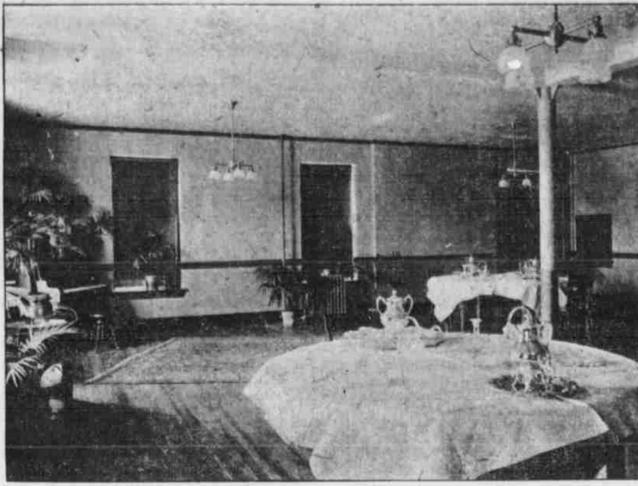


OMAHA YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION'S HOME

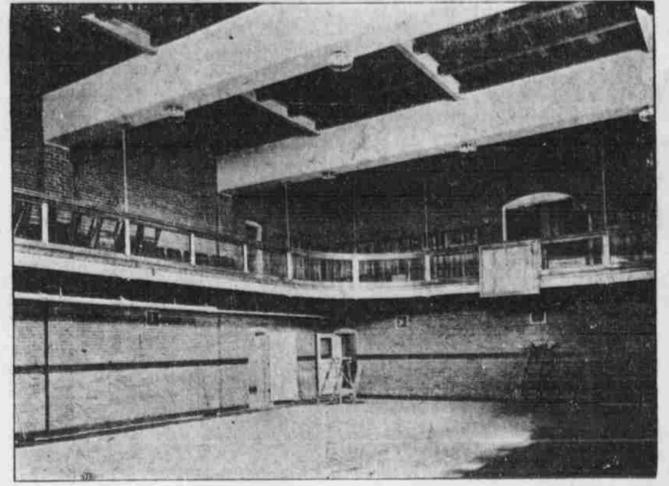
Beautiful New Building Just Dedicated to the Uses of the Association Stands As a Monument to the Faith and Energy of Some Noble Women Who Would Not Be Discouraged



IN THE READING ROOM.



CORNER OF THE DINING ROOM.



WHERE THE GYMNASIUM WILL BE.

SEVERAL years have elapsed since, talking one day with Rev. H. C. Herring, Mrs. Emma Byers asked, "Why can't we have a building in Omaha such as they have in other cities?"

"You can have a building," replied the then pastor of the First Congregational church, "if the matter is gone about seriously and in the right way."

This is not a verbatim report of that conversation, which was but one of many that had occurred from time to time between persons interested in the Young Women's Christian association, but it is typical of the first impulse that was felt toward the great need for a young women's Christian association home that should be devoted exclusively to the work comprehended in the title.

Casual conversations led to serious conferences, the conferences to plans, first hazy, then tentative, finally definite; and today the devoted women who have struggled and won behold with overflowing satisfaction a splendid dream grandly realized. Through oceans of hard work they have come to stand on the deck of success, captains of victory. And the feeling that thrills their hearts the whole day long is one of exaltation shot through with thankfulness to Providence and to the whole citizenship of Omaha. There were moments, half of pleasure, half of pain, when the ambitious project was temporarily hesitating, but a supreme faith sustained its promoters. Again it was stopped, when San Francisco lay groaning under visitation most dire; and ten months, that seemed like ten years to the pent-up enthusiasm of many sweet souls, went by before the campaign for funds was again effectively under way. But, once started anew, there was no serious pause until the hill of endeavor was topped and surcease from doubt came like a balm to anxious hearts.

"It is said woman is made up of wants, and has the happy faculty of acquiring many of them. We shall not cease to want when in our own building, yet that is our great desire now. The success of the past inspires us with the hope that with a wider knowledge of the work and returning prosperity to our city (the faint glimmer of which we catch in the distance now), by a strong pull, and a pull all together, we shall in the near future possess our own young women's building."

So wrote Nannie Clayton, recording secretary, in making her report to the board of directors of the Young Women's Christian association of Omaha for the year ending May 11, 1896. The aspiration embodied in the exhortation for a strong pull and a pull all together was the same as expressed daily and hourly by all the leaders and all the members. That aspiration has been achieved in most gratifying measure in the new building which has been formally and forever thrown open to the world the last week. It is pronounced by those who have been in about all the similar institutions on this continent unsurpassed between the coasts for its purpose; unsurpassed, too, in its homelike atmosphere and wide-openness for entertainment, rest, instruction and uplift.

It is quite safe to say that no persons in the wide universe are happier, with the happiness that grows out of holy accomplishment, than Mrs. W. P. Harford, the president; Mrs. George Tilden, chairman of the finance and building committee, and Mrs. Emma F. Byers, the efficient general secretary. Mrs. Tilden was the first president, serving for six years, and Mrs. Harford succeeded, holding to the present time. Mrs. Byers has been general secretary for about six years. She has been the active mother of the young women connected with the many lines of activity of the association during her service; but no one will quarrel with the assertion that Mrs. Tilden is the mother of all the mothers when we begin to build this tree of a happy and extensive family.

Mrs. Tilden was found one day recently in the deserted rooms of the association in the Paxton block, "redding things up." Like a good and faithful captain, she was the last to move out. The rooms were deserted and permeated with that indescribable air that rooms have when folks who have given them life and color for many years have gone away. A feeling of restful satisfaction in the new home was hers, of course; but one fancied that, sitting there among the wreck of things that were part of life through years of care and watchfulness and hope, her heart was harboring a sentiment of tender regret.

"When we opened to serve lunch, years ago," she said, "we had one girl as guest the first day. That was when we were in two rooms in the McCague building, and had an outside store room for a gymnasium. Then we went to the Bee building, about nine months after starting. We first had what is now the office of the editor-in-chief, then added one or two more rooms, and finally occupied all the space that is now given up to The Bee editorial force, and had the use of the rotunda when we desired. We came to this location in the early autumn of 1897, first taking possession of what had been the old public library room, at \$50 a month. We put the present partitions in, and after a while we secured the adjoining rooms to the east, which had been used for lodge purposes, and which, on account of many walls and small hallways, have never been very satisfactory. We were finally paying \$200 a month for this location.

"At the rooms in the Bee building we did not at first serve lunches, but provided tea, coffee and cocoa for those girls who brought their own lunches. Later we began to serve a light lunch and finally were serving a full variety of everything that usually appears on a modest menu."

While in the reminiscent vein Mrs. Tilden continued: "This time sixteen years ago we were just planning to organize the association, with fair hopes of success; but at that time no one could project their vision far

enough into the future to picture as our very own the building just opened."

April 24, 1893, was the date on which the Omaha Young Women's Christian association was organized, with fifty-four active and thirty-three associate members. Two rooms in the McCague building were the first home of the young association, and were soon outgrown. Then came the removal to the Bee building, mentioned by Mrs. Tilden. Growth was always steady, sometimes rapid, and the membership never fell off. In the early days, as now, the association was fortunate in its active officers, but could not keep them all. The report for 1895-'96 says: "Miss Taylor, our first general secretary, has gone the way of many—married, and the happy possessor of a home of her own in another state."

Miss Dora Cady (now Mrs. F. E. A. Smith of Portland, Ore.)

a very large part of the best service rendered is voluntary.

Something like a year ago, when the association was serving an average of 600 women and girls every noon, the average cost of the meals was about 9 cents. At the present time that is considered a fair figure, because while more are being served the cost of meats and other foodstuffs has gone up. The figure given will serve to indicate the very great benefit that this institution must be to women workers of small income, for all the food they get at the Young Women's Christian association counters is clean, wholesome, carefully selected, handled and prepared. Saving the pennies is a serious business with many a brave-hearted woman or girl who is plodding along, with small income and big hopes or heavier responsibilities than she ever lets the world know of. Patrons can bring their lunches to the rooms and buy coffee, milk, tea or cocoa, and the only

inspiration in itself. In congenial surroundings, with "pally" friends all about, the most convenient and comfortable arrangements on every hand, the hundreds of diners make up just one large family—and conversation is unconfined, naturally, because it is the best sauce.

We will pass up all discussion of cost of buildings and furnishings and dig out something of the real value embodied in this home of intelligent philanthropy and shrine of Christian progress.

Let us go to the rest room, where are inviting cots to accommodate thirty-five or forty tired ones. For members? Yes, but also for visitors, for callers, anyone who cares to accept the invitation to come and relax for a spell. This rest room is used to great advantage, all the time, and many a business woman, and many a more humble worker, leaves here a murmured blessing on the thoughtfulness of the plan that made it possible. The room has screens that may be moved about and placed where needed, and while retired in location, it is still most convenient of access. During the hours from 12 to 2 this Young Women's Christian association rest room is a very popular place, albeit a very quiet one.

Then there is a club room, which is in almost constant use. Here the Business Women's club meets about twice a month, but in the intervals many and many an involuntary club gets together. It is the custom to have interchanges of opinion, off-hand, which help very materially. The aforesaid Business Women's club has developed a field of usefulness that is quite ambitious in scope. Originally started with the idea of bringing under the influence of the association girls that were not being brought actively into the current of association life, it has gone to that point where lectures have become a fixture—not set and severe lectures, but practical discussions of things worth while by women who know. If a pat colloquialism may be permitted, the inexperienced are here "wised up" to many of the quirks of active living in a hustling, work-a-day city. How to go about securing work the best way is learned from those who have tried the trick from all angles; and how to hold a position and win the fullest rights an honest worker is entitled to; what to avoid, and what to seek; in short, how to live in largest measure; how to do something and be somebody. It was the Business Women's club that told Mrs. Byers to furnish her personal office as she thought it ought to be, and they would pay the cost; just as the very-much-alive Bible class, numbering seventy-five, furnished the covenant room, that stands alone of its kind for equipment and promise of good fruit among the similar associations of the whole country.

In the club room the board of directors, consisting of twenty-one women, meets once a month, for a whole day—and that day is a real one, so far as work is concerned. Nothing is slighted, and details are entered into deeply and intimately, as only women can.

In all the educational classes, counting the physical educational features embodied in the gymnasium, there are about 450 students. Education in the arts and crafts is the heavy end of the teaching department, with dressmaking and millinery classes, musical classes coming, and the domestic science group of students. A model kitchen has been installed, with Miss Clara E. Burgoyne as director and teacher, which has been pronounced more complete and better in plan than even the Detroit association kitchen. Miss Mary R. Wallace, who installed the Detroit kitchen, has said so, and was generously enthusiastic in her praise of the local plant. Here instruction will be given to a business women's dinner class, a beginners' cookery class, a maids' class in cooking and serving and a fancy cookery class. All these classes in domestic science will eat at the tables in the model kitchen the food they have prepared, and each student is to have her own table outfit for personal use. The dressing and adornment of a hold-the-man-at-home dining room is taught by practical example as well as by spoken precept; and it is a distinct delight to be allowed a peep into Miss Burgoyne's kingdom and have her tell what is proposed and hoped for.

Besides dressmaking proper, those ambitious to know are taught how to make shirtwaists, underwear and all sorts of knickknacks and useful things, including embroidery and dolls' dressmaking.

Those fortunate enough to be able to take vacations every year are called together at stated times, about this season, to tell where they have been, what can be seen, to go over itineraries, cost of same, tell what is necessary for traveling or camping; to put forth enlightening details for the benefit of all contemplating an outing, close by or far away from Omaha.

A library with 1,200 volumes to start on is provided, with an inviting balcony adjoining, for outdoor reading. In the library there is also a reference department, which will be kept entirely separate from the fiction end, and from which books may be taken at any time by patrons or friends of the association.

Study rooms here and there are a thoughtful provision, to be used not only in connection with the works of the regular classes, but also by others. Some of the best teaching talent in Omaha is at the disposal of the association and the enrolled students. Who better to teach literature and illuminate all its pleasurable phases than Miss McHugh of the High school? In the literature classes are fifty pupils, and the ground is covered very thoroughly. Mrs. Josephine Carroll is a prized woman among the groups of girls who are not over long and speak foreign languages. She has achieved a flattering and a satisfying success in teaching fifty or more girls who are attending her classes to read and write English, and they return time after time to renewed study with an avidity that betokens their earnestness.

A dozen or more individual bath tubs are provided, likewise shower baths, and a plunge that will invite the most timid to be refreshed.

Aside from a large assembly room, (Continued on Page Two.)



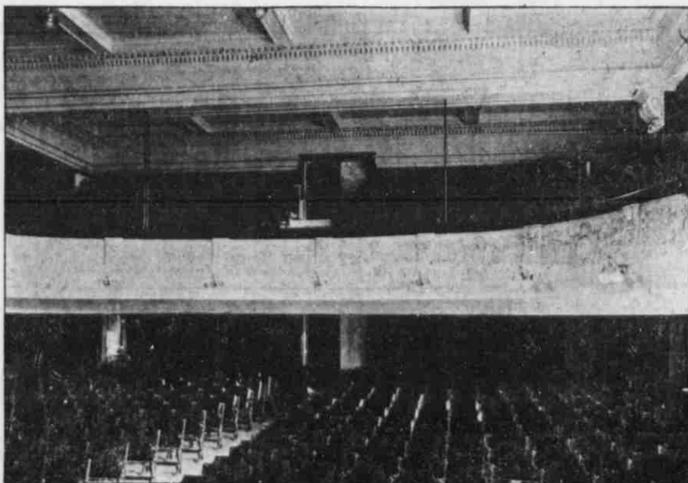
NEW BUILDING OF THE OMAHA YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION, LATELY DEDICATED.

succeeded Miss Taylor in September, 1895, and Mrs. Tilden gives her credit for most effective work. The year ending May, 1896, was closed with a membership of 605, a gain of 138 over the preceding year. At this time from 75 to 125 girls were taking advantage of the facilities of the association rooms every noon, the daily average being ninety-three, and the noonday rest was established as a feature. It is a strong card today, too, with members and visitors.

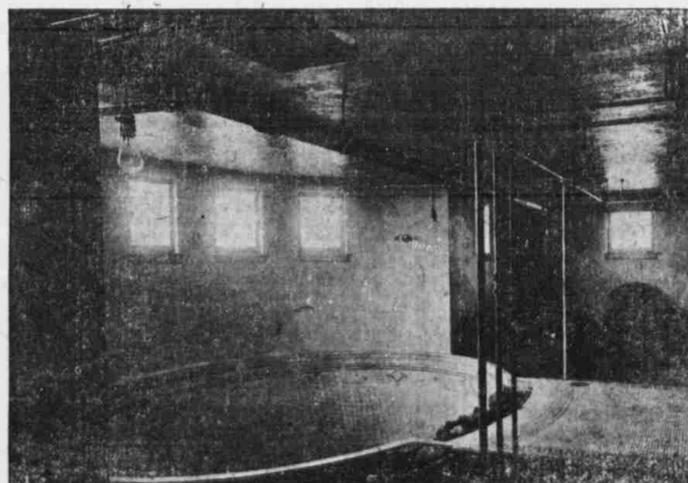
About 1895 the association first began to have any paid workers, and then only a general secretary, whose stipend would never make any one rich. All other work was voluntary and even today

prerequisite for using the rooms is to have one penny punched on their cards.

It will be necessary for the person desiring to get a real understanding of the practical usefulness and blessing of the association work every day in the year to personally visit the building, if possible at the noon hour. Throngs of workers flock in from every corner of the downtown district where labor is performed. Each one bears an assurance of welcome and of confidence, has an air of homecoming and enters into possession and enjoyment of all within with avidity. Such a picture as the noonday gathering makes is an in-



AUDITORIUM OF THE Y. W. C. A., LOOKING FROM THE STAGE.



THE SWIMMING POOL.