited the number of jobs available for anyone, but eighty percent of the women

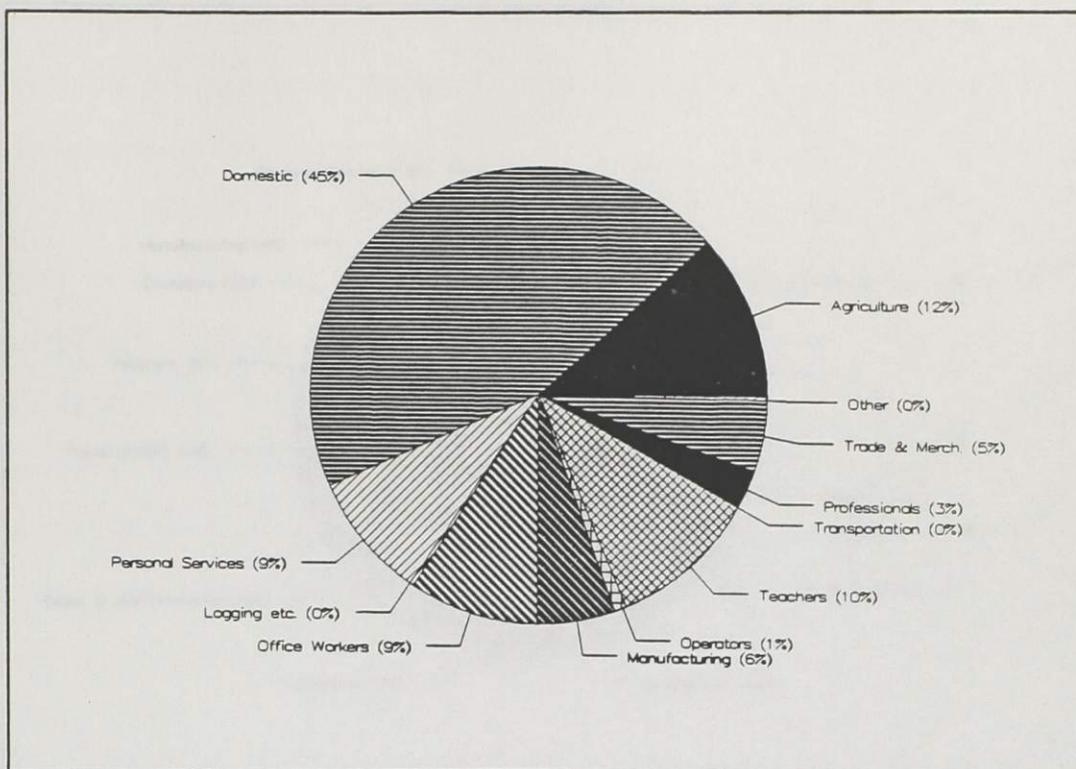


Figure 5-1. Women Employed in Saskatchewan, 1911 -- by Occupation.

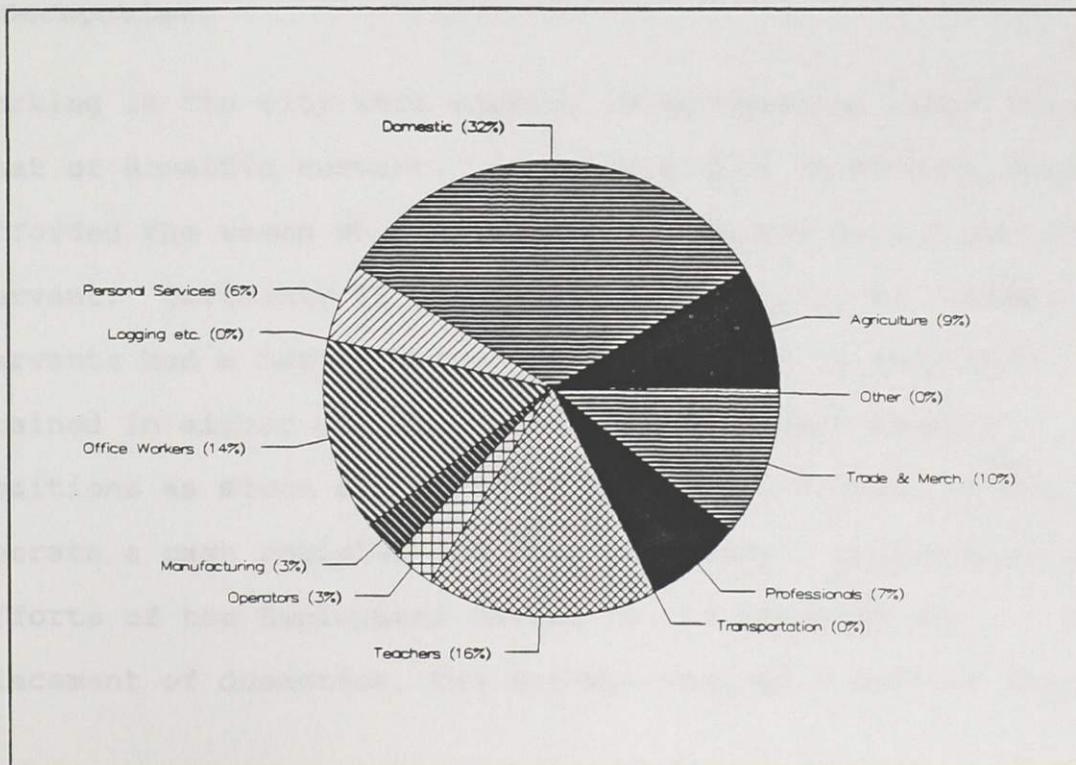


Figure 5-2. Women Employed in Saskatchewan, 1921 -- by Occupation.

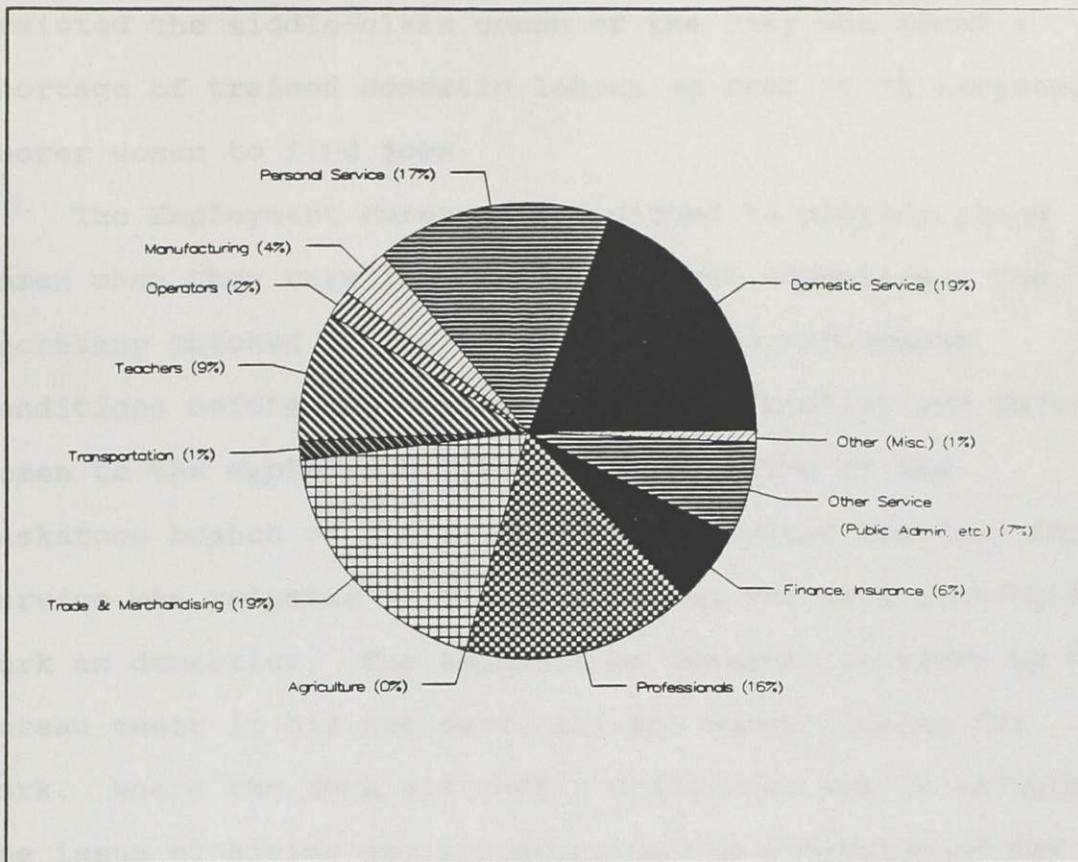


Figure 5-3. Women Employed in Saskatoon, 1931 -- by Occupation.

working in the city were working in occupations other than that of domestic servant. Some assistance could have been afforded the women who did not want a career as a domestic servant. Certainly if women seeking positions as domestic servants had a better chance of being hired if they were trained in silver polishing and dusting, women seeking positions as store clerks would benefit from being taught to operate a cash register and take inventory. By limiting the efforts of the Employment Bureau to the training and placement of domestics, the Bureau remained a service that

assisted the middle-class women of the city who faced a shortage of trained domestic labour as much as it assisted poorer women to find jobs.

The Employment Bureau was designed to protect young women when they were looking for jobs as domestics. The secretary checked on the employer and the employment conditions before she would take the job posting and refer women to the employer. Prior to the opening of the Saskatoon branch of the Government Employment Service, this service was valuable to the young women who were looking for work as domestics. The emphasis on domestic servants by the Bureau meant it did not serve all the women looking for work. Where the YWCA did make a difference was in bringing the issue of hiring day labourers to the attention of the people of the city. Many women were not able to survive on the social assistance that was available, and without day labour jobs, they would not have been able to feed their families. In this area, the YWCA did provide a valuable service.

Chapter Six

KEEPING THE FAITH: THE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL DEPARTMENTS

The objective of the women of the Saskatoon Young Women's Christian Association was the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual development of young women. The Travellers' Aid, Residence, and Employment Departments served to draw women to the YWCA, and played a role in the YWCA campaign to protect young women. Protection for women while travelling, boarding in the city, and in the workplace was only the first step in fulfilling the YWCA objectives. The character building, which was the result of the four-fold objective, could best be achieved through the Education and Social Departments¹ of the Association.

Character building was considered to be necessary because of the changes that had taken place in society. Women living away from home were divorced from the influence of their families, and this, the YWCA women believed, held the potential for problems since good moral influences could be replaced by immoral ones. The YWCA women believed that young women were most vulnerable in two situations: the first few weeks they were in the city and during their leisure hours. The Travellers' Aid, Residence, and

¹ For the purposes of this analysis, the classes, clubs, and socials sponsored by all departments of the YWCA are categorized under the Education and Social Departments.

Employment Bureau targeted the women newly arrived in the city. The problem with filling the leisure hours of the young women was handled by the Education and Social Departments.

The leisure hours of the working girl were perceived by the YWCA women as a threat to her well-being because

The girl of to-day craves excitement in the evening, in a way that the girl of old times did not do. There is a reason for this -- her conditions and environment are quite different. In old times she got some of the joy of life out of her work, an opportunity to use her creative power, and to do things on her own initiative. She took part in all the work of the home; wove the cloth, made her own clothes, helped with the cooking, knitted the socks, sweaters and mitts, and if she lived in the country, she milked the cows and made the butter.²

The working girl boarding in the city did not have these tasks to perform. Once she finished work for the day she was free for the evening with no home duties to fill her hours. This situation, according to the women of the YWCA, caused the girl to crave something in the evening that would give colour to her life, "something that will supply the excitement, the romance, the element of chance that her life lacks."³ A girl in pursuit of excitement and romance had the potential to become what the YWCA termed a "problem girl."

² NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 46-27, M. Lean, "Recreation, Re-creation, or Wreck-creation", Association Outlook, vol. XVIII, no. 9, Dec. 1919, p. 214.

³ Ibid.

The "problem girl" was one who broke the law, engaged in premarital sex, or was otherwise wanton in behaviour.⁴ The YWCA women believed they could save most girls from becoming "problem girls" by providing wholesome ways to fill their leisure hours and promoting a Christian lifestyle. Leisure hours could be utilized by taking classes and participating in YWCA clubs and socials.

The socials offered to the young women of the city included some large gatherings such as the one held in 1913 on St. Patrick's day, which was the first at which men were invited, as well as gatherings held every Friday evening. At the Friday socials

Many of the girls residing in the house gather round the grate fire and ... are often joined by others from outside, some sewing is done, there is a little music, a few games, sometimes reading aloud, and often lively discussion.⁵

The socials provided alternatives to the young women of the city for filling their leisure hours and provided an opportunity for the YWCA women to demonstrate the types of

⁴ There was a debate within the YWCA at the National level over whether 'problem girls' should be included in the clubs and activities of the Association. The women of the YWCA were divided on whether including the 'problem girls' was beneficial to rescue efforts, or detrimental to the "other girls whom we are trying to prevent making missteps." For more on this debate and examples of 'problem girls', see NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 46-7, "The Association and the Problem Girl", YWCA Notes, vol. VI, no. 2, July 1927, p. 14.

⁵ USA, J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907-1916, YWCA Annual Report, 1912-13, p. 7.

activities that were proper for young women. In 1918, the YWCA board members had to deal with the greater freedom of girls in the post-war period and decided that "while it was desirable for young people to have a chance to meet one another, mixed dancing at the YWCA was not necessary for happy evenings."⁶

In the post-war period most of the socials at the YWCA were organized by the clubs and classes that had become part of the Association. The socials served to attract young women to the Association building as an alternative to unsupervised parties and movie theatres. Once the women were in the building their enjoyment of the fellowship of other young women was expected to make them receptive to the idea of joining a YWCA class or club.

Educational classes and lectures were offered by the Saskatoon YWCA in an effort to fulfil its goal of intellectual development of young women and as a means of arousing interest in the Association. The first class was offered by the Travellers' Aid secretary particularly for the strangers in the city. The class met for the first time on September 4, 1910 at the YWCA offices in the MacBeth block. Twelve women, four of them strangers to the city, met to listen to Mrs. Ross, the editor of a missionary paper

⁶ Frances Croome, ed., Building Fellowship: A History of the YWCA in Saskatchewan, (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1955), p. 139.

of the Gwalls-Presbyterian mission in Jhansi, India.⁷ This class, like many of the classes and clubs offered at the YWCA, was organized to provide women who were new to the city with the opportunity to meet other women. The subject matter chosen for the class also demonstrated the emphasis the Association had on the 'Christian' aspect of their work.

Bible Study classes were also inaugurated soon after the Association was organized. These classes were the most direct effort the YWCA made "to lead young women into personal loyalty to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour."⁸ The classes were held in private homes around the city until March, 1911, when they were moved to the Baptist church lecture room so "that greater numbers may be accommodated."⁹

These two classes were the only ones offered by the YWCA prior to the completion of the Association building. In autumn of 1912, the YWCA took advantage of their new quarters and offered a history class and a dressmaking class, as well as relocating the Bible Study class to their

⁷ "Addressed the YWCA", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, September 5, 1910, p. 2.

⁸ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 52-6, "National Convention Recommendations", Findings of the 12th National Convention, YWCA, May 28 - June 3, 1927, p. 2.

⁹ "YWCA Bible Study Class", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, March 13, 1911, p. 2.

own premises. A series of lectures on Kipling was also presented.¹⁰

More classes were added when a need or an interest was discerned in the community. All of these activities had the same goal -- to bring the young women into the realm of the YWCA. Once a young woman attended the YWCA on a regular basis, the process of character-building was well under way.

In 1913 and 1914 a French class and an embroidery class were added to the YWCA program. After the Great War, the majority of the YWCA classes taught crafts and practical topics, while the academic classes were gradually discontinued. In 1925, the class schedule included millinery, china painting, basketry, and home-making, the latter covering such diverse topics as "How to Properly Prepare Fowl for the Oven," and "Interior Decorating -- The Placing of bric-a-brac in a room."¹¹ The trend for these types of classes continued through the 1930s, though many classes were dropped because of duplication with evening classes offered at Nutana Collegiate and a subsequent decline in the enrolment in the YWCA courses.¹² When

¹⁰ USA, J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907 - 1916, YWCA Annual Report, 1912-13, p. 7.

¹¹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-64(a), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, a)1914-1930, YWCA Annual Announcement, 1925-1926, pp. 5-6.

¹² SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports 1914-1953, Annual Report 1925-26, pp. 3-4.

classes were dropped because of duplication, the YWCA board attempted to offer new classes. One such attempt was made in 1930 when music classes taught by Andy Anderson of the Silvertone Seven were added to the program of classes. Group learning was tried for the first time in the city with students playing guitars, banjos, or ukuleles.¹³

The problems with unemployment during the Depression prompted the YWCA to add classes to its program for training domestics. Leisure time classes were also offered. Classes in knitting, cooking, handicraft, sewing, tap dancing, dramatics, and finger waving (a type of hair styling) were offered to unemployed girls so they could "employ their leisure time constructively".¹⁴

The teaching of the course material alone was not enough to meet the objective of involving women with the church of their choice or of influencing women to identify with the YWCA's moral and social objectives. Much emphasis was placed on obtaining competent teachers who were also capable leaders and Christians. "You may teach a girl to sew, but that will not keep her from temptation"¹⁵ was one

¹³ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-64(c), Scrapbooks 1914-1972, (c) 1930-1939, newspaper clipping, "Classes in Inter...", October 18, 1930.

¹⁴ "Women's Organizations Co-operate in plan to Help Unemployed Girls", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 13, 1934, p. 7.

¹⁵ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 46, Young Women of Canada, February/March 1911, p. 71.

of the maxims that served to remind the teachers of their responsibilities to their students. The teachers were expected to provide a good role model to the young women participating in the classes and to promote the other activities of the YWCA.

Participation in the YWCA clubs was actively encouraged in the classes. Unlike the classes, clubs were open only to YWCA members, and the work undertaken by the clubs was in direct fulfilment of the objectives of the YWCA. Classes were open to any women regardless of their age, whereas clubs were for the young women who were the raison d'être of the Association. The matrons of the Association served as organizers, advisors, and teachers in the clubs rather than as participants in the club activities.

The first club initiated by the YWCA targeted the immigrant women in the city. In February, 1913, a "Sunshine Club" was organized for girls from Europe. The stated purpose of the club was to help these girls make friends in Canada. The YWCA also hoped that women originally from Europe who had been in Canada for several years would join the club and help with the newcomers. The need for English classes in conjunction with the Sunshine Club was also realized.¹⁶

¹⁶ "Will Organise Sunshine Club", Saskatoon Phoenix, February 27, 1913, p. 4.

The English classes for "foreign speaking girls" were held at the Princess Alexandra School for the first year and then were moved to the YWCA building in 1914. The teaching of the twice-weekly classes was assisted by volunteers who were YWCA residents and members, and Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) members and teachers from around the city. In 1914, the Fitzgerald Chapter of the IODE took over the responsibility for the organization and teaching of the YWCA English language classes.¹⁷

The overlap in the objectives of the YWCA and other organizations in the city can be seen in the area of teaching 'foreigners'.¹⁸ The YWCA's stated purpose in teaching English classes was to allow the young women an opportunity to participate in the Sunshine Club, and other YWCA activities.¹⁹ The Fitzgerald Chapter of the IODE was involved with the teaching of the classes, and though it was never stated as such, their objective was the assimilation of the foreign element.²⁰ The assimilation of the students

¹⁷ "Busy Month's Work Done at YWCA", Saskatoon Phoenix, October 10, 1914, p. 6.

¹⁸ The YWCA used the term 'foreigners' to refer to immigrants from countries other than England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and the United States.

¹⁹ "Will Organise Sunshine Club", Saskatoon Phoenix, February 27, 1913, p. 4.

²⁰ Nadine M. Small, "Stand By the Union Jack: The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire in the Prairie Provinces During the Great War, 1914 - 1918", unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1988, p. 153.

was not formally included in the YWCA's objectives, but the effort was undoubtedly made, as is evidenced by the participation of the IODE and the attitudes of the YWCA women.

Non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants were of special concern to the YWCA for a number of reasons. In addition to the dangers they believed all women faced when they arrived in the city, the 'foreigners' had the additional handicap of a language barrier and the disorienting effects of living in a new culture. The YWCA women believed the combination of these factors made the foreign girl especially vulnerable to immoral influences. Added to this was the belief that foreign girls were even more at risk because they lacked the benefits of a good British upbringing.²¹ The women of the YWCA attempted to make up for the lack of a British background by instilling the moral values they felt were lacking in the European heritage. The matrons of the YWCA attempted to combat the difficulties faced by the immigrants with the English classes, and by including lessons in the

²¹ This belief was evident in the concerns the women of the YWCA expressed regarding the assimilation of 'foreign' girls. In addition to being taught the customs and the language of Canadian society, the 'foreign' girls needed to be taught the British morality which the YWCA women believed was lacking in their 'foreign' upbringing. For examples of this belief see: NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 46-17, "Immigration and Travellers' Aid Department", Young Women of Canada, Vol. XIII, no. 10, December, 1914, pp. 244-6; Ibid., "Foreign-Born", YWCA Notes, Vol. VIII, no. 2, July 1929, p. 15.

culture and customs of a British society with the classes and the associated socials. So, although the stated objective of the YWCA was not the assimilation of foreign girls, the methods they employed for dealing with 'the foreign element' amounted to a concerted effort to assimilate.

British immigrants and newcomers of British ancestry were also targeted as a group in need of special programs. The English-speaking women who were new to the city were invited to join the Strangers Welcome Club. This club was open to "all girls in the city who have not yet many acquaintances here,"²² and was part of the National YWCA policy on immigration.²³ The Strangers Welcome Club was organized to "care for and provide for social, educational, and religious facilities for strange girls."²⁴ The majority of the membership were British girls, though women from other nationalities joined if they could speak English. In 1914, a YWCA report included a reference to some Norwegian, Swedish and German girls who had done so well in the classes

²² "Dressmaking Class", Saskatoon Phoenix, October 16, 1913, p. 4.

²³ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 13-17, Immigration Committee, 1912-1916, Address by Mr. Lee, YMCA Immigration Secretary, n.d..

²⁴ Ibid..

for foreigners that they were able to join the Strangers Welcome Club.²⁵

The commitment the YWCA board had to providing suitable guidance to young women through their clubs caused the Saskatoon Association to follow the lead of other YWCA's in Canada, and to hire a full-time Girls' Work Secretary. Girls' Work Secretaries were generally university or college graduates who had an affinity for working with girls, a thorough training in adolescent psychology, and a knowledge of the programs and methods being used in the field of Girls' Work.²⁶

The Girls' Work Secretary was responsible for the organization and administration of the clubs, and was the liaison between the YWCA and the Protestant churches and other organizations offering activities for young women in the city. In most other cities, the Girls' Work Secretary was in charge of activities for teenage and preteen girls.²⁷

²⁵ "Planning for Annual YWCA Meeting", Saskatoon Phoenix, April 7, 1914, p. 4. It is interesting to note the nationalities of the three 'foreign' women who were able to join the Strangers Welcome Club. There is no mention of any Eastern Europeans moving from the Sunshine Club to the Strangers Welcome Club.

²⁶ Diana L. Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, 1870-1920: 'A Movement to meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need'", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Carleton University, 1987, p. 394.

²⁷ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 21-16, Suggested Constitution for Young Women's Christian Associations in Cities, p. 25.

In Saskatoon, the Secretary was put in charge of all the clubs and the activities at summer camp.

The first Girls' Work Secretary to work for the Saskatoon Association was Jessie McDermid, who was hired in May, 1917, and her first duty was to develop a Bible Study in conjunction with the Protestant churches in the community.²⁸ She also took over the administration of the clubs already in operation and began work towards starting other clubs and activities.

McDermid was replaced by Edith Code in 1918. Code was responsible for the organization of the Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT). She made her first report to the YWCA Board in December, 1918, and outlined her progress. She had met with the Ministers, Sunday school superintendents, and representatives of girls' groups of the Protestant Churches to try to co-ordinate a girls' club that was an extension of the Sunday school classes offered in the churches. In a meeting between a committee of the YWCA and the church and girls' group representatives the policy of the CGIT was chosen for use.²⁹

The CGIT program was run jointly by the Protestant churches and the YWCA. The aim of the program was similar

²⁸ "YWCA Completed Best Year in History", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May 22, 1917, p. 5.

²⁹ "Girls' Work Secy. Presents Report to YWCA Board", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, December 15, 1918, p. 11.

to that of the YWCA -- "To lead every girl to become committed to and established in the Christian way of life."³⁰ The program was intended for girls aged twelve to seventeen and promoted a four-fold development of a physical, intellectual, religious, and service standard that was part of the YWCA program for older women.³¹

The YWCA encountered difficulties in the new area of work among teenage girls when there were not enough trained leaders to take charge of the girls' groups. A similar problem was being experienced by the Canadian Standards Efficiency Training,³² so a joint meeting was held and a Mentor's Training Class was organized. A Teen-Age Sunday was organized at all the Protestant churches in the city and a trained boys' or girls' worker spoke on the theme of "The necessity for trained leaders" at each of the churches. The response by interested people was sufficient to meet the needs of the groups requiring leaders.³³

³⁰ NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 40-4, Youth - Girls' Work - Canadian Girls in Training, n.d., 1919-1923, "The Beginnings of the CGIT Movement", p. 4.

³¹ See SAB, Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, B2 III 12, Pamphlets and Publications, Canadian Girls in Training for details on the CGIT version of the four-fold development.

³² This group was the boys' equivalent of the CGIT and was the organization emulated by the CGIT.

³³ The course consisted of Biblical talks given by Professor Sherrard of the University of Saskatchewan, Professor Oliver of Knox College, and Mr. Rose of the Normal School, as well as training in the mechanics of the CGIT and
(continued...)

It was unusual for the YWCA to resort to classes to train volunteers. In part, the success of their club program was measured by the number of women who 'graduated' from the clubs to become leaders in the community. In the early 1920s, the increase in demand for classes and clubs in a relatively young Association caused the shortfall in the number of leaders available at the YWCA.

A shortage in leaders was again experienced in the early 1930s when leaders were needed for the clubs of younger adolescent girls. In an effort to recruit new leaders the SOS Leadership Training Classes were organized. The name of the course was chosen because this was "an SOS call for help in the YWCA."³⁴

As with the classes, the clubs were organized and disbanded according to the demand. In the 1920s several new clubs were in existence. The "Sunshine Club" had been renamed the "New Canadian" club and the language classes became part of the club activities. A "Homemakers Club" composed of British-born women and children was organized early in 1920.³⁵

³³(...continued)
CSET program. NAC, YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 46-28, Association Outlook, Vol. XIX, no. 6, June 1920, p. 147.

³⁴ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-64(c), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, (c) 1930-1939, newspaper clipping, "YWCA Notes", January 10, 1931.

³⁵ "Reports of YW Activities Presented at Public Meeting ...", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, March 19, 1927, p. 7.

Clubs for business women and women attending business college were developed under the guidance of Code. By 1921, there were five such clubs meeting at the YWCA, with a total attendance of over 100 girls.³⁶ The clubs for business girls were often formed for particular groups, such as a club for the women working at Woolworth's store.³⁷

Lella Giberson who took over as Girls' Work Secretary in 1922, was typical of the 'professional' Girls' Work Secretary sought by the Association. Giberson's interest in the YWCA started while she was attending the Acadia Ladies' Seminary, and her interest in the Association led to her pursuit of a career with the YWCA. After graduating from a Home Economics program, she attended New Brunswick Normal School. She was principal and domestic science teacher at a high school in Iowa, and attended the National YWCA training school in New York before joining the staff of the Saskatoon Association.³⁸ During her tenure a House Girls' Club was organized for the girls in residence. The girls in this club gave service to the Association by taking office duty in an emergency, doing clerical work during financial

³⁶ "Year of Exceptional Progress is Shown in Reports of YWCA", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May 23, 1921, p. 7.

³⁷ Croome, p. 142.

³⁸ "New Secretary is Welcomed by 'Y' Girls' Work Dept.", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, January 16, 1922, p. 7.

campaigns, and taking charge of the Vesper Services. They also organized a number of parties and other activities.³⁹

In 1925 a Business and Professional Women's Club was organized as a result of work done by several female Masters of Arts students. They visited every industry, store, hotel, restaurant, and office to inform every business woman of the privileges of the YWCA. Eighty-seven women joined the club as a result of this canvassing.⁴⁰

From 1925 to 1930 the work of the Girls' Work Secretary was carried out by volunteers. In 1930 a trained worker was again hired after the board decided that an extra effort should be made to hire a suitable secretary "in view of the unusual economic conditions affecting Saskatoon."⁴¹ Helen Hilton was hired to continue the work in 1930, and under her direction the clubs were completely reorganized.

Hilton worked to reorganize and strengthen the clubs already in existence and to add new clubs to reach more young women. At the end of 1930, six clubs were being offered to young women: the TNT (Thursday Nights Together) club composed of girls in the domestic service; the Gay League made up of girls who worked in hotels; the Alma Pheta

³⁹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553--1(1), Annual Report, May 25, 1923, p. 1.

⁴⁰ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annuals Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report 1925-26, p. 5.

⁴¹ "Y.W. Appoints Secretary for Girls' Work", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 4, 1930, p. 8.

Club, established as a 'friendship club'; the Be Square Club composed of restaurant girls; the Yakonwita club made up of young business girls; and the New Canadian club which provided English language classes.⁴² The Girls' Work Committee reviewed the work of the Department in the fall of 1931 and considered these classes to be a foundation on which to build up the Department.

Through a program of RECREATION, EDUCATION, SERVICE, and WORSHIP, the Committee sought to build into the life of girls the purpose of the Association, which is to lead them into personal loyalty to Jesus Christ, to promote growth in Christian character, and to be a social force in the extension of the Kingdom of God.⁴³

New clubs were established and extension work was started in an effort to unify clubs by inter-club activities.

Adjustments were made to existing clubs to retain members and to attract new participants. Perhaps the most radical change in a club occurred to the TNT club. It was composed of domestic servants who came to the YWCA for their social activities on their one night off a week. In 1934, Hilton introduced forty "carefully selected young men" to

⁴² SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-64(c), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, (c) 1930-1939, newspaper clipping, "YWCA Pla ... Swimming ...", November 25, 1930. The restaurant and hotel girls' clubs were classified as "business girl clubs". The Wo-he-lo club and the Business and Professional Women's club met at the YWCA building at this time, but they were not part of the YWCA club structure.

⁴³ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-2, Annual Reports, Girls Work Department, 1931-1942, Annual Report of the Girls' Work Department, 1931-1932, p. 1.

the TNT girls. Problems arose when couples began to date and the girls had to decide whether to continue to participate in the club activities or to devote their one free night a week to seeing their boyfriends. A solution was found by forming a joint Young People's Club and inviting any interested young men to join.⁴⁴ This appears to have been a successful venture since the club continued to meet for several years.

During her tenure as Girls' Work Secretary, Hilton gradually expanded the number of clubs in order to attract women not already participating in a club. Clubs for school-aged girls were added and special interest clubs such as the Dressmakers club were attempted.⁴⁵ By 1935, ten clubs were meeting regularly at the YWCA. These included one for Grade School girls, two for High School girls, two groups of girls finishing school and beginning to work, three business girl groups, a club for Household Assistants, and one for young married ladies.⁴⁶

Betty Quiggan took over as the Girls' Work Secretary in September, 1935. She inherited a healthy system of clubs

⁴⁴ "YWCA Provide Social Contacts For Girls Who Have One Night Weekly", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 10, 1934.

⁴⁵ "YWCA Notes", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 15, 1934, p. 7.

⁴⁶ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-33, Minutes, Annual Meetings, 1937-1973, Annual Report Girls Work Dept., April 1935.

but ran into problems because the Department Committee had been discontinued and there was a lack of volunteer leadership.⁴⁷ Only seven of the ten clubs were convened in the fall, and one new club was added. Her work was also hampered by the continuing Depression. Every effort had been made from the onset of the Depression to include all girls, whether they could afford fees or not, in the club programs. Invitations to join in the club activities were offered to unemployed women throughout the Depression in an effort to provide some emotional support and a place to go. Even though the club activities had been financed through several fund-raising campaigns and from other departments' resources within the Association,⁴⁸ finances were stretched to their limits by the latter half of the 1930s, and it became more difficult to offer comprehensive club programs. Despite this, the level of club activities was maintained with the most serious problem being that new clubs could not be added because of the lack of space for club work.⁴⁹

The clubs offered a wide variety of activities to their members. The club members formed social, literary, physical culture, and religious work committees at their first

⁴⁷ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-2, Annual Reports, Girls' Work Department, 1931-1942, Girls' Work Department Annual Report, 1935-36, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸ Part of the funds for the club program came from building campaign money raised in the late 1920s.

⁴⁹ Croome, p. 155.

meeting. The religious committee generally took on the task of introducing the newcomers to their own particular church, since "so many girls seem to feel too shy and lonely to go themselves."⁵⁰ In addition to the regular meetings, the clubs organized special activities such as hikes, wiener roasts, picnics, baseball, and tennis during the summer. In the winter they held talks and discussions, handicraft sessions, parties, and toboggan slides.⁵¹

The clubs were designed to provide opportunities for the women to serve their community, so many of the activities revolved around this task. During the war, the clubs did Red Cross Work⁵² and work in support of the Belgian Relief fund.⁵³ Baby layettes were knit for the Infants Home and toys were provided to the Children's Aid Society through the work of the clubs.⁵⁴ Charity work was always part of the Christmas activities. In 1916, a Christmas dinner basket was prepared for a poor family in

⁵⁰ "October at the YWCA Proved Eventful", Saskatoon Phoenix, November 10, 1913, p. 4.

⁵¹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report, May 26, 1923.

⁵² For example, see "YWCA Board of Directors Meet", Saskatoon Phoenix, January 18, 1916, p. 6.

⁵³ For example see "YWCA Board Holds Important Session", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, April 17, 1917, p. 5.

⁵⁴ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report 1925-6, p. 5.

the city⁵⁵ and in 1922 the business girls' clubs provided a Christmas party for the Day Nursery Children and their mothers.⁵⁶ The clubs also contributed towards fund-raising for the YWCA by holding teas or other socials throughout the year.⁵⁷ A "Gift Day" was established in the 1930s to allow the club girls to "show appreciation" to the YWCA. Each club contributed a substantial amount of their proceeds from an Open House or other event to the YWCA annual financial campaign. "To give even though the contribution be small, increases interest and affection, and it is the desire of the Secretary to plant and foster a growing love for the "Y" in [the] heart of every girl who crosses the threshold of the Association building."⁵⁸

The socials and charity work were part of the learning process in which the girls of the clubs were involved. Club activities were expected to help each girl build for herself

⁵⁵ "YWCA Board of Directors Meet", Saskatoon Phoenix, January 18, 1916, p. 6.

⁵⁶ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report, May 25, 1923, p. 2.

⁵⁷ "Reports of YW Activities Presented at Public Meeting ...", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, March 19, 1927, p. 7. The difference in attitude towards 'foreign' girls is evident in the area of service to the community. British girls were expected to contribute to the community through their clubs, whereas the foreign girls in the New Canadian Club "...have learned to contribute their share toward the YWCA spirit of service." (emphasis mine)

⁵⁸ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-2, Annual Reports, Girls Work Department, 1931-1942, Annual Report of the Girls' Work Department, 1931-32, p. 2.

the standards of conduct and a pattern of living that would carry her safely into maturity.⁵⁹ It was also the aim of the Girls' Work Department "to help the girls of Saskatoon to find in this community the best way of life, and to help them fit themselves for living this 'best way'."⁶⁰ The goals for the women were outlined in the business girls' club motto:

To give an honest return for my salary and to be
 worthy of being trusted with responsibility
 To be business like in manner and sincere in all I
 say and do
 To be courteous and considerate, no matter how
 busy I am
 To be square and dependable in all my dealings
 with people
 To endeavor to be always cheerful and have a smile
 to pass along
 To dress appropriately for business and to be neat
 in my personal appearance
 To keep myself physically fit and mentally alert
 To take time to read, study and think that I [may]
 make my contribution as a thinking girl to
 the world in which I live
 To uphold at all times with God's help the highest
 ideals of Christian womanhood.⁶¹

The four-fold aim of physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual development was part of the program of the club. The structure of the clubs and the activities offered

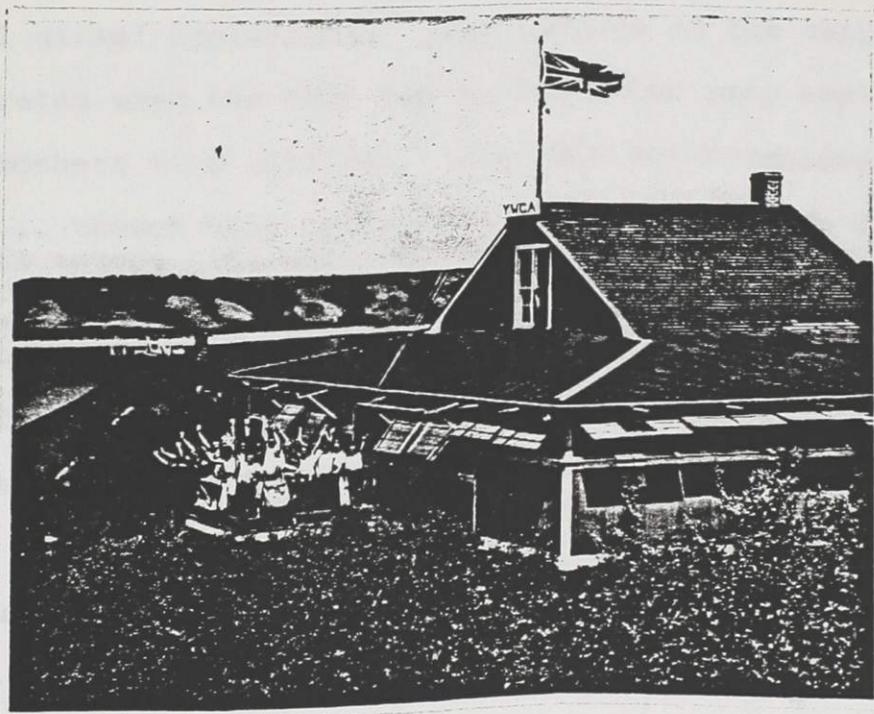
⁵⁹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-33, Minutes, Annual Meeting, 1937-1973, Annual Report Girls Work Dept., April 1935, p. 2.

⁶⁰ "YWCA Board of Directors Will Start Tomorrow On Annual Finance Campaign", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, April 28, 1924, p. 7.

⁶¹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report 1925-6, p. 4.

in them were all geared to helping young women build character.

An extension of the girls' work being done in the clubs was the running of a summer camp for business girls. The



YWCA Camp at Watrous, c. 1940. SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553 uncatalogued photos.

camp was proposed in the summer of 1916 and opened in 1917, with the first camp being held at Watrous with A.J. Sparling's cottage as the main building and dormitory tents and a bathing tent erected to accommodate the thirty campers. The camp opened June 29, and women were charged \$8 per week, or \$2 for a weekend.⁶² A special half-price rate was arranged with the railway for women attending the camp. The camp was exclusively for business girls except for the first ten days of the summer which were set aside for a school girls' conference.⁶³ The purpose of the camp was reiterated when the YWCA had to deal with camp applications from mothers with children. The YWCA board decided that

... though they probably need the holiday as much as anyone [it] was not what the camp was organised for. By trying to combine a camp for business girls and for mothers and children, we might not make a success for either.⁶⁴

The camp proved to be such a success that it became a permanent part of the YWCA program. In 1920 the Association began negotiations to establish a permanent camp at Watrous⁶⁵ and throughout the 1920s the YWCA could not

⁶² "Arrangements Made for YWCA Camp at Watrous", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, June 12, 1917, p. 5.

⁶³ "Girls' Camp at Watrous for Study and Recreation", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, June 16, 1917, p. 4.

⁶⁴ "Satisfactory Reports at YWCA Board Meeting", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, July 17, 1917, p. 5.

⁶⁵ "Every Department YWCA Reports Splendid Progress During Year", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May 22, 1920, p.4.



Photo of one of the camp activities, a 'camp band', taken after the camp was opened to men, women and children. SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553, uncatalogued photos, c. 1936.

accommodate all the women who wished to attend the summer camp. In an effort to house more women, additional accommodation was added in 1929 when a cottage was built on the property.⁶⁶ The Depression caused a reduction in the number of women who could afford to attend the camp, and by the 1934 the camp was opened up to men, women, and children.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-28(1), History, Saskatoon YWCA 1910-1971, Yearly Report to the Local Council of Women, January 31, 1930.

⁶⁷ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-64(c), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, (c) 1930-1939, advertisement for the YWCA Watrous camp, 1934.

The club and camp activities contributed in part to the physical development of young women by offering sports activities to the participants; however, this level of participation was not enough to meet the objectives of the YWCA. Classes in gym, swimming, and dancing were offered by the Physical Education and Health department to help build the physical strength of young women.

The YWCA had acquired a nation-wide reputation for offering classes in Physical Education, and in most cities the gym and swimming classes could be relied on to draw women to the Association. Indeed, in most cities the reason for constructing an Association building was to provide gym and pool facilities to the women of the city.⁶⁸ The case in Saskatoon was somewhat different. Though the initial plans for the YWCA building had included a gym and pool, these features had to be dropped when insufficient funds were raised in the building campaign. The women of the YWCA made the decision to go ahead with the building without these facilities in order to be able to provide a residence, dining room, and some educational classes. This decision shaped the history of the Association in its early years. The board was continually hampered by fiscal difficulties that precluded the addition of swimming and gymnasium

⁶⁸ Diana L. Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, 1970-1920: 'A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need'", Ph.D. dissertation, Carleton University, 1987, p. 255.

facilities, so, if they were to meet their objective of building up women physically, steps had to be taken to provide physical education classes elsewhere. This resulted in the majority of physical education classes being held off the YWCA premises and the beneficial effects of having the women come to the Association building for the classes being lost.

Despite the lack of facilities at the YWCA, the board attempted to offer some physical culture classes. In 1913 they began to look for facilities they could rent with the first, and perhaps most obvious place to enquire being the YMCA.⁶⁹ These facilities were unavailable, and the YWCA attempted to hold classes in their dining room. As this did not prove satisfactory, they were quick to take up invitations to hold classes elsewhere. The first YWCA recreational class was held at the Baptist church, and was the result of an invitation from the church to the membership of the YWCA to join a physical culture class in November, 1913.⁷⁰ By February, 1914, the class had been renamed a recreational class and was included in a list of

⁶⁹ "Young Women Will Ask For Use of Gymnasium", Saskatoon Phoenix, April 8, 1913, p. 4. The request was repeated twice more until arrangements were made in 1915 to allow the use of the gymnasium and pool on Thursday evenings. "Young Women May Use Swimming Pool Thursday Nights", Saskatoon Phoenix, August 31, 1915, p. 6.

⁷⁰ "YWCA World Week of Prayer Observed", Saskatoon Phoenix, November 5, 1913, p. 4.

classes offered by the YWCA. Mrs. A. R. Morgan, a YWCA board member, extended the original invitation and taught the classes, which were held in the church basement.

In the fall of 1914, the physical education classes returned to the YWCA dining room. There were classes in both physical drill and recreation. The recreational classes offered rhythmic dance and other activities, while the physical drill classes followed the regimen of the Swedish gymnastics program.⁷¹ The classes proved to be very popular, and the Association was hard-pressed to keep up with demand.

In 1915 the YWCA was able to secure the use of the YMCA pool and gymnasium. The use of the YMCA facilities allowed the YWCA to report to their members that there was now a practical benefit to joining the Association.

We have had so little to offer our members directly in return for their membership and now that we have something tangible which they really need we are going to get in touch with a large

⁷¹ The Swedish system stressed precision and uniformity in response to commands. The system used bending, stepping, and arm-swinging motions with the use of dumb-bells, wands, and small rings. This system was replaced by the Danish system during the 1920s. The Danish system incorporated a more rhythmic approach to exercises. See Helen Lenskyj, "Femininity First. Sport and Physical Education for Ontario Girls, 1890-1930", Canadian Journal of History of Sport, Vol. 13, no. 2, 1983, pp. 4-17; Frank Cosentino and Maxwell L. Howell, A History of Physical Education in Canada, (Toronto: General Publishing Co., Ltd., 1971), pp. 25, 44.

number of girls who would not otherwise come to the Association.⁷²

Swimming classes were added to the Physical Education program, and the girls' gym classes were moved to the YMCA gymnasium. A gym class for married women, with an enrolment of 70, continued to meet at the YWCA building.⁷³ The women attending the classes at the YMCA were heavily chaperoned.

In addition to the classes offered at the YMCA building, outdoor activities were arranged during the summer. In 1917, these took the form of an Outdoor Festival, which included gym classes and swimming classes held outdoors all summer long. The festival was planned "...not only with a view of giving health and happiness to a number during the summer, but we expect much of our work for the coming year to be inaugurated through these two features [Outdoor Festival and Camp]."⁷⁴

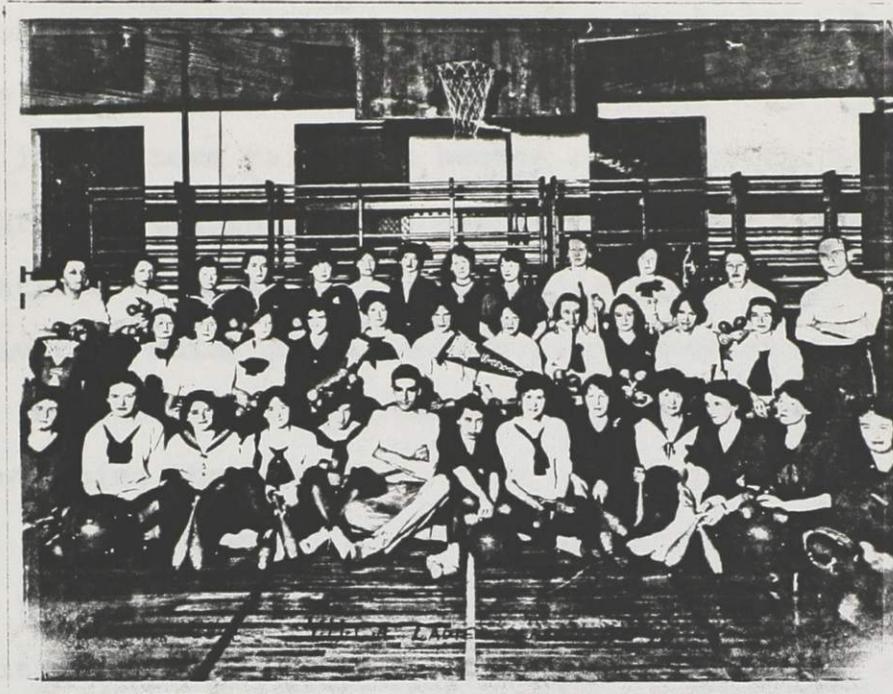
By the mid-1920s the YWCA board came to the conclusion that until a gym, pool and meeting hall were acquired "the association in [Saskatoon] was accomplishing practically all within its range of possibility."⁷⁵ There were 1123 women

⁷² "YWCA Board Holds Monthly Meeting", Saskatoon Phoenix, September 21, 1915, p. 6.

⁷³ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report 1914-1915, p. 15.

⁷⁴ "YWCA Completed Best Year in History", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, May, 22, 1917, p. 5.

⁷⁵ Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, January 25, 1927, p. 7.



Ladies Gym Class held at the YMCA, 1915-1916. The balls and clubs were used to the drills. Note the two chaperones in the middle of the back row. Photo courtesy of the Saskatoon Public Library -- Local History Room.

enrolled in gym, dancing, and badminton classes in 1927, and further demands for classes could not be met because of the lack of facilities.⁷⁶

The number and variety of classes remained fairly static from the mid-1920s through the 1930s because of the lack of facilities. The numbers of women enrolled in the

⁷⁶ Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, March 19, 1927, p. 7. See also, SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report of the YWCA to the Local Council of Women, Saskatoon, January 19, 1929, p. 2.

classes declined during the 1930s because fewer women could afford to take the classes. The physical education classes were expensive to run because facilities had to be rented and instructors paid. It became difficult to plan the program of classes when the number of women who could afford to attend was unknown.⁷⁷ Unlike the other classes and activities which could be offered free or at a nominal fee, the Physical Education classes could not be operated without maintaining the fees.

An exception to this was made for unemployed women. The YWCA board members decided that they must offer a variety of activities to unemployed young women, and physical education classes were considered by the women of the YWCA as an important deterrent to the mental depression they felt could overwhelm the unemployed. Gym classes were offered free of charge to unemployed girls. The classes were held at the YWCA building and included rhythmic gymnastics, health exercises, clog and tap dancing, and stunts.⁷⁸

The response of the women of the city to the gym and swim classes from 1910 to the Depression was enthusiastic,

⁷⁷ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-33, Minutes, Annual Meetings, 1937-1973, Annual Report of the Health and Physical Education Department for the year ending April 30th, 1938, p. 1.

⁷⁸ "Women's Organizations Co-operate in Plan to Help Unemployed Girls", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 13, 1934, p. 7.

with a drop in attendance being experienced only when women could not afford to attend in the 1930s. The YWCA was pressed to add a number of classes that were necessary to meet the demand for enrolment. The YWCA board was well aware that they could fill classes in their own facility if they could build a gymnasium and swimming pool, but their efforts to add to their building were not successful until the 1950s. A concerted effort to build up an extension fund in the late 1920s was thwarted by the onset of the Depression.

Despite the lack of facilities, the YWCA was able to offer a large number of classes and organized sports prior to World War II. After Knox Hall was added to the building in 1917,⁷⁹ some of the gym classes were moved back to the YWCA. Classes for all ages were then added to the program. Their commitment to the physical education classes was so great that they hired a full-time Physical Education instructor, and were the only Association in the country without a gym and pool to do so.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ The Knox Church Hall was purchased by the YWCA and moved adjacent to the residence as a temporary solution to their space problems. "YWCA Board Holds Important Session", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, April 17, 1917, p. 5, "YWCA Directors Plan for Gymnasium Building", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, August 21, 1917, p. 5.

⁸⁰ "YWCA Secretaries Present Interesting Reports of Activities", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, May 15, 1935.

The Saskatoon YWCA was successful in its efforts to contribute to the physical development of the young women involved in the Association. Despite their lack of proper facilities they made every effort to offer a wide range of classes and sports to the women of the city. This lack of facilities detracted from the efforts of the YWCA to attract women to the other programs offered by the Association. Women attending classes at the YWCA were not continually exposed to the surroundings of the YWCA, and therefore were not as likely to become involved with other facets of the Association as women who attended classes in the YWCA building.

The YWCA board members had such confidence in their goals and in their programs that they believed they could attract members to the Association simply by attracting women to the YWCA building. "Anything which we can do to attract a larger number to our building should make the work of the membership less difficult."⁸¹ They had the goal of making every woman in the city aware of the Association.⁸² By doing so, they could increase their membership and influence a larger number of young women.

⁸¹ "Month's Work at YWCA", Saskatoon Phoenix, November 17, 1914, p. 6.

⁸² "Is the YWCA Down-Hearted? Not At All", Saskatoon Phoenix, December 21, 1914, p. 6.

Participation by young women in the Association activities allowed the matrons of the YWCA to work toward their goals of character-building and participation in a Protestant church of the girl's choice. All the activities of the clubs and classes had the same message -- the importance of a Christian lifestyle. The guidance provided during the time the women spent at the YWCA was expected to have a lasting influence when the women were on their own. The social and moral lessons they learned from the YWCA were expected to serve the women when they left work and started their families. When this stage of their life was reached, the women were expected to take their place in the YWCA as leaders and pass their knowledge on to the young women following in their footsteps.

Chapter Seven

"GOD'S OWN CORNERSTONES: OUR DAUGHTERS"

The services of the Young Women's Christian Association were designed to touch every facet of a girl's life. When a girl left home, she could be placed in the capable care of a Travellers' Aid Secretary, be safely shepherded through the train stations, cared for between train connections, and met upon arrival in the city. She could then be safely housed in the residence building, be found suitable work in an appropriate environment, and during her leisure hours could take part in the classes, clubs, and socials offered at the YWCA. All the services available through the YWCA were designed to attract young girls to the Association so they could be built up physically, spiritually, and intellectually. The matrons of the YWCA believed this process was necessary in order to equip a young woman with the skills she needed to continue to live a Christian life when she lived independently of the influence of her family.

The matrons of the YWCA believed they had the duty to mould, form, and polish the daughters of society to be "God's own cornerstones".¹ The future of society depended upon these daughters because of their role in influencing the moral and religious standards of their children.

¹ Mary Quayle Innis, Unfold the Years: A History of the Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1949), p. 27.

The girl is the hope of the world. As we keep her pure, we protect the race of the future; as we keep her bright and keen for the better things of life, we raise the standard of our nation; as we draw her closer to the verities of life, we help to lift up the Christ so that our children's children may know Him, 'whom to know is life.'²

In order to protect the girl and keep her pure, the YWCA had to attract her to the Association building and provide facilities and programs of interest to her. At the same time, they had to use these programs as the vehicle to attain their goals of building up the girl.

The success of the women of the YWCA in attaining their goals is difficult to measure. Certainly the number of women who participated in the YWCA programs can be determined, and in the case of the Saskatoon Association this would show a great deal of success. The Travellers' Aid service was well utilized; the residence generally attracted a large number of women; the Employment Bureau in the period up to 1923 was one of the largest in Canada being operated by a YWCA, and the classes, clubs, and socials were well received by the women of the city. But how many of the women touched by the influence of the Association failed to meet the high expectations of the YWCA and were not built up physically, intellectually, or spiritually? How many women would have crumbled as one of "God's own cornerstones" if the Association had not had an influence on their lives?

² National Archives of Canada (NAC), YWCA of Canada, MG28 I198 vol. 46-22, Association Outlook, Vol. XVI, no. 1, January 1917, p. 7.

These numbers can never be known. According to the Association's own rhetoric, it was enormously successful in providing a positive influence on the lives of a great many young women, and had "saved many an innocent girl from what might have caused her sickening remorse."³

In order to judge the success of the YWCA in achieving its goals, it is necessary to determine whether the Association actually accomplished what it set out to do. The first goal was to attract young women to the Association. In this the local Association met with great success. Once the women were there, they were to be built up physically, spiritually, and intellectually. Again, the Association met with success. The physical culture classes and other sporting activities were very popular. The educational classes also attracted many women. The spiritual side of the work is harder to judge; however, the song services, vesper services, and Bible classes did attract a large number of women, and the clubs each had a religious committee that worked to keep their members in touch with the church of their choice.⁴

The Association was less successful in pursuit of its goal of breaking down the barriers between races, nations,

³ University of Saskatchewan Archives (USA), J. E. Murray Collection, B-III-5. YWCA 1907-1916, YWCA Annual Report, 1912-1913, p. 4.

⁴ When the churches took over the responsibility of providing song services and vesper services, the YWCA cancelled their services.

and classes.⁵ This goal was inherent in the philosophy of the YWCA. The Association promoted itself as an organization that "unites all women of all classes in the common cause of womanhood."⁶ All young girls were welcomed to the Association, with immigrant girls and poorer girls being targeted as most in need of the services of the YWCA. The claim of the Association that it broke through all society's barriers is true in the sense that all women were welcome, but the services of the Association served to keep and even reinforce these barriers.

The barriers between women of British ancestry and 'foreigners' were perhaps the most evident. Non-English-speaking immigrants were invited to join English classes, and a club was set up for women enrolled in these classes. Very few of the immigrants moved from this separate club to the other clubs offered by the Association. There are references to some Norwegian, Swedish, and German girls doing so well in the English classes that they were able to join the Strangers Welcome Club (the club for English-speaking immigrants). However, it must be kept in mind that women of these nationalities were considered to be the 'next

⁵ "Saskatonians Invited to Invest in Youth by Assisting Local 'Y.W.'", Saskatoon Star Phoenix, May 18, 1939.

⁶ Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), YWCA Saskatoon, A553-1(1), Annual Reports, 1914-1953, Annual Report 1914-1915, p. 7.

best thing' to being British.⁷ The treatment of the two groups of women also reinforced the barriers. British girls were encouraged to serve their community by helping to teach the 'foreigners' English. 'Foreign' girls, according to the YWCA, had to learn to serve, as was pointed out by the General Secretary in 1927. The New Canadian club girls had "learned to contribute their share towards the YWCA spirit of service" by providing gifts to the poor at Christmas and a donation to the YWCA Linen Shower.⁸ No mention was ever made of the other club girls having to 'learn' to contribute.

The matrons of the Association attempted to provide the 'foreign' girls with more moral guidance and teaching because they believed a non-Anglo-Saxon upbringing was inferior. The imposition of British moral standards would help to compensate for this inferiority. This nativism resulted in the belief that young 'foreign' women were at risk until they were assimilated.

Other barriers existed within the Association and were reinforced by it. Unemployed girls who could not afford class fees were provided with separate classes during the

⁷ For example Thompson states that "by 1914 the Icelanders had become sufficiently assimilated to be almost 'honorary Anglo-Saxons.'", John Herd Thompson, The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 82.

⁸ "Reports of YW Activities Presented at Public Meeting as Introduction to Campaign", Saskatoon Daily Phoenix, March 19, 1927, p. 7.

Depression, thus segregating them from the gainfully employed. Some separation of the girls in the middle and upper ranks of society from the lower ranks occurred because of the structuring of the club system. Groups such as domestics, store clerks, and hotel workers had their own clubs, separate from the business and professional women. This segregation was intentional. The YWCA was more concerned with providing clubs that would attract girls than it was with breaking social barriers. While the YWCA was attempting to meet the needs of the girls by providing clubs that suited their interests, the structuring of the clubs reinforced differences between the members.

Barriers between the classes were reinforced by the treatment of girls within the Association based on their class background. Generally girls from the middle and upper ranks of society were not in need of as much moral guidance as the girls from the lower ranks. Many young women from the upper and middle classes who did not work still participated in YWCA programs. The matrons believed this gave them an opportunity to serve. Their good British upbringing only required some reinforcement that would take place naturally as they participated in activities at the YWCA.

Barriers between the classes may also have been evident in the treatment of industrial workers. There was a surprising lack of interest in these workers on the part of

the Saskatoon Association. In larger centres, these women were targeted for special attention by the Association and special programs and lunch rooms were set up in factories. The lack of a strong industrial base in Saskatoon precluded this type of attention, but it does not justify the almost total neglect of the industrial workers. It is difficult to determine why there was this lack of interest. The matrons of the YWCA may have been satisfied that they were reaching the women through their other programs and that no special programs were necessary. If this was not the case, then other possibilities have to be considered. Prejudice against the class of worker in the industries may have been a factor. If the YWCA matrons believed that no amount of building up of the women physically, intellectually, and spiritually would have made a difference, they may have decided to concentrate their efforts elsewhere. More evidence is required in order to be able to determine whether the YWCA programs did reach the industrial workers or if there was prejudice on the part of the matrons.

The Association met with more success in adapting its programs to meet the changing needs of its members. Classes were added to the educational programs to accommodate new interests. Physical culture classes were restructured to serve the greatest number of women possible. The clubs evolved to meet changing interests, and the Association even went so far as to admit men to a club in order to maintain

the membership in the TNT club. The residence was reorganized into light-housekeeping rooms when the dormitory style rooms no longer suited the needs of young women. With all of these changes it must be noted that the purpose of the Association did not change. The restructuring of programs and facilities was undertaken in order to maintain the original purpose of the Association. In being responsive to the needs of the girls, the YWCA ensured that the girls continued to participate in Association activities. They were willing to take whatever steps were necessary to continue to attract women to the YWCA building.

The fact that the purpose of the Association did not change despite the changes society had undergone since 1910 should not be construed to mean it was not meeting the needs of the girls it was serving. A girl arriving in the city in 1910 may have needed some sheltering and assistance in adjusting to her new life away from home, but did her daughter need the same assistance when she took her place in the workforce in the 1930s? The working girl was gaining confidence in her independence by the end of the 1920s, and the novelty of single women working had passed. If it were not for the Depression of the 1930s the YWCA may have found their aims no longer coincided with the needs of the working girls. The problems of the Depression, including the employment and relief needs of women, resulted in many women still needing the benefits of participation in the YWCA

activities. Challenges to the aims and purpose of the Association had to wait until the 1940s, when economic conditions improved and women were called upon to help with the defence of the country by participating more fully in the businesses and industries of the country.

A close examination of the activities of the Saskatoon YWCA during the years 1910 to 1939 reveals the workings of a maternal feminist organization. The ideologies of maternal feminists are well documented in the histories of the woman's suffrage movement, but a study of a small and particular group reveals the methods women used to implement their ideologies. It demonstrates how women worked together, and to some extent, the tensions and problems that resulted when women of different classes came together in one organization.

A study of a local group that is part of a nation-wide organization also reveals how the policies and expectations at the national level are carried out at the local level. The history of the Canadian YWCA has been documented, but studies of local Associations are a necessity if we are to see the execution of national policies in the face of local conditions. In the case of the Saskatoon organization, the challenges of establishing the YWCA in a young, western Canadian city moulded the Association so that it had a character different from that of a sister Association in an

eastern Canadian city. More studies of this nature are required in order to compare the impact of the local conditions on the Associations.

This study also gives us some insight into urban history and western Canadian history. By examining the growth of the Saskatoon YWCA, we can see the development of the city and the role that women took in its formation. The actual steps taken to aid immigrants through the Travellers' Aid department, and assimilate them through the other programs gives us an idea of the practical methods taken by a predominantly Anglo-Saxon organization to meet the challenges of massive immigration in the West. The barriers within the Association between the British and the "foreigners" shows us the effects of nativist attitudes.

The YWCA did meet a need within the community. The women utilizing the services of the Association would not have done so if the YWCA did not suit their needs. The desire on the part of women of the city to serve the working girls would have resulted in wasted efforts if the girls themselves had not wanted to be served. The community as a whole wanted the Association to continue its work as is evidenced by the response to fund-raising campaigns. They appeared to agree that:

The YWCA is SAFEGUARDING the high standard of
INTEGRITY you demand in your girl employees,
DEVELOPING the QUALITIES you look for in your

daughters' associates, UPHOLDING the PERFECT⁹ION
you expect in the future wife of your son.

The process of building up girls physically, intellectually, and spiritually benefitted the community at large. Not only were qualities of YWCA girls beneficial to the community during the time they participated in Association activities, but they benefitted future generations as well.

Changes in Saskatoon society that were brought on by the Great War, immigration, and the Depression, did not sway the women of the YWCA from their fundamental belief that the young girls of the city needed guidance and a place they could go for assistance, club activities, or just to meet with a friend. The women of the Association believed that the traditional values of the home and church were in danger if young women lived independently without the constant guidance of their families. To combat this danger, the YWCA provided a substitute for the home. Young women were able to retain their independence while still having the security of knowing they had a place to go if they wanted a room, needed help, or were lonely and wanted companionship. During a time when women were just starting to forge their place in the labour force, the YWCA provided the support they needed to make the transition from home to the working world.

⁹ SAB, YWCA Saskatoon, A553-64 (a), Scrapbooks, 1914-1972, (a) 1915-1940, Fund-raising ad, 1929.

APPENDIX A

Occupations of the Husbands of YWCA Members in 1910

This list is derived from newspaper reports listing the women who attended YWCA executive meetings. The Saskatoon YWCA history indicates that approximately 30 women joined together to form the Association. The twenty-eight women shown as board members (indicated by a *) are part of the group of founding members. The occupations of the husbands are taken from the Henderson's Directory for 1910.

<u>Member</u>	<u>Husband's Occupation</u>
Ashworth, Mrs. John *(Pres.)	Lawyer
Bell, Mrs. J.C. *(Sec.)	Real Estate, Mighton, Bell & Turner
Cairns, Mrs. J.F.*	Businessman, Cairns Dept. Store
Calder, Mrs. L.G.*	Sherriff
Clare, Mrs. G. H.*	Real Estate
Copland, Mrs. Mary	N/A (widow of Thomas Copland, Temperance Colonization Society agent and a town councillor)
Engen, Mrs.*	Real Estate, Engen & McRae
Gordon, Mrs. E.*	Businessman, Gordon & Sparling Butchers & Livestock
Greig, Mrs. Alex R.*	Agricultural Engineer
Holmes, Mrs. J.H.*	Nurseryman
Hopkins, Mrs. Wm.*	Businessman, Hopkins Hardwood Stoves, Ranges, & Furnaces

Irvine, Mrs. R.B.*	Businessman, R.B. Irvine & Co. Lumber & Building Supplies
Kirkpatrick, Mrs. W.P.*	Bank Manager, Canadian Bank of Commerce
Koyl, Mrs. Arthur L.	Real Estate, MacDonald & Koyl
Lenon, Mrs.	General Manager, Saskatoon Forwarding & Storage Co.
MacVicar, Mrs. M.G.*	Real Estate
McCraney, Mrs. Geo. E.	Lawyer, McCraney, Mackenzie & Hutchinson
McLorg, Mrs. E.A.C.*	Judge
McNab, Mrs. A.P.*	President, Saskatchewan Milling Co. & MLA
McRae, Mrs. John A.	Real Estate, Engen & McRae
Simcox, Miss Millicent*	N/A (She was Church of England Deaconess)
Murray, Mrs. W.C. *(V.P.)	President, University of Saskatchewan
Rutherford, Mrs. A.*	Building Contractor
Sillers, Mrs. Geo.	Manager, Monarch Lumber Co.
Snell, Mrs. Eben*	Real Estate & Bookkeeper, Engen & McRae
Sparling, Mrs. Fred G.*	Doctor
St. Laurent, Mrs. Alex *	Manager, Western Commercial Co.
Straton, Mrs. James *	Lawyer
Sutherland, Mrs. W.C.*	M.L.A. & Real Estate, Sutherland Real Estate, Loans & Insurance
Weaver, Mrs. H.D.*	Physician & Surgeon
Weston, Mrs. Herbert	N/A

White, Mrs. Fred*	N/A (Mrs. White was society editor, <u>Saturday Press</u>)
Wiggins, Mrs. T.H.*	Land Surveyor & Civil Engineer
Wilson, Mrs. Russell*	Businessman, Wilson Bros. Carriages, Harnesses, & Automobiles
Wright, Mrs. G.A.*	Physician & Surgeon

* indicates a member of the Board of Executives. The executive position is given in parentheses.

APPENDIX B

YEAR	# Trains Met	# People Assisted
1912-13	976	333
1913-14	1634	
1914-15	2073	
1915-16	2068	1049
1916-17	2136	1048
1917-18	2116	1263
1918-19	2070	1366
1919-20	3295	3185
1920-21	3903	4092
1921-22	4061	4000
1922-23	3553	3568
1923-24	2439	3177
1926		2688
1927	3465	2985
1928	3489	2633
1930	3271	2164
1930-31	4308	1993
1931-32	3111	1519
1932-33	2617	1329
1936	873	672
1939	2302	1026

The figures show over two years (eg. 1912-13) are for the fiscal years, ending in May.

The figures shown for a single year (eg. 1939) are for the calendar year.

The data is from Annual Reports, and Reports to the National Council YWCA, the Local Council of Women, and the City of Saskatoon.

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