

New Light on Marietta Johnson (1864-1938)

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Abstract

In 1885, Marietta (*née* Pierce) Johnson graduated from Third State Normal School at Saint Cloud, Minnesota. She built up professionalism in primary teaching in the Midwestern state of Minnesota (1885-1890) and in tertiary teaching of prospecting teachers at Normal Schools in diverse Midwestern states (1890-1900 and 1901-1902). In 1907, she founded the School of Organic Education at Fairhope in the Southern state of Alabama, and remained the school's principal until her death. Additionally she amassed an impressive curriculum vita as a school principal lecturing throughout the country — especially in the Eastern states. She became an accomplished recruiter of students and progressive teachers. She was a capable speaker, able to explain a novel educational approach in terms of a drawn out emotional, personal, and professional struggle. In 1919 Johnson co-founded the Progressive Education Association (PEA) with four fellow progressive educators. Virtually unknown, however, is the fact that two years earlier she joined the Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE) in New York City, and worked at Public Schools 64 and 95 during the 1917-1918 season, salaried by the BEE. This article will shed new light on Marietta Johnson and her meandering educational career with high ups and low downs.

Keywords: History of Education, Marietta Johnson (1864-1938), Organic Education, the School of Organic Education, Bureau of Educational Experiments, Progressive Education Association

Introduction

We have scant knowledge of Marietta Johnson's childhood and early adulthood. We know Marietta (Mattie) Louise Pierce and a twin sister were born in October 1864 in Mendota near St. Paul, Minnesota, daughters of deeply religious Clarence De Sackett Pierce from New York State and Rhoda Mathilda (*née* Morton) Pierce, born in Illinois. Marietta was one of eight children.

Her siblings were her older brother Freemont, older sister Florence, older brother Lowell, twin sister Harriet (Hattie), and her younger brothers Everett, Clifford and Ernest. They grew up in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s' closely-knit and pious family that lived in a safe, protected farm home on the edge of the American frontier. But we do not know much about them. (*1)

Marietta's parents were devout members of the Christian Church. Also known as Disciples of Christ, the Christian Church was part and parcel of the Second Great Awakening, a religious reform movement known for a theology that granted instantaneous bestowal of grace during conversions at revival meetings. As well, Second Great Awakening preachers were leaders in social reform movements for abolition of slavery, quality universal education, temperance, women's education, and women's rights (McAllister & Tucker, 1975). Clarence and Rhoda Pierce were among the founders of the First Christian Church of St. Paul. Clarence became one of its Deacons and its trustees (*Saint Paul Daily Globe*, 1884, 1887, 1889).

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Rhoda was a teacher, who directed a one-room school in their home. She was President of the local Ladies' Missionary Society, and worked for the Lady Somerset W.C.T.U., the local chapter of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (*Saint Paul Daily Globe*, 1884; *Saint Paul Globe*, 1896a).

After primary schooling led by her mother in their home, Marietta attended Humboldt School, a St. Paul public school. She graduated with honours in 1881 (*Saint Paul Daily Globe*, 1881). Her mother must have inspired her. In her autobiography, *Thirty Years With An Idea* (Johnson, 1974), she wrote that when she was about ten years of age she "began dreaming of the time when [she] should be a teacher." On every possible occasion she would announce: "I am going to be a teacher when I grow up" (p. 1). During the 1880s, teaching was one of few professions accessible to women, especially to young single women. Since Marietta attended Third State Normal School at Saint Cloud, Minnesota, only established in 1869, she had opportunity, even at the beginning of her teaching career, to earn professional credentials superior to any that her mother's generation of female teachers could acquire. She graduated in 1885. For five years she taught at Minnesota rural and village elementary schools. Next, she began training prospective teachers, first as a *model teacher* at St. Paul State Normal (1890-1892), next at the Moorhead State Normal (1892-1896) as a *training teacher* supervising student teachers' practice teaching (*Saint Paul Daily Globe*, 1894).

In 1896, she transferred to Mankato State Normal, accepting a position as principal of the Primary Practice School, the next step in her career (*Saint Paul Globe*, 1896b; 1897, 1899c). During this period of her life she was a virtuous, religious woman, devoutly working as a professional teacher of teachers — and was a worthy representative of her profession. Obituaries of President Searing of the Mankato Normal School in the school newspaper, *The Mankatonian*, co-authored by Marietta and five colleagues (Koehler, Cox, Robbins, Darling, Earhart, & Johnson, 1898), and in *School Education*, by Marietta (Johnson, 1898), illustrate thoughtful religious fervour mixed with growing social awareness and self-confidence. Her ambition overtly showed as the *Public-School Journal* (1896) reported that she, at the age of 30, was one of three members of a committee to organize a state society for child-study in mid-1895. In 1898 and 1899, she became Secretary of the Southern Minnesota Teachers' Association.

1897-1906: Ten Years of Searching for a Sense of Purpose

Later in her life, Marietta would state in her autobiography (Johnson, 1974) that before 1900 she felt thrilled to teach. She fully accepted the prevailing educational system of grading, student rewards, dismissing the real needs of students, and pleasing ambitious parents instead of students. "To my mind," she wrote, "the child was being educated if he was acquiring knowledge and skill and learning to behave well — and the teacher an educator if he had the ability to impart the knowledge, to direct and control, and to insist upon 'attainment and achievement'" (p. 6). But she then recalls that one day during her work at Mankato Normal, her superintendent thrust a book — *The Development of the Child* (Oppenheim, 1898) — into her hand, saying: "Unless education takes this direction, there is no incentive for a young man to enter the profession" (*ibid.*). Reading the book came as a great shock to her, made her feel "a child destroyer," impelling re-examination of sense of life, purpose and career. She began seriously assessing her own teaching past as well as the prevailing instruction methods she taught her students. She confessed, "I discovered that nearly everything I had been doing with such pride and success in the primary department was a violation of the order of the development of the nervous system. I realized that my enthusiasm was destructive, and the more efficient I was, the more I injured the pupils!" (p. 8). In fundraising speeches and articles presented over the course of her career, she repeatedly referred to her reading of Oppenheim's book as a *conversion experience*, one that fully awakened her to experimental education. (*2)

She learned that the most important work of children was to grow and that teachers must be able to recognize the signs of growth in them. As a consequence she did not develop novel teaching methods, but rather a completely new point of view: "Instead of being taught facts, children should be helped to understand their experiences" (p. 10). She repudiated her earlier pedagogical stance.

As a teacher who could no longer unequivocally insist upon “attainment and achievement,” imparting knowledge directly, viewing children as mere passive receptacles, and controlling them by stern discipline, she began reading whatever she could find about child development. This included George Patrick’s (1899) *Should Children Under Ten Learn To Read And Write?* The argument of Patrick struck her as of extreme importance, especially his stance (p. 385) that:

Our increasing knowledge of the child’s mind, his muscular and nervous system, and his special senses, points indubitably to the conclusion that reading and writing are subjects which do not belong to the early years of school life, but to a later period, and that other subjects now studied later are better adapted to this early stage of development. What is thus indicated of reading and writing may be affirmed also of drawing and arithmetic.

During the rest of her career, to buttress her position that children should not begin to read and write in school under the age of ten, she would refer to Patrick’s mix of learning psychology and brain development physiology.

In the light of Johnson’s account of her 1898-1899 conversion experience, it is telling that she already began sharing her changing educational perspective prior to the turn of the twentieth century. The *Saint Paul Globe* (1899a) drew attention to her presentation during a conference held in St. Paul, reporting that “In discussing drawing Mrs. Johnson thought it a mistake to place an object before the child and have him draw it as it is rather than as he sees it. It had an injurious effect on the nervous system, compelling the child to do that which was unnatural to him.” It is apparent that she had begun to integrate an understanding of Oppenheim and Patrick into new pedagogic vision. The position, *in statu nascendi*, would certainly have alienated her from her colleagues at Mankato Normal. Johnson (1974) wrote that after the initial shocks she had experienced she went back to her superintendent, saying, “The scales are off. If ever I have a child of my own, whose education I can control, he will not be put at books until he is at least ten years of age” (p. 10).

On June 6, 1897, Marietta Pierce had married John Franklin Johnson (1860-1919), a carpenter and cabinetmaker from St. Paul. The first ten years of their marriage, they moved often — from one state to another, and back, only to move on to yet another state. Nowhere did they manage to become part of a community; nowhere was the couple able to really establish a home — until in 1907, when they finally settled in Fairhope, Alabama.

Marietta and Frank did not become parents until the new century began. In 1900, the couple moved to a cattle ranch in western North Dakota (Cooper, 1900; *School Education*, 1900), where in April 1901 Marietta gave birth to Clifford Ernest, their first son. Later that year, the family moved to St. Paul, where Marietta resumed teaching at St. Paul State Normal School. She continued to genuinely struggle to find new direction. It must have been agonizing, the more so since she doubtless was the only teacher at St. Paul Normal advocating new pedagogical ideals and didactic methods. Surely she felt out-of-place. Before she felt at the centre of knowledge where “The Curriculum was sacred,” and where “To be an honest teacher meant to insist upon every child meeting the requirements or being considered a failure! No favoritism was ever allowed” (Johnson, 1974, p. 3).

In 1902, she read a third text that would influence her new pedagogical vision, Charles Henderson’s (1902) *Education and the Larger Life*. His thesis reinforced Johnson’s new direction. While she found that Henderson fully agreed with Oppenheim and Patrick, he proposed a practical means to implement program. By Organic Education, Henderson meant paying attention to sense development, good health, and expansion of “personal control” (p. 128). He especially advocated implementing Organic Education in kindergartens and manual training schools, since the latter must show “profound belief in the unity of man” (p. 147). Henderson would eventually inspire Marietta Johnson to found a school based on those principles.

Less than a year after the move to St. Paul, by the end of 1902, the Johnsons moved again, this time to Fairhope, Alabama, a small village on the Gulf Coast. Fairhope, a utopian community inspired by the ideas of self-educated political economist Henry George, was founded in November 1894.

George (1879) believed that the capitalist economic system had proved unsuccessful in decreasing poverty, which led to despair and desolation among millions of Americans.

As remedy, he proposed land be held as common property, introducing the concept of “cooperative individualism” that would be practically implemented by a *land value tax*. Rather than taxing the output of labour and capital, he proposed a *single tax on land* to meet costs of running government and community. (*3) The economic theory has fallen out of favor, but in its heyday had thousands of devoted followers, going by the eponymous *Georgist*. Georgism became a capitalist reform movement competitor to Marxism.

In January 1903, Marietta Johnson began teaching at the Fairhope public elementary school. She introduced gardening and handicraft training to the curriculum and “invited adults to school to make music and tell stories” to convey the importance of arts education (Newman, 1999, p. 71). She also directed older students in performing a play, and took her students sailing on a catamaran built by her husband. On New Year’s Day, 1904, at the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Fairhope colony founding, she gave an address summarizing what she had accomplished during her first year at the public school. Her message was that “new education” is fully compatible with the colony’s Georgist views (Gaston, 1984, p. 73).

The day, however, turned out to be not only a day of celebration. An article in the *Fairhope Courier* announced that Frank Johnson, and in due time his family, would leave for Barnett, Mississippi. During the winter of 1904, her husband Frank already living on a pecan farm in Barnett, Marietta frequently had lunch with two friends who had been in Fairhope since 1902: Lydia (*nee* Newcomb) Comings, a former teacher of physical culture, and her husband Samuel Comings. They carried on in mutually inspiring midday meal conversations about Froebel, manual training, out-of-doors schooling and other new education topics (Gaston, 1984). Especially so, since Samuel Comings’s *Pagan vs. Christian Civilization*, an essay on experimental industrial and vocational education would be published in 1904.

In April 1904, Marietta and her son Clifford joined Frank in Barnett, where they would reside until 1907. Franklin Pierce, Marietta and Frank’s second son, was born in April 1905. In spite of this happy occasion, life was difficult. In 1905 their home burned; they had to rebuild the farmhouse. Happily for Marietta, ties with Fairhope survived through regularly reading the *Fairhope Courier*, through visits, and correspondence with friends. That is how she learned of the publication of Samuel Comings’s (1904) essay. (*4)

1906-1907: Planning and Founding a School of Organic Education

Invited by Lydia and Samuel Comings, during the summer of 1906, Marietta capably conducted a demonstration kindergarten in Fairhope. It was a test, scrutinizing the practicality of her newly formed ideas and ideals, which she now dubbed *Organic Training*, and *Organic Education*. She envisaged employing Froebel kindergarten teaching methods through the entire primary school curriculum, much as Samuel Comings (1904) had.

Clearly she had overcome her agony and worries. She was ready to take new edifying steps, having sworn off her former, pre-1898 teaching “attainment and achievement” life. She did not need to feel appalled anymore at what she had been doing, measuring the work of her students by adult standards. Her recent general conclusion was, “If the child is wholesomely, happily, intelligently employed, he *is* being educated!” (Johnson, 1974, p. 9).

We may ask whether she had sworn off her former religious ideals as well. The conversion experience that had hit her so suddenly and intensely lasted for a protracted period. In an open 1907 letter to Ernest Gaston, founding father of the Fairhope colony, published in the *Fairhope Courier*, Marietta Johnson accused churches of failing to condemn the “unjust and un-Christian system” by which people lived, finding that Fairhope colonists did “a greater Christian work than that of any other organization of which I know” (in Gaston, 1984, p. 76). She fused Georgist cooperative individualism, Christian Socialism, and educational reform, thus supplanting Christian commitment with secular Georgist and educational ideals.

Her letter to Gaston discloses that she longed to return to Fairhope and that she was “more interested than ever before in the reforms for which Fairhope exists” (*ibid.*). She would be “more than happy to be able to spend the rest of [her] life in helping ever so little in so great a cause” (*ibid.*).

The fall of 1907: Triumph and Tragedy

Lydia Comings wrote to ask the Johnsons to return to Fairhope and open a kindergarten, offering \$25 a month for everyday expenditures. The Johnson family moved back in the summer of 1907. Marietta resolved to establish a coeducational school in Fairhope. She wholly settled in Fairhope — her home.

The ten years of searching for a sense of purpose were over. The school opened in November 1907. (*5) Given that her reading of his 1902 book had so inspired her, it is fitting that she recruited Henderson himself to give an address at the school's opening in Fairhope.

At the start, Johnson's new school was comprised of only eight students: her two children plus six “little villagers whose parents allowed them to be played upon” (Rawson, 1920). Soon after the school's opening, in December 1907, Franklin, Johnson's second child, died from a fall. The tragedy silenced her in a profound way. She never spoke about Franklin's death, neither in public, nor in private conversations. Her silence expressed her pain. Then on Christmas Eve of 1907, Johnson's good friend Samuel Comings died of a stroke. A woman raised in a religious family and only a generation removed from the American frontier would turn to her faith to survive such ordeals. (*6) In examining the course of her life following these catastrophic events, it seems that she solemnly pledged an oath to secure financial support for her school — and to make it a success honouring her youngest child.

1908-1909: First Mission: Preaching to the Choir

During the first five years, the school attracted little notice. Marietta Johnson was busy finally settling in Fairhope, introducing Organic Education, closely following Henderson in matters like, for instance, not specifying single-year grade groups. (*7) Instead the four and five-year-olds formed the kindergarten class; the children six to thirteen years of age formed the *life class*. From 1911 onwards, six and seven-year-olds formed the *first life class*, eight and nine-year-olds the *second life class*, and so forth until *fourth life class*.

Johnson proved an able recruiter and professional school director. The second year the number of pupils enrolled increased to more than fifty. There were approximately ninety school-age children in the colony. The school had to move to larger quarters a number of times. Fairhoppers did not have to pay tuition. Friends of Johnson, including Lydia Comings, provided the initial financial support to run the school. As of February 1908, the Colony Council appropriated an additional amount of \$25 per month (Newman, 2002). No one seemed to suggest that Georgist single tax policies should generate an adequate source of funds to fully support the kind of quality education the utopian colonists wanted for their children's future.

Instead, when soap magnate, Georgist social reformer and philanthropist Joseph Fels visited the school near the anniversary celebrations of the Fairhope colony on New Year's Day, 1909, he initially donated \$5,000. These funds enabled the school to survive and incorporate — as well as move to a ten-acre site provided by the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation (Johnson, 1974). Over the next five years Fels would donate another \$1,000 a year. Johnson now had sufficient funds to support the school's experimental program, to recruit talented teachers and to construct additional school buildings, including a dormitory for board-paying students.

Early Fairhope school reports show that between 1908 and 1910, the first two full years of the school's existence, both Lydia Comings and Marietta Johnson began touring the country giving presentations at meetings of like-minded political peers. Comings and Johnson had become Fairhope missionaries spreading the single tax gospel, promoting Georgist values with eulogizing stories about Johnson's school. The Utopia of 470 colonists was in need of additional colonists. Their message apparently helped their cause.

The population grew from ± 500 people in 1910 to ± 800 by 1920. Almost one year after the founding of Johnson's school, Lydia Comings began spreading the word at the Annual Meeting of the Maine Federation, held in Portland, Oregon, October 20-22, 1908. "Organic Training" (Comings, 1909b), the text of her paper, explains that Johnson's teaching is "advanced kindergarten work." It is the training of the sense organs through "self-directed activities, freedom in the school-room and without," and allowing the "brain to develop without forcing and without stunting."

In November 1908 Comings also lectured in Buffalo, New York (*Buffalo Courier*, 1908), and in Pensacola, Florida (*Pensacola Journal*, 1908a-b). The texts of her papers are missing. "Organic Education," an October 1909 article by Comings (1909a) — most probably the text of a paper that she presented in Utica, New York, on January 7, 1909 — shows that she had widened her original concept of *Organic Training* into *Organic Education*, illustrating Organic Education as dealing "with the present." (*8)

The earliest newspaper story indicating Marietta Johnson's success as Georgist missionary appears in an article in the April 1909 Syracuse, New York, *Post-Standard*, written by Mary Prang (1909), spouse of the renowned art publisher Louis Prang. She praised a Johnson lecture for promoting Fairhope and "cooperative individualism," the colony's catchphrase, and stated that Organic Education "aims for the sound, accomplished, beautiful body — the intelligent, creative mind — the sympathetic, reverent spirit."

Next, in the May 1909 *Federation Bulletin*, the Fairhope School for Organic Training advertized "Natural Methods, Brain development through training of the Sense Organs. Kindergarten,... Manual Training, School Garden, Out-door Gymnasium," topics that would return time and again in newspaper and magazine reports. It suggests Johnson unreservedly fixed for years to come to the initially adopted curriculum. Later that year, the school's prospectus, *Comings Memorial College of Organic Education*, stressed the same topics. According to *The Public* (1909), they offered "an interesting plan for stimulating the development of childhood through self-prompted creative ability." (*9)

Lastly in 1909, Johnson's "Education" appeared in *The Public*, the first in a series of three articles published between 1909 and 1911 that outline the genesis of a "New Education," alternatively "Natural Education." These articles, conveying a strong impression of educational sermons, are the earliest Johnson wrote subsequent to her self-proclaimed conversion experience and the founding of a school signifying her new vision. She clearly identified herself as a Georgist social reformer, committed to altering primary and secondary education in order to change human relations and living conditions for the better. In this sense, she was a social reconstructionist *avant la lettre* (Kliebard, 1995).

Johnson (1909) described a gloomy socio-political world, a Dantesque hell and damnation where no salvation is to be found — excepting, perhaps, in education reform. She peppered quasi-religious rendering with rhetorical clichés. She wrote, "There are many earnest teachers who see a new day dawning for education. They see a time when there shall be no more driving of children to their tasks even by so apparently harmless incentives as 'grades,' 'marks' or 'promotions.' A time when the work of the school shall really be the joyous self-expression of the child" (p. 1143).

Johnson predicted, "A time will come" when schools will be conscious of their child welfare duty to children; "when education will be considered a process of life — the end attainable in the present, not simply a preparation for some future time" (*ibid.*). However, she warned, "Until the earth is in possession of the entire race on equal terms, no dream of symmetrical growth or natural development can ever be realized" (*ibid.*). Her gloomy analysis indeed, at the time extremely acerbically, overwhelmed her educational dream. She believed that "Equality of opportunity must be an accomplished fact, ere education may in truth become the development of life to higher life" (*ibid.*). She added that educators needed to realize that the prevailing "economic injustice [was] the 'root of the hydra'" and they needed to study "the fundamental principles of economics quite as diligently as the fundamental principles of education" (p. 1144). (*10)

It seems Lydia Comings and Marietta Johnson's mission to advocate the School of Organic Education, promoting a Georgist Utopia, was understood by them as an achievement. Both women would board trains again in 1910 to spread the word.

1910-1911: Second Mission: Fairhoppers Advocating the Educational Experiment

Clearly Marietta Johnson had widened her horizon, enlarging the mission's circumference by advocating her experiment in education beyond the Alabama borders as well as gaining experience addressing large audiences. Still, other than adding lecturing practice to her educating and school directing experiences the prime mission remained promoting the educational facet of her concoction of Georgist faith and Organic Education.

Lydia Comings gave sisterly support, launching the 1910 missionary term by delivering two presentations at the Biennial Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, May 11-18, 1910. Her first lecture presented Organic Training as the "natural training of the complete child-body, sense and brain, as opposed to the artificial training of the brain only" (Lake, 1910, p. 127). "A New Theory in Education," her second lecture, illustrated the school's curriculum. According to a reporter, "[Comings] told of a unique school in Alabama where children are in kindergartens; and then in out-door schools until 10 years of age. There are no books for these children.

They are taught orally and from nature studies; and they have tennis courts, baseball, gardening and manual training. After 10 or 11 years of age they enter upon organized educational work" (Stevens, 1910, p. 482).

In June, it was Marietta Johnson's turn to preach. *The Public* (1910) announced that she would address the Chicago Single Tax Club on "Organic Education" on June 17, and published "Moral Education," the second article by Johnson (1910a) in a series of three. To the Moral Education League of London — which urged formal moral and civic instruction, aiming at character formation in education — Johnson argued that since children learn from experience, and children who are always controlled do not develop self-control, "occupations instead of lessons" should be the main work of schools (p. 568). Parents and teachers should not force their interest on children. Instead children should be permitted freedom and self-prompted activities. She found that "only by developing abiding interests may we hope to cultivate high moral ideals" (*ibid.*). However, unjust laws, such as laws that tax industry and put "premiums on idleness and cunning," according to Johnson, "cannot give the youth the right idea of social justice and civic purity" (p. 569).

Interestingly, Comings and Johnson were *not* the only Fairhope colonists to advocate Johnson's educational experiment outside Alabama borders. Single-taxers felt they should endorse the experiment, believing the school educated children to become assiduous Georgists. "Children's Paradise," a *Boston Daily Globe* article by Fairhopper Alice Herring (1910), glowingly described the school as the "most interesting educational experiment in America." It is a "school without marks, examinations, or promotions...with few books and with no 'lessons' in the ordinary sense of the word...in which the work is made to fit the child, not the child to fit the school." It is a school "in which the utmost freedom of choice and self-prompted activity are allowed." Herring explained "that unless the work of the school makes the child happier and stronger and sweeter in every way" it was not educational. The school's aim was to help children develop a "sound, accomplished, beautiful body, an intelligent, sympathetic mind, an understanding spirit." The "social spirit...emphasized all through the school work, [gives] the children the experience of cooperative, helpful effort."

The school was not organized by grades, age, or subject matter. Instead there were three so-called *departments*.

While school work in the school's *first department*, the kindergarten, was comparable to nearly all kindergartens, according to Herring, More emphasis [is] placed on the health and happiness of the doer than on the beauty or excellence of the thing done. Much time is spent outdoors, no fine, close work is permitted and no work done for "exhibits."

Dictation work, domination of the teacher and work of "selected children" are discouraged. Much liberty is allowed for self-prompted occupations, and care is used to prevent over-stimulation of the children.

Self-prompted schoolwork in the school's *second department*, the *life-class*, continued as far as possible in age. No books were used in the younger group. Music was taught by singing. Literature and history were taught by story telling. Considerable time was devoted to artwork. The outdoor gymnasium was much enjoyed by the students, and "Every child has a garden plot in which he may plant what he chooses and which he cares for in his own way." Educational circumstances differed for older life-class students. In mid-1910 they had not yet divided life classes by age; nevertheless, Herring asserted, the older pupils increasingly turned to "books for further explanation of their experiences" and took an interest in numbers, reading and writing as well as in artwork and *Sloyd* (manual training, woodwork). She further claimed that both life-class groups learned poems by hearing them recited by their teacher, with time taken for dramatization. Students would learn English and German grammar usage by conversational (immersion) methods. Herring highlighted an exceptionally motivating feature of Johnson's school: Students went on daily trips into nature for both life-class groups — observing birds, their nests, native animals, trees and vegetation, growth of crops, geological stratification discernible in gullies around Fairhope, *etc.* She dubbed these daily rural Fairhope school field trips "the daily walk."

The first two years of the school's *third department*, grammar school offered pupils "earnest work...in arithmetic, history, geography, *etc.*," but no grades, marks, or promotions. They assured parents that "after two years of formal, serious, earnest work, the child is old and mature enough to take up the work at the high school." Throughout the final two-year high school, sizeable liberty of choice was still allowed. "Excellence of work is not determined by examination but by interest and power shown, from day to day. The teacher is more concerned with the development of the pupil than with the development of the subject."

Herring's exceptionally detailed account permits retrospective insight into the contemporaneous life in Johnson's school. And she mentions yet another special feature: teachers training. Prospective teachers were expected to study the students' development while giving attention to their needs at various stages of their growth. Herring concludes her article with a Deweyan slogan, "School must be life, not simply a preparation for life."

Finally, in 1910, Johnson made a short stay in Minnesota in July 1910. The *Twice-A-Week Spokesman-Review* (1910), located in far away Spokane, Washington reported that Johnson delivered an address at the Conference on Agricultural Education, at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, July 29-30, 1910. There, she stated that Fairhope was the "only town in the United States run on a single tax plan and that the system was working out nicely there." She said that in spite of the Alabama law requiring the teaching of agriculture in its schools, Alabama teachers "were not provided with any facilities for giving [agricultural] instruction except text books and consequently neither they nor their students had an opportunity to study growing crops." (*11) In a *University Missourian* (1910) interview with Johnson, she praised the one-tax village, boasting that her school was "a revolution from the standpoint of education." During this 1910 lecture tour, she championed Fairhope's Georgist ideals as much as she did her school.

The January 1911 *Good Housekeeping* magazine (with a nationwide circulation of ± 300,000 copies) printed "A Utopian Colony," a letter to the editor by another Fairhoper promoting the colony and its exceptional school. Its author described settling in Fairhope, where "a man and wife having a fixed income of fifty dollars per month can get the most out of their money in comfort and happiness" (Pope, 1911). She wrote that the climate allowed for three crops a year, that boating, bathing and fishing were the best, that Fairhope had its own system of land tenure, "which enables a man to own his own home," that Fairhope had the only free library in the state of Alabama, and that the School of Organic Education, "which is free to all children living on colony land, is attracting the attention of educators and drawing pupils from all over the country. Teachers trained in its normal courses are in demand." Indeed, it was free advertising.

Edwin Potter (1911), not from Fairhope, but from the Arden, Delaware, Georgist colony, reported in the *Syracuse Herald* that Johnson had conducted an extremely successful model class during the 1911 University of Pennsylvania Summer School.

During six weeks the students, “a lot of backward and wayward misfits of the primary grades on whom the ordinary schools had failed utterly to make any satisfactory impression,” had the right to move about, talk while working, and gain a valuable learning experience in which the school did not repress their interests. Potter noted that Johnson was planning to illustrate her principles in model schools, first in his hometown Arden, and later in the larger Eastern cities. This is remarkable because Arden too housed a single tax colony, its citizens following Georgist political and economic ideas. It seems that Johnson may have been planning to *first* spread her educational experiment among like-minded peers before branching out to other educators.

Finally in 1911, “Organic Education,” an article concluding a series of three by Johnson in *The Public*, drew an analogy between educating children, the work of physicians and growing crops. Johnson (1911) found prevailing schoolwork *uneducational* since it did not “study the needs of the child as evidenced by the symptoms” (p. 1289). Hence, children grow nervous, near-sighted, round-shouldered, and fail. Johnson preached that the prudent “student of nature” (*ibid.*) works in harmony with symptoms of health and disease of growing plants, analogous to the work of doctors with patients. Johnson further held that educational institutions should not ask, “What do you know?” “What have you done?” “Where are your credentials?” but should ask, “What do you need?” and “How may we serve you?” (p. 1289). (*12) Note that these 1911 phrases return time and again in later newspaper and magazine publications by her as well as by reporters apparently echoing the tone and source.

1912: Third Mission: The First Summer School

By 1912, the number of students enrolled had progressively increased. Marietta Johnson hired and trained teachers through her teacher training class. However, since she had entirely invested Fels’s 1908 \$10,000 donation into buildings and salaries, she had to secure new funds to maintain her school from mid-1912 onward. In part, she did so by writing grant applications for assistance in support of the school. First and foremost, she gave lectures — simultaneously soliciting for donations. As a consequence, she sought to draw as much media attention to her school as possible. A negative consequence of the publicity activities was that she increasingly became the school’s director *in absentia*.

Johnson began her 1912 fund-raising tour during the summer break. In full agreement with apparent plans concerning “model schools” mentioned in Potter’s (1911) *Syracuse Herald* article reviewed above, she conducted the Summer Camp School of Organic Education at Arden, Delaware. Marietta Johnson, Edwin Potter and his wife Cora directed the summer school. The *Current Literature* (1912) gave publicity to the camp by reporting, “Mrs. Marietta Johnson is working out a system of “organic” education at Fairhope, Alabama, and at Arden, Delaware” (p. 311). The *San Francisco Call* (1912) ran an illustrated story on the camp, praising the Fairhope school as a place “where every boy and girl does as he or she likes.” It included photos of a boy standing on his head, a girl demonstrating dancing skills, and children throwing stones at a target. The *Call’s* reporter noted that the children loved the swimming and reading sessions during the camp. The report was extremely influential. it was reprinted by at least four East Coast newspapers with a total circulation of almost half a million copies. (*13)

The fall of 1912: the First Acknowledgement on a National Scale

“How Fairhope Solved the School Problem” by Helen Bennett was another particularly influential illustrated article. It appeared in the September 1912 *Pictorial Review* — a women’s magazine with a nationwide circulation of 700,000 copies. Bennett (1912), who had lived in Fairhope for a while, reviewed Johnson’s conversion experience and narrated the school’s early history. Additionally she quoted Johnson’s 1911 radical critique of regular public schools: “Why should education insist upon being uneducational?”

The insane desire to *teach* is a fatal barrier to development... If children do not thrive under the educational system provided, why not change the system?" (p. 13). Bennett outlined the school's characteristics: kindergarten and life classes, children singing and dramatizing songs, outdoor nature study, no reading and writing before the age of nine, and children making their own rulers and measuring with them. There was an absence of what is now called formal learning. Moreover, no child was "ever been 'left back' or 'put back'" (*ibid.*). She did note a steady influx of children from public schools who were at first unable to adjust to the school's liberty and freedom. Bennett's article portrays the children as affectionate, high spirited, original, self-reliant, knowing as much as public school children of their years, fluently expressing themselves, more intelligent in absorbing new knowledge, and amazingly interested in abstract questions (p. 60). Illustrative photographs show, for instance, two teepees built by the children and children who are busy roofing one of the newly constructed buildings at the school's campus. (*14)

1913-1914: Firm Local Recognition in the Eastern States

Early in 1913, Johnson attended the Annual Meeting of the New Jersey Conference of Charities and Correction, held at Plainfield, New Jersey, where she (1913c) made an address about Organic Education, enlightening her audience about the conversion experience that had changed her educational approach. In March, as testament to her phenomenal public relations prowess, akin to a one-woman civic group applying political pressure, the *New York Times* ran a full-page, illustrated, highly favourable interview with Johnson about her educational perspective and the Fairhope School of Organic Education (Edwards, 1913). Johnson related that one of her most successful teaching techniques was simply letting the children alone, claiming that her students develop so remarkably because the "interest with which they seize on learning, when left to themselves" is greater than in other circumstances "where the teachers force it down their throats." She stressed, "The child who performs tasks to please a teacher, to avoid punishment, or to get a grade or a reward of any kind, is working under a false motive; often when thus actuated children will do just enough to avoid the punishment or gain the reward and not a fraction more." Later that year, the *Evening Post* (1913) claimed that Johnson's school was known in her neighbourhood as a "Do-As-You-Please School," and the *New York Press* (1913) declared that children at Johnson's school were allowed to "just grow."

The publicity value of the *New York Times* interview was enormous (Newman, 2002). The history of education literature even gives the impression that there had been no other significant promotion prior to the *New York Times* article. The general idea in the literature is that the star of Johnson's fame only began rising after publication of this particular *New York Times* article. Many researchers share this view (*e.g.*, Stack Jr., 2004). One historian even stated that for "all its radical innovation, the Fairhope experiment remained relatively unsung" until 1915 (Cremin, 1961, p. 151), ignoring the *New York Times* interview and many other publications altogether.

Johnson directed the first session of the Fairhope Summer School in July 1913, but, in spite of its name, held in the Havemeyer School building in Greenwich, Connecticut. The majority of teachers and mothers attending were from New York City. A public conference about Johnson's work was also held. The events created a flood of newspaper articles about the Fairhope Summer School at Greenwich and about Johnson's school at Fairhope.

Since the articles have corresponding illustrations and merely retell the account in Johnson's three 1909-1911 articles in *The Public* and in the 1909-1912 pieces by other single-taxers — Bennett, Comings, Herring, Potter — it suggests that Johnson distributed press kits to journalists with the photographs and excerpts of articles written by her and her *aficionados*.

On 31 July 1913, at the closing conference during the first Fairhope Summer School, the Fairhope League was founded, with Mrs. May Lanier as President and Miss Jean Lee Hunt as Secretary. Johnson (1974) wrote, "The Secretary, Miss Jean L. Hunt, did valiant service for several years, making speaking appointments, arranging for summer schools, and promoting the idea in every possible way" (p. 40). Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, the wife of the President of the United States, joined the League too.

The Fairhope League, which in 1920 became the Fairhope Educational Foundation, raised funds, organized lectures (admission fee: one U.S. dollar), and sponsored sessions of the Fairhope Summer School. For instance, in 1914 and in 1915, the League successfully organized two successive summer school sessions.

By now, Johnson had gained recognition for her methods in the Eastern states several times in succession. The extensive 1912 to 1913 publicity increased the focus of the educational world upon her methods. As well, articles in *The Survey* by Johnson (1913a, 1913b) and by Hunt (1913), the Secretary of the Fairhope League, stressed familiar Fairhope school topics. Young children develop myopia and eyestrains when reading. Children should not sit in rows of desks. Children's interest in their activities will afford sufficient self-restraint. Fear of any kind, strain, and anxiety cause nervousness and destroy children's interest in their activities. Johnson's Alabama school has no requirements, no homework, nor examinations, nor marks. In Fairhope, the children begin reading and writing at the age of nine or ten.

1914: "The American Montessori"

During the summer of 1913, John Dewey was invited by the Fairhope League to investigate Johnson's school. Dewey accepted. In December he visited the Fairhope School of Organic Education in the company of his fourteen-year-old adopted son Sabino. During the early months of 1914, he made his report to the Fairhope League (*New York Herald*, 1914). *The Survey* issued a sizeable excerpt from his animated testimony. In his report to the Fairhope League, Dewey (1914) had advised Johnson to create a solid financial foundation for her school.

"A guarantee fund covering a span of years...would give [Marietta Johnson] opportunity for supervision; for greater attention to the assisting teachers; for her training work, as well as for trips north to make her work known and to give assistance and supervision to like attempts there." A *New York Times* (1914) reporter quoted Dewey saying that a "fund of from \$5,000 to \$7,000 will meet the needs of the work" and that he hoped that "the ideals and the methods of the school will be adopted [in New York City]." Johnson (1974) later remembered, "John Dewey's report of the work has been of inestimable value, not only in establishing it in the minds of educators and others, but it has been a tremendous help in securing funds" (p. 41).

During 1914, several generous newspaper and magazine articles appeared. (*15) Unusual, on the other hand, are two phenomena.

Firstly, suddenly various reporters began comparing Johnson to Maria Montessori, dubbing Johnson the "American Montessori," even reporting that Montessori directly influenced Johnson's educational methods. (*16) Before we draw premature conclusions, it is good to know that Italian educational reformer Maria Montessori visited the United States in December 1913. It looks, therefore, as if Johnson simply wished to make the most of the publicity generated by Montessori's American sojourn. She did not object to being compared to Montessori when it generated interest in her own educational approach.

There is a second phenomenon. As of mid-1914, newspaper reporters began merely referring to Johnson's work, trusting their readers would be familiar with her approach to education, indicating that Johnson's success story had become almost too well known. (*17)

1915: Firm Nationwide Recognition: Schools of to-Morrow

In January 1915, in a one-page article titled "Organization," Johnson (1915b) wrote that kindergartens demonstrate "the law of growth through self-activity." She argued that when children are inspired by evocative, practical materials, they become completely engrossed by their mission, set to work to construct objects of their imagination with materials that surround them, and express themselves through these materials.

This is how they develop discipline, will power, and power of concentration, self-control, and reasonableness. However, comes the age of six or seven, schools abruptly crush these self-prompted activities to make room for occupations thought up, fixed, and evaluated by grown-ups.

Johnson rhetorically asks, "Why should this law of self-activity be violated when school age is reached?" "Does the organism develop under a different law at seven or eight?" Her answer: "To be educational...we must obey the law of growth and provide occupations and activities which will satisfy the needs of the growing body, the inquiring mind, and the delight of the spirit."

1915 saw another flood of articles about Johnson, her school, and her educational approach. It was as if Johnson had "set out to convert the nation" (Gaston, 1984, p. 88). In *The New Republic*, Randolph Bourne (1915) concluded that "No school carries out more carefully Professor Dewey's dictum that the child can only be educated by concerning himself with what has meaning to him as a child, and not what is to have meaning to him later as an adult." This was high praise coming from Bourne, the influential critic. In the *New York Tribune*, educator Henrietta Rodman (1915) wrote that "Johnson's method [was] in striking contrast to the methods of our New York City training schools for teachers." Rodman had visited Johnson's Summer School at the Arden colony in 1912 and attended Fairhope Summer School at Greenwich in 1915.

In May 1915 came the publication of the massively influential *Schools of To-Morrow* by John Dewey and his daughter Evelyn. It includes a collection of reports on experimental schools they personally investigated between 1913 and 1915. Evelyn Dewey made the field visits to all the schools referred to in the book, except Johnson's school, which her father and brother Sabino investigated. "An Experiment in Education as Natural Development," the second chapter, deals in its entirety with the Fairhope School of Organic Education. In outlining the school's now familiar themes, the Deweys explained that the underlying principle of Johnson's methods was Rousseau's idea that the "child is best prepared for life as an adult by experiencing in childhood what has meaning to him as a child" (pp. 17-18). They portrayed Johnson as "trying an experiment under conditions which hold in public schools," asserting that her methods were "feasible for any public school system" (p. 23).

The considerable 1912-1916 newspaper, magazine, journal, and book coverage of Johnson's approach to education had constructive consequences.

It enabled her to give lectures and secure funds for her Fairhope school (Comings, 1915). Johnson received fees for her lectures, and solicited contributions during those lectures. This does not mean that the school received no criticism. It did! For example, a *New York Sun* (1915) article, headed "School Experiment Opposed," reported that the Montclair Superintendent of Schools strongly opposed the intended implementation of Johnson's methods in the Mount Hebron School in Montclair, New Jersey. Nevertheless, positive media coverage predominated.

1916: Fading Recognition

The February 1916 *Kindergarten and First Grade* reprinted no less than three pages of quotations from Johnson's articles and speeches (Johnson, 1916). During the rest of the year, few announcements and reports of her lectures appeared in the media. *The Mothercraft Manual* (Read, 1916) shows that Johnson in 1916 not solely was the director of the Fairhope school; at the same time she also led the Little School in the Woods in Greenwich, Connecticut. Johnson (1974) explained that after Dewey's 1913 visit to Fairhope an invitation "to direct [the] little school in Greenwich...made it possible for me to continue my work in the Fairhope School without compensation" since she received a salary from this "Northern school" (p. 41). The *Evening Telegram*, reporting about the school of thirty-seven pupils in the hills just outside Greenwich town, outlined that Johnson was a "militant revolutionist against the system long in vogue in the public schools" (Goewey, 1916). Paragraph headings like "Joy in Work," "No Closed Doors" and "Lie Down and Rest" indicate the now familiar approach to education. This means that Johnson merged being the principal of her Fairhope school with directing the Greenwich school, organizing summer schools and lecturing throughout the country.

During the First World War, Johnson seldom spoke of her socio-political goals, other than at occasional village celebrations in Fairhope. The one exception was a lecture at Chautauqua in August 1916 (Foyer,

1916; *Randolph Register*, 1916). After hearing her speech, a reporter wrote in *The Public* how impressed he was with her synthesis of Organic Education pedagogy and Fairhope principles.

"At the basis of the social and political philosophy of Henry George," he explained, "lies the doctrine that labor shall not seek through legislation, results which it may accomplish for itself, but that the worker only asks such legislation as shall establish equality of opportunity, and give him a larger freedom, to make of his life what he will" (Platt, 1916, p. 847).

In like vein, Johnson, he wrote, insisted that teachers should not significantly interfere with the "freedom of opportunity for children to work out their native impulses and natural desires" (*ibid.*). Since the nature of children is activity, schoolrooms and grounds should be spacious. In case of the Fairhope School of Organic Education, 165 children occupied several buildings and more than a few acres. Logically, to the reporter, the manual training room was largest and best equipped. He concluded that the school carried individualism to a beneficial extreme. The reality that the school was financially supported neither by the state of Alabama, nor in actuality by the Fairhope colony, the journalist attributed to the colony maintaining "an autonomy in every way separate from the state" (p. 848). He apparently believed that the Fairhope School of Organic Education suffered no lack of financial support. In this respect, George's philosophy of "cooperative individualism" (the colony's slogan) corresponded with an educational approach promoting self-activity and personal initiative of the child "to make of his life what he will" (Johnson, 1909).

1916-1917: Making Contact with the Bureau of Educational Experiments

By now, Johnson had stood in the educational limelight for several years. Until 1916, she succeeded admirably in ensuring her school's survival. During the second half of that year, nonetheless, encouraging consequences of media attention faded. While the Fairhope School of Organic Education was favourably mentioned in diverse publications, meeting the budget remained Johnson's constant struggle. At some time early in 1916, the Fairhope League was unable to pay its Secretary and "for a number of years the funds were most uncertain, being largely secured by personal solicitation" (Johnson, 1974, p. 47). Jean Lee Hunt, the fired Secretary of the Fairhope League, began work as Secretary of the Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE) in May 1916. The BEE was founded only a month before, its aims were both to collect and share information regarding progressive education, and to conduct, promote, and support educational experiments. In all probability, Hunt did some groundwork to bring Johnson and the BEE together. In December 1916, *The Survey* (1916) reported that the Fairhope League would incorporate and conduct a correspondence school in Johnson's educational principles "for mothers throughout the country." *The Survey* also reported that Johnson was about to begin a demonstration school in New York City. An author of a *New York Tribune* letter to the editor had already called for a school like Fairhope. "A school of this kind in New York would surely be a godsend to the community" (Pumpelly, 1916).

Eventually, Johnson's 'demonstration school' would not be a school but a demonstration class at Public School 95 (P.S. 95), Clarkson Street, New York City, and it would not start in 1916 but in the spring of 1917.

Between December 1916 and March 1917, members of the BEE had been considering a plan for cooperation with Johnson and P.S. 95. They found that an Organic Education experimental class could fit their own priority to establish a laboratory school. Recalling Dewey's 1914 recommendations regarding a solid financial foundation for Johnson's Fairhope school (see above), given the harsh economic consequences after the U.S.A. broke relations with Germany in February 1917, feeding nationwide fears that the U.S.A. would declare war on Germany, Johnson desperately needed new sponsors willing to subsidize her school. In March 1917, she was advised to write an application to the BEE for assistance in the support of her school. She noted that during the ten years of the school's life, voluntary donations were the only means of support. Each year in May, it was uncertain whether the school could continue after the summer break.

Therefore, she sought secure support for ten years in advance, she wrote. Johnson asked for \$100,000. "Will you not help toward this fund?" She stated, "It is impossible for me to do the educational work which is demanding my efforts when I am obliged to carry this burden of raising funds." (*18)

It appears that Johnson did not secure a gift. Instead, she was offered to supervise the teaching of a class and to supervise teachers at Public School 95 in return for a generous salary, paid by the BEE. Lucy Sprague Mitchell, founding mother of the BEE, reported that Johnson "was favorably disposed toward the scheme for a class in P.S. 95." (*19) On 12 March 1917, the BEE Committee on the Greenwich House Plans reported to the BEE Working Council that Johnson and the principals of P.S. 95 and P.S. 64 had met with them. Johnson had been interested. (*20) In September 1917, Johnson began working at P.S. 95 and started advisory work for P.S. 64 (*School*, 1917). Half a year later, apparently quite satisfied with her own results, she reported to the BEE Working Council that regarding P.S. 95, she observed "great improvement in the children's voices, their poise, and their self-direction." (*21) Earlier, in October 1917, BEE members already seemed entirely convinced of her expertise, and suggested her to the Membership Committee as a non-resident member.

In December 1917, the BEE Working Council unanimously elected Marietta Johnson as a non-resident member, meaning that whenever she attended committee meetings, she would have the qualifications and privileges of active BEE members, but not the right to vote.

At the time, she was not only serving as supervisor and advisor in P.S. 64 and P.S. 95; she continued to lecture on Organic Education at teachers' conferences, held regularly at Greenwich House in Manhattan, and elsewhere, outside of New York City. The BEE planned to continue Johnson's experimental class in P.S. 95 for another year (that is, during the 1918-1919 season). It also considered beginning an experiment under her guidance involving two experimental Organic Education classes in P.S. 64, and it proposed moving her yearly Fairhope Summer School to Hopewell Junction near Poughkeepsie, New York, at a farm the BEE rented in 1918. Johnson was to train teachers there during the summer months.

In spite of this, in April of 1918, sudden gloomy clouds were on the horizon. Minutes of the BEE's Executive Committee April 24, 1918, meeting read: "It was the sense of the meeting that the Executive Committee recommend that the BEE should discontinue its work in P.S. 95 beyond the present school year."

Four reasons were given — the last one the weightiest: (*22)

The Principal seems to be in an unfortunate attitude toward experiments just now and we cannot at the present time determine that his point of view will change. Unless it does we are very sure that we should not choose that school as our main plant and that we should not be welcome there as experimenters who were aiming at a reorganization of a school system. Unless we can be perfectly frank with the person at the head of the school and unless we can be sure of the co-operation of the head and of his subordinates we cannot make headway in our plans.

Until 1918, both the principal of P.S. 64 and the principal of P.S. 95 promoted a plan adopted by NYC Mayor Mitchel to reform part of the NYC public education system.

In actual fact, P.S. 95 implemented the plan in a hybrid form as a modification of another reform plan, the Gary Plan that led to the notorious NYC Gary School War (Worthington, 1915).

When Mayor Mitchel who had implemented the "Garyizing" of most NYC public schools failed to win reelection in November 1917, newly elected Mayor Hylan announced plans to discontinue introducing the Gary Plan in the majority of NYC public schools. He even ordered to "de-Garyize" already "Garyized" schools, among them P.S. 95 that had been converted according to a hybrid plan. This circumstance very well explains P.S. 95's principal's substantial reluctance to house and support Johnson's experimental Organic Education class in his school for yet another year.

Hartman's 1918 BEE Conference Proposal Basis for Establishing the PEA

In May 1918, when the P.S. 95 principal resolutely spoke out against BEE policy, all plans for Johnson's participation in BEE activities for the 1918-1919 school year ended *abruptly*. Still, for Johnson a most significant development gained momentum in late 1918 and early in 1919. Ironically, it originated in the Gary School War aftermath.

At first, repercussions of Johnson's dismissal looked particularly bad for her. Mid-1918, after her one-year term as Organic Education teaching supervisor at P.S. 95 and advisory work for P.S. 64, salaried by the BEE, Johnson began another phase in her life. Though she never stopped lecturing during the 1917-1918 BEE term, she now began preparing for a truly nationwide fund-raising lecture tour. Beyond any doubt, this *post-BEE* phase of her life was met with extremely good news from Connecticut, just when she learned that her tenure with the BEE would soon end. On May 20, 1918, the Connecticut school that she directed received the donation of a grand mansion in the Rock Ridge section of Greenwich, valued at \$300,000. According to *New York Herald* (1918a-b) reports, Johnson was utterly surprised by the generous bequest. It meant survival of her Greenwich school was secure for years. Still, the Fairhope school remained in dire need of finances.

Earlier, however, during a lecture evening in January 1918 in Baltimore, Maryland she had a conversation with Stanwood Cobb, lecturer in English at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. His memory of the conversation is that Johnson suggested founding a national association to promote her Organic Education framework (Drost, 1971). However, Johnson's proposal to Cobb reflected scheduling for a conference planned by the BEE. As non-resident BEE member, Johnson knew that consulting BEE researcher Gertrude Hartman was planning a conference *along with* planning a national association of teachers of experimental schools.

Minutes of a January 1918 BEE meeting read: "Miss Hartman is arranging *a conference of teachers of experimental schools with a view to forming an association of such teachers* working in close cooperation with the Bureau in its surveys, its publications, its library, and its experiments." (*23)

Two versions of what happened next exist. One historian of education concludes that a short while after Johnson's initial suggestion to Cobb, she changed it into "a proposal to establish an educational association devoted to publicizing current experiments in education" (Graham, 1967, p. 18). Cobb found the new proposal more appealing indeed. Another historian believes that after considering Johnson's initial idea Cobb dropped it "in favor of a broader sort of conference in which various experimental educators and parent groups might gather to exchange ideas" (Cremin, 1961, p. 242) — in fact a carbon copy of the conference suggested by Hartman to her BEE colleagues in January 1918. Either way, Johnson successfully borrowed Hartman's idea.

As a consequence, after consultation with a number of interested educators, and as soon as it became clear that World War I had effectively ended, seizing the moment, a group of educators regularly met in Washington, D.C. in the fall of 1918 and winter of 1919, among whom were Cobb and Johnson. They were planning establishing a national educational organization under the provisional name Association for the Advancement of Experimental Schools (Kliebard, 1995). Their preparations went smoothly, and swiftly showed results. In February 1919, at the Washington Studio House, they officially presented their proposal for an Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education. In March the Association *in statu nascendi* held its first public meeting in the Washington Public Library — and presented a statement of principles heavily influenced by Johnson. (*24)

On April 4, 1919, then, the Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education was founded, renamed Progressive Education Association (PEA) in 1920. Among others, Marietta Johnson, one of the Association's five co-founders, was on the Executive Committee. (*25)

Aftermath

Johnson's (1974) autobiography fails to give any account of her 1917-1918 involvement with the BEE and teaching and supervising at P.S. 95 and P.S. 64.

Her publications during the 1920s and 1930s never referred to her BEE involvement too, or to the true originator of her plans to found the PEA (consult, for instance Johnson, 1920, 1922a-b, 1923a-b, 1924a-b, 1926a-b, 1927, 1928, 1929).

Much as she never referred to the death of her child, she seems to have suppressed even thinking about that personal history. The *naissance* of the PEA in the winter of 1919 and Johnson's PEA related organizing duties, combined with lecturing activities (increasingly nationwide), gave her ample fund-raising opportunities for Fairhope. It seems it never became a burden to be constantly fund-raising, being a part-time Alabama school director, a part-time Connecticut school director, organizing summer schools, lecturing far from her Alabama home. However, following the death of her husband Frank in August 1919, she temporarily halted fund-raising. A few months later, though, the Fairhope Educational Foundation (the former Fairhope League) saw to it that her schedule of lectures and demonstrations was active again.

Between 1920 and 1925, numerous newspapers reported, Johnson lectured in at least twenty states — states as far apart as California and Florida, Wisconsin and Texas. And, not only did she travel to Europe in 1921 for the founding conference of the New Education Fellowship in Calais (France), she attended conferences in England (Cambridge, 1922), Germany (Heidelberg, 1925), Switzerland (Locarno, 1927) and Ireland (Dublin, 1933). It seems, the spring 1918 BEE events had noticeably made her more determined on her way to national and international recognition. However, her increasing absences during parts of the year profoundly impacted her school and its curriculum. (*26) Johnson's incessant *post-World War I* fund-raising tours raised concerns among the school's teaching staff, hindered recruiting competent teachers, and stagnated curriculum development. Not long after the Roaring Twenties' onset, Alice Howell (1922), who had taught at the Fairhope School of Organic Education during the 1919-1920 season, wrote an internal analysis of the school. She found numerous curriculum flaws and organisational problems. A lack of continuous tradition manifested at the opening of each school year. One third of the teachers were new, often newly graduated teachers from the school's training class. This led to a serious delay in "getting the school machinery started" (p. 242). A number of students, the majority with special needs, seemed unsuited for the school's busy atmosphere; they did not receive proper guidance. There were a limited number of teachers in the school "with the vision, the mental suppleness, and the physical stamina necessary for so arduous a career" (p. 246).

Referring to scarce material equipment and too few high-calibre teachers, Howell concluded, "[Fully] two-thirds of the unfavourable criticism of Mrs. Johnson's work at Fairhope is due to the incompleteness with which her ideas can be worked out under the hampering conditions which meagre funds impose" (*ibid.*). Howell warned that anxiety amongst the staff threatened the long-term survival of the school.

During the 1920s, the number of boarding students enrolled gradually decreased. It dropped off sharply during the Great Depression. Johnson's 1907 earnest pledge to effectively maintain the school herself, more and more became a race for money against all odds. Even though she had a greatly expanded national and international reputation, it could not turn the tide. An author of a letter to the editor of the *Evening Post* remarked that she was shocked to learn that the school was in financial danger (Fisher, 1923). The letter states that the school was approaching extinction and that it was in desperate need of \$16,000. A year later, in 1924, Johnson was forced to mortgage her school. *Progressive Education* (1925) reported a debt of \$10,000. This debt remained outstanding during the 1920s and early 1930s.

Johnson's (1929) book *Youth in a World of Men* was not received well. During the 1930s the Fairhope Educational Foundation discontinued financial support of the school. Newman (1999), who describes the school's later fate, states that in 1934 Johnson was even "dismissed as past her prime, written off as a 'play schooler'" by her professional colleagues (p. 83). The school barely stayed afloat during her lifetime.

Marietta L. (Pierce) Johnson died on December 23, 1938.
 Her autobiography appeared posthumously (Johnson, 1974).
 The Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education celebrated its centennial in 2007.

Notes

- * 1. Marietta's twin sister Harriet became a nurse (Saint Paul Daily Globe, 1895b; Saint Paul Globe, 1899b). Florence became a teacher and was active in the Minnesota Christian Missionary Society (Saint Paul Daily Globe, 1895a). Clifford became a teacher too (Saint Paul Globe, 1898). Lowell became the owner of the local City Milk Company (Saint Paul Daily Globe, 1893). And Ernest became a registrar at the University of Minnesota (Marquis (Ed.), 1907). In 1890, Florence, Harriet, Everett, and Clifford starred in two plays (Saint Paul Daily Globe, 1890).
- * 2. See, for instance, Bennett, 1912; Edwards, 1913; Johnson, 1913a, 1923b. Newman (1999; 2002), following Gaston (1984), dates Johnson's conversion experience as having occurred in 1901, instead of during 1898-1899. The origin of this discrepancy is a 1913 New York Times interview, when Johnson told of receiving Oppenheim's book from the superintendent of the St. Paul Teachers' Training School (Edwards, 1913). However, in a 1928 interview in the Evening Post she remembered that she worked as "head of the primary department of the State Normal College" in Minnesota when she was given Oppenheim's book (McCarroll, 1928); this is when she was principal of the Primary Practice School at the Mankato State Normal School, 1896-1900.
- * 3. Fairhope housed the first utopian single tax colony, officially the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, established by George devotees in the U.S.A. The corporation owned the land, which it rented out. The rental payment of home, farm, and business owners was used to pay, among other taxes, the taxes on the land. In 1900, another Georgist single tax community was founded in Arden, Delaware.
- * 4. Comings (1904) opposed memorizing of what he called the "dry facts and abstract statements of principles" (p. 31), injuring the character and moral development of students and deadening the "joy of learning" (ibid.). He argued that Froebel's insight to train "hands, head and heart at the same time" (p. 17) should be put to practice in industrial training, using handicraft training; cabinet work; gardening and horticulture; and practical studies in biology as "formative influences" (p. 69) to develop "creative power of hand and head" (p. 17); "moral and spiritual uplift" (p. 34); self-government (p. 40); and "habits of care, nicety and thoroughness of detail" (p. 67).
- * 5. In 1908 the school was named Comings Memorial College of Organic Education, renamed School for Organic Training in 1909, renamed Comings Memorial School of Organic Education in 1910, and later renamed School of Organic Education.
- * 6. In this light it is interesting to note that Hermann Kutter's (1908) *They Must*, a treatise about Christian Social Democracy by the Zürich, Switzerland, based Minister, references George's 1883 book *Social Problems* (pp. 181, 186) and specifies that "Mrs. Mariette [sic] L. Johnson, Fairhope, Ala.," purchased three copies (p. 221).
- * 7. Compare Henderson (1902, p. 190): "The work itself is so largely individual that a single group may properly include children of quite unlike ages" (p. 190).
- * 8. Most probably, Lydia Comings's October 1909 article constitutes the text of a paper titled "Organic Education" which she — according to the Utica Daily Express (1909) — presented at the Utica, New York, New Century Club on January 7, 1909.
- * 9. At the time the school did not advertise widely. It also advertised in the 22 September, and the 6, 13 and 20 October 1911 issues of *The Public*: "School of Organic Education, at Fairhope, Ala. A Boarding School where Boys and Girls Develop Naturally and Really Live. Mariette [sic] L. Johnson, Principal."
- * 10. If Johnson meant "equality of opportunity" for all persons regardless of ethnic origin, at least one dream was not realized. The Fairhope School of Organic Education practiced racial segregation, never enrolling students of African-American origin during Johnson's lifetime. On this front, Fairhope administrators fully acquiesced to racial segregation norms practiced in the Deep South.
- * 11. The official transcript of Johnson's address (1910b) in the Minnesota Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction does not speak of Fairhope, though, or of single tax plans.
- * 12. See also Johnson's contribution in Sidis, Baker, Johnson, & Maxwell, 1911.
- * 13. The Boston Daily Globe, the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, the Illustrated Buffalo Express and the Washington Herald reprinted the San Francisco Call article.
- * 14. Other, less significant, 1912 articles highlighting the school are not reviewed here. See, for instance, *The Sun*, 1912.

- *15. These reports, however, did not differ much in content from 1913 newspaper stories. See, for instance, *American Educational Review*, 1914; Hamilton, 1914; Watson, 1914.
- *16. See, for instance, *Boston Daily Globe*, 1915; Case, 1914; Gruenberg, 1914; Hildebrand, 1914; Marshall, 1914a-b.
- *17. See, for instance, Adams, 1914; Brooks, 1914.
- *18. Copy of letter by Marietta L. Johnson, March 24, 1917, in City and Country School Archives, New York City.
- *19. Minutes Executive Committee of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, March 5, 1917, in Bank Street College of Education Archives, New York City. Sprague Mitchell added, "Miss [Elisabeth] Irwin would like the approval of the Executive Committee to her plan to have Mrs. Johnson devote some of her time to Miss Irwin's class of precocious children in P.S. 64" (*ibid.*).
- *20. Minutes Working Council of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, March 12, 1917, in Bank Street College of Education Archives, New York City. Consult also: Irwin & Marks, 1926, pp. vii-viii + pp. 115-117.
- *21. Minutes S. P. & M. Department of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, January 30, and February 6, 1918, in Bank Street College of Education Archives, New York City.
- *22. Minutes Executive Committee, April 24, 1918, of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, in Bank Street College of Education Archives, New York City
- *23. Minutes Department of Information, January 17, 1918, of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, in Bank Street College of Education Archives, New York City; italics added. Later, BEE members suggested that the intended "Conference of Experimental Schools" be postponed and be held in the summer of 1918, and to already plan a registry for teachers of experimental schools.
- *24. By the end of March 1919, BEE Working Council minutes reported about an interview with Cobb (date not given), who asked for financial help for the imminent Association and for a "representative from the Bureau to serve on their executive committee" (Minutes Working Council, March 31, 1919, of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, in Bank Street College of Education Archives, New York City). BEE members Harriet Johnson and Jean Lee Hunt were empowered to consult with Cobb. On April 9, 1919, BEE members discussed whether they would financially support the Association, whether Jean Lee Hunt would become a member of the Association's executive committee, and whether the BEE would advice about handling copy for a magazine the Association wished to issue.
- *25. In fact, both directly and indirectly, the Bureau of Educational Experiments was the organization that had stood at the crib of the PEA and co-formed its initial structure. It is only fair to label the PEA as the brainchild of Gertrude Hartman, a BEE-consulting researcher between 1918 and 1923. Already in the fall of 1923, without delay after she had drawn her BEE work to a close and published her book *Home and Community Life* (1923a) and an article on imaginative literature for children (1923b), Hartman became editor of the PEA's journal *Progressive Education*. She remained sole editor of the exceptionally influential journal until 1930. During the 1920s, BEE members regularly contributed services to the PEA. BEE members Laura Garrett, Jean Lee Hunt, Elisabeth Irwin, Harriet Johnson, Caroline Pratt, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, and Elsa Ueland published numerous articles in *Progressive Education*. From the mid-1920s, BEE member Elsa Ueland was on the Association's Executive Committee. BEE founding mother Lucy Sprague Mitchell even chaired a Group Conference during the 1928 PEA annual meeting, as did BEE member Caroline Pratt.
- *26. For instance, there is no indication in the many media reports about Johnson's school that the School of Organic Education's curriculum evolved in any way after its 1907 inception. Then, the circumstances that led Johnson and the BEE to sever a working relationship left her without an opportunity for discussions with equally successful, like-minded peers. Even were she inclined toward self-reflection and assessment, she had no one with whom she could engage about how their education theory manifested in practice. Without a serious program of self-assessment, Johnson was unable to shed the popular impression that she was merely the prophet of Organic Education, directing an extremist school in the Deep South.

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