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EPILOGUE

What Became of Johnson and Pratt?

"The future of democratic society depends upon the socialization of the schools. When they become practice communities in which young people through their growing years are trained to respond in desirable ways to social institutions, when students are versed in solving social problems, when the curriculum is enriched by a broad social interpretation, we shall have the hope of creating a society capable of directing social changes instead of being overwhelmed by them."

Gertrude Hartman cited in *The New Leaven: The Progressive Education and Its Effect Upon the Child and Society*; Cobb, 1928, pp. 130-131.

Sketches of the fate of the Progressive Education Association and Bureau of Educational Experiments in foregoing chapters clarify how the resolute women of the BEE contributed to an organization that was, in large part, a model for the PEA. Two questions remain to be answered: "What became of Marietta Johnson and her School of Organic Education? What became of Caroline Pratt and her Play School?"

Marietta Johnson and the School of Organic Education

While working with the BEE, atypically for her, Marietta Johnson neither expressed views on the war effort nor for other political causes she had championed, finding other means to act on her socio-political aspirations.³²⁰ In *Chapter 4*, I have shown that early in 1918, Johnson approached Stanwood Cobb, to encourage founding a national association bringing together teachers to support progressive education. The 1919 founding meeting of the Progressive Education Association "represented a dream come true [for] Minnesota-born Marietta Johnson" (Graham, 1967 p. 17). To be sure, the PEA did *not* resemble the dream Johnson (1909) articulated a decade earlier in *The Public*. However, now an organisation existed to bring together educational reformers on a national level, contributing to a nationwide professionalization process of progressive teachers and progressive education and to protoprofessionalization processes of parents and other laypersons.

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 (*The Sun*, 1919d), lecturing far from her Alabama home. However, following the death of her husband Frank in August 1919 (*New York Herald*, 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. Johnson's (1974) autobiography describes an occasion that probably occurred in 1919 or 1920: an invitation to speak in Detroit. In the audience were Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford. They donated \$12,000 to the cause of Johnson's Fairhope School of Organic Education. This lucky event suggests that her worries about the survival of the school may have abated. They had not.³²¹

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.³²² 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. She did not delegate authority outside her family. Before her husband's death, when she was on lecture tours or spending time in New York City in 1917 and 1918, Frank took charge of the school. After his death, when Marietta toured, there was no Johnson present to direct either school or teacher training.

There were problems before Frank's death. For instance, there is no indication in the many media reports about Johnson's school from 1909 to 1920 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. 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. She began conducting mid-winter adult courses in 1921. Parents from all over the country attended these. Even though she had a greatly expanded national and international reputation (Montoliu, 1921), 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). Whether this was the outcome of a publicity stunt by Johnson, or a genuine concern, there is no telling. 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 League 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 (M. L. Johnson, 1974). The Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education celebrated its centennial in 2007.

Caroline Pratt and the Play School / City and Country School

The November 24, 1895, *School Journal*, referenced in *Chapter 3*, strongly suggests that Caroline Pratt's late nineteenth-century manual training classes mainly applied conventional graded exercises methods. Her early twentieth-century writings, in contrast, conclusively show that she was evolving her own approach to education — and reinventing herself as an experimental, progressive, teacher. Her articles, bulletins and book contributions reveal a steady progression in *independent* theorizing based on years of observing children (in groups she supervised) using toys and blocks she had designed and constructed. She observed them experientially learning at school about interdependences of the physical and social worlds, and during field trips in the inner city of New York. She observed them afterwards reconstructing their activities and experiences, "*recasting experience in symbolic form*" (Franklin, 1996, p. 4). And she observed their dramatic play tying impressions gained during the trips with social studies perspectives. Pratt's writings form major theoretical contributions to experimental educational perspectives.

Play School renamed City and Country School in April 1919. The contents of *The City & Country School* (1919), an illustrated information pamphlet for parents issued by the school, indicate that the school's student population had grown considerably between 1916 and 1919, as had the number of classrooms.³²³ The pamphlet details field trips into the city, programs to let the children help prepare lunch, or planning, marketing and serving lunches, estimating the costs. These "real experiences" would help them with their understanding of geography, history, science and arithmetic. The pamphlet further states that the pupils were expected to spend two summer months at the school's farm. During the summer breaks, the BEE rented the farm near Poughkeepsie, New York. However, an increasing part of City and Country School families were vacationing with their children during the summer months; the farm experiment was abandoned after only a few years.³²⁴

1919 also marks the final act of Pratt's business enterprise trying to sell her Do-With Toys™. At the time, the dolls and toys were already slowly disappearing from the scenes at City and Country School. In December 1919, though, an exhibition of American-made toys was opened at the Art Institute of Chicago "to recognize the making of toys as an art" (C. W. E., 1919).³²⁵ The Toy Exhibition Committee gave a reception. For her group of wooden dolls, Pratt was awarded the Mrs. Hubbard Carpenter Award for toys of greatest art and educational value.³²⁶ Pratt closed the toy-manufacturing chapter of her life the very moment she received the award. *Artistic Do-With Toys™* had become *true art* — an art of the past, exhibited in museums. *Unit Blocks*, devised by Pratt around 1910, gradually replaced Do-Withs. Blocks became the school's most important playthings.³²⁷

In the autumn of 1921, City and Country School moved to its present address in New York City.³²⁸ While the school developed a services, or jobs, program during the 1920s, Pratt would edit a series of four books on the experimental teaching practice in her

school.³²⁹ Various magazine and newspaper articles and books depicted the school's unique curriculum, its social sciences approach, its health program, its class size of ten children per class, and its educational approach to art — strongly praising the art produced by the students.³³⁰ *Ladies' Home Journal* noted how schools best stimulate self-government and active citizenship, naming City and Country School as *the* commendable school in this respect (Jordan, 1921).³³¹ The school was exemplary in quite another respect as well. *Health News* (1922) claimed the school was “a laboratory school, supported through private funds, making provision for children of the rank and file of a congested neighborhood, and is fairly representative of the children of such a community...About fifty per cent of the parents pay the regular tuition fee; a fund is provided to care for those unable to pay” (p. 97).

Pratt's school severed from the BEE in 1929.³³² In 1934, Pratt and others founded the Associated Experimental Schools, an organization of seven schools, “coeducational, non-profit-making [and] without race discrimination” (The Associated Experimental Schools, n.d., p. 1), which cooperated in the fields of fund raising and buying equipment and supplies during the Depression years, planning and developing health programs and experimental school programs, as well as coordinating children's art exhibitions.³³³ Around 1940, however, the Association disbanded.

In 1935, City and Country School opened an *Extension Service* that in 1936 built up an after school Recreation Center at Public School 33 in Chelsea, Manhattan, later dubbed Chelsea School Project, and trained its volunteers.³³⁴ In 1937, the program became an all-day, all-year service, during school hours and summer vacations. In fact, City and Country School exported its curriculum and teaching techniques (community trips, map making, games, modelling, group discussions, shop work, dramatic play, block building, jobs program, arts and rhythms programs, remedial instruction, *etc.*) to an inner-city public school with many underprivileged children. From 1938 onward, the Public Education Association sponsored Chelsea School Project. Fascinatingly, Pratt made *The Nation's* 1939 ‘Roll of Honor’ for her “devotion to the principles of progressive education...in the reorganization of a number of public schools in New York State” (*Capital Times*, 1940). In 1942, when the Board of Education took over Chelsea School Project, it was held up as example for other schools in time of war and was extended to P.S. 194 and several other NYC public schools that became known as All-Day Neighborhood Schools.³³⁵

Throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s until her retirement from the school after thirty-two years of service as the school's director on June 1, 1945 (*The Sun*, 1945a), Pratt was a prolific writer. She wrote about her school, its curriculum making, its pedagogy, learning methods, and the craft of progressive education teaching. Pratt's autobiography appeared in 1948. Caroline L. Pratt died on June 6, 1954. On May 18, 1979, Manhattan Borough President Andrew Stein officially proclaimed City and Country School the oldest progressive school in the State of New York. The school plans to celebrate its centennial in 2014.