

John Dewey: First Marietta Johnson Fan at Columbia University? Or Perhaps William H. Kilpatrick? Three *Petites histoires* about Marietta L. Johnson.

Author Details: Jeroen Staring

Retired Dr Jeroen Staring taught mathematics at secondary schools in The Netherlands. His 2005 Medical Sciences dissertation describes the life, work and technique of F. Matthias Alexander. In 2013 he successfully defended a second dissertation, on the early history of the NYC Bureau of Educational Experiments.

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Abstract

This descriptive case study reviews literature that may fill gaps in the biography of Marietta L. Johnson (1864-1938) from 1913-1918. This study discusses three questions: Was John Dewey the first Marietta Johnson fan at Columbia University, or was it William H. Kilpatrick? When did Marietta Johnson become principal of the Lanier School — The Little School in the Woods — in Greenwich, Connecticut? What exactly was Marietta Johnson doing in 1917 and the early months of 1918? This case study tells three stories that have not been analyzed before.

Key Words: *Marjorie Merriweather (née Post) Close (= Mrs. Edward B. Close), later well-known as Marjorie Merriweather Post; Lydia J. (née Newcomb) Comings; Marietta Louise (née Pierce) Johnson; May (née Field) Lanier (= Mrs. Charles D. Lanier); Maria Montessori. John Dewey; William Heard Kilpatrick; Ernest Thompson Seton; Bernard Sexton. Boy Scouts of America. Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE), New York City. Edgewood School, Greenwich, Connecticut (~ part of former Little School in the Woods, also known as Lanier Organic School, Lanier School, Lanier School in the Woods, or Organic Institution of Learning). School of Organic Education, Fairhope, Alabama. Wabanaki Woodcraft School, Wabanaki School, or Woodcraft School, Greenwich, Connecticut (~ part of former Little School in the Woods). Camp Fire Girls. Woodcraft Girls. Woodcraft Indians. Woodcraft League.*

Introduction. Marietta L. Johnson = the “American Montessori”?

A compelling idea, like that at the base of the Fairhope experiment, is disconcertingly simple. We distrust it, as the school boy distrusts a simple solution of the problem, that he most intricate processes failed to solve. But the simplicity of [Mrs.] Johnson’s plan is very different from the simplicity of the old type of school. It is an organic, not chaotic. (*School Education*, 1916).

In the history-of-education literature, it is believed that Marietta Johnson and the School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama became known outside the United States from the early 1920s. However, the 1914 French magazine *La Revue* (1914) already had “*L’école mise à la portée de l’enfant*,” an article about Johnson and her school based on “Fitting the School to the Child” in the *Literary Digest* of December 5, 1914 — in turn based on Sidonie Matzner Gruenberg’s “An Experiment in Organic Education” in the *Scientific American Supplement* of November 14, 1914 (see *Note 1*). The French article in *La Revue* (1914) was not illustrated, but both the *Literary Digest* (1914) and Gruenberg’s (1914) were illustrated — with a photo of Marietta Johnson (see *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*; note that *Figure 1* is an adapted inverse version of *Figure 2*) and a photo of children building a one-storey wooden building.

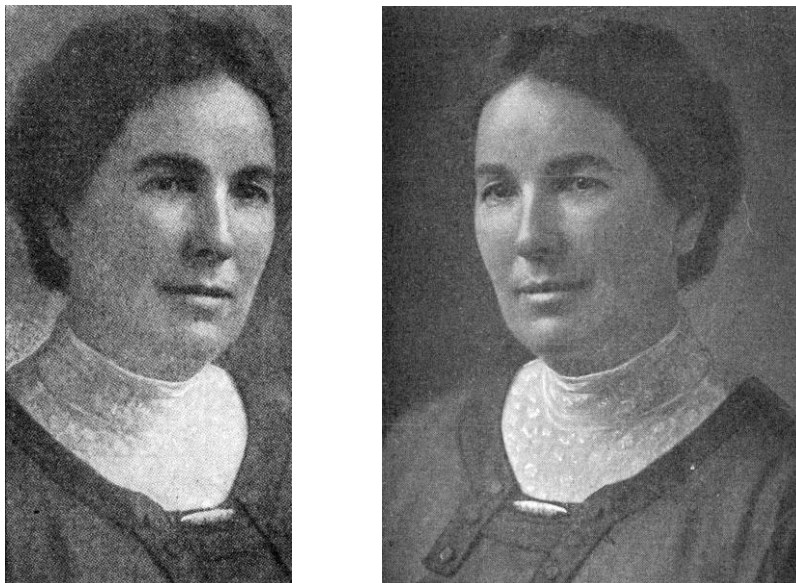
In the history-of-education literature, it is also believed that Marietta Johnson and the School of Organic Education in Fairhope didn’t really become known in the United States until around the spring of 1913. However, the above-mentioned two American magazine texts are part of a long series of newspaper and magazine reports about Johnson’s school in Fairhope, illustrated with photographs (see *Note 2*). These illustrated articles suggest that Marietta Johnson and her school must have been widely known in the US well before 1914 (Staring, 2020, 2021). Together with a plethora of non-illustrated articles by and about

Johnson (Staring, 2016b, 2020, 2021), they indicate that Marietta Johnson was indeed well known in the US before 1914, as was her school in Fairhope.

Interestingly, in March 1912 *Current Literature* (1912, p. 311) referred to Marietta Johnson in an article on Maria Montessori. The same month, *Friend's Intelligencer* published a letter to the editor, written by Edwin S. Potter (1912), in which he stated, “an educational demonstration almost identical with that made by Madame Montessori is now under way in the United States and conducted by an American woman bred in our own American schools.”

The following month, the *Evening Journal* (1912) reported,

Through the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin S. Potter, of Arden, Mrs. Mariette [*sic*; J.S.] Johnson, of Fairhope, Ala., who delivered several lectures at the Arden [single tax; J.S.] colony last summer, is to conduct an “organic” school there this year. Mrs. Johnson, who conducts such a school in the Alabama [single tax; J.S.] colony will come here this summer and operate the school along the lines of the famous Montessori Schools of Rome. The school at Arden will take the form of a summer school at first but as it is understood a building is to be erected on the Sherwood side of the colony it may become a permanent institution. The pupils will be charged a nominal fee to pay.



**Figure 1 (left): Marietta Johnson; in the December 5, 1914, *Literary Digest* (1914, p. 1118).
Figure 2 (right): Marietta Johnson; in the November 14, 1914, *Scientific American Supplement* (Gruenberg, 1914, p. 316).**

Again a month later, Sydney M. Hillyard (1912, p. 193), referring to both the Montessori Method and Johnson’s Fairhope school, also made strong statements that Marietta Johnson was an early Montessorian and that she was in fact practicing the Montessori Method at her Alabama school:

The Montessori system is attracting attention. Already one teacher, Mrs. Johnson of Fairhope, Ala., a single tax colony, has proven the success of it in her work...Mrs. Johnson has already supplanted discipline in her schools with happiness, freedom, and spontaneity. Let us hope it will be supplanted with these in every school in America.

This is remarkable, because until 1912, Maria Montessori was relatively unknown in the US. Few books (e.g. Barr, 1910) and relatively few articles in diverse newspapers and journals mentioned her (see *Note 3*). Montessori only really started to become famous in 1912 and subsequent years after articles were published in *McClure’s Magazine* depicting her teaching methods (see *Note 4*) and after her books *The Montessori Method* and *Pedagogical Anthropology* and her article “Disciplining Children” were published in the US. Especially around and after her lecture tour in the US in December 1913 (see *Note 5*) there were numerous publications about her, her pedagogy, and her schools in Italy (see *Note 6*).

Montessori was, of course, already well known in Italy at the time.

Perhaps embarrassingly today, long before she opened her first schools in 1907 in Rome and Milan she seemed to be best known to the general Italian public for her beauty. One of the earliest mentions in the

Italian press is a short text in *L'Illustrazione Popolare* (1896; translation J.S.) explaining why the magazine published a photo of her (see *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*):

Do readers remember the study *L'Illustrazione Popolare* opened on female doctors at the beginning of this year?...An Italian physician and surgeon, Dr. Maria Montessori, garnered...admiration at one of the women's congresses in Berlin. Her grace captured all the pens, we were about to say: all the hearts of the journalists of the Spree...One of our employees in Berlin asks us for the picture of the charming doctor-surgeon, to 'decorate' (he says) his album...But we don't believe it is appropriate just to satisfy his particular enthusiasm; we want all our readers to see the portrait of the distinguished young lady, which is we are posing it here on this page.



Figure 3 (left): Italian text regarding photo Maria Montessori (*L'Illustrazione Popolare*, 1896).

Figure 4 (middle): Dr. Maria Montessori (*L'Illustrazione Popolare*, 1896).

Figure 5 (right): Maria Montessori; in the January 21, 1909, *Sullivan County Record* (1909).

Mentioning Maria Montessori and Marietta Johnson in the same breath in newspapers and magazines was not limited to 1912, but also happened in 1913 and subsequent years. For instance, in 1913, a reference to Johnson's school appeared in the Editor's Page ("Talking Together") in the May 1913 issue of *Primary Education* (1913, p. 312), stating that Johnson's method was in many ways "based on the principles advocated by the Italian teacher" Maria Montessori. In March 1914, Marguerite Mooers Marshall (1914) called Marietta Johnson the "American Montessori." In June of that year, *Bridgeport Evening Farmer* (1914) declared that the Fairhope Summer School in Greenwich would be conducted by Marietta Johnson from July 6 to August 17, "after a system which is a considerable departure from prevailing methods, and with a spiritual resemblance to the Montessori system, which a noted Italian woman has made famous." And in November of that year, *Evening Star* (1914) reported that Johnson, "superintendent of a school at Fairhope, Ala.," at a meeting of the Washington Secular League on November 22 "told of her success during the past eight years in the use of a modified form of the Montessori system in the school of which she is the head."

Note that there does not seem to be any evidence that Marietta Johnson objected to these and the earlier comparisons to Montessori. Was it perhaps because it would spark interest in her teaching? It remains a mystery why the comparisons took place, that they occurred as early as 1912, and why a newspaper would report in November 1914 that she presented herself as an early Montessorian in the US — notably after Fairhope League secretary Jean Lee Hunt (1913, pp. 240) had already drawn a sharp contrast between Johnson's parenting philosophy and that of Montessori:

[Marietta Johnson's] experiment begins where kindergarten and Montessori end, and strongly as it attracts the Montessori teacher of America, it is psychologically of the school of Froebel. Self-activity, that great law of the master, has been consistently used by Mrs. Johnson as the basis of a

scheme covering a complete experience for primary and grammar grades, and her adaptation of the high school course is under way.

In the same text, Hunt (1913, pp. 240) outlined why the Fairhope League was founded:

On July 31, last, at Greenwich, Conn., the Fairhope League was organized in the belief that the school established by Marietta L. Johnson at Fairhope, Ala., meets the conditions which should recommend a serious consideration by the public. The fundamental theories are in accord with those advanced by many eminent educators.

Two such “eminent educators” must have been John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick.

William Heard Kilpatrick: Montessori Researcher at Teachers College

Kindergarten Review (1912, p. 638) reported in May 1912 that scholars from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City would sail to Europe on May 8 to investigate the Montessori method in Rome, including Dr. Milo B. Hillegas and Dr. William Heard Kilpatrick (compare Beineke, 1998; Kramer, 1976; Tenenbaum, 1951).

On October 17, 1912, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (1912c) reported Kilpatrick’s verdict on Montessori’s teaching methods:

“The Montessori system is dangerous,” said the doctor, “if it means that we must teach writing and reading earlier than we do at present.” Dr. Kilpatrick said this yesterday afternoon during the progress of a luncheon given by the Unity Child Welfare Association at its regular meeting in Unity Parish House, Irving Place and Gats avenue. His remarks precipitated vigorous discussion [...].

Two weeks later, at the 18th Annual Meeting of the Michigan State Teachers’ Association, held in Grand Rapids, Michigan on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, Kilpatrick again revealed his verdict (Densmore, 1912; Gage, 1912).

Frances M. Berry (1912, p. 469) reported, among other things:

The theory of freedom is one of the oldest in American education, but freedom as presented by this system of Madam Montessori is not freedom in the American sense. The child is free to choose his material, but is not free to use the material as he chooses; unless he uses it for its stipulated purpose it is taken from him. There is limited freedom of variety and limited freedom of scope, whereas there is no freedom of self-expression. Play, one of the chief forms of self-expression, has no place. “If,” said Madame Montessori, “I were persuaded that children ought to play I would include play materials. I consider it a waste of time.” The material corrects itself, therefore is auto educative, and without the aid of a teacher the child educates himself by means of the material. This is good as far as it goes, but with limited material it is a meager diet and comes very near destroying a child’s initiative.

Next, in December, *Kindergarten Review* (1912, pp. 268, 268, 270) reported on Kilpatrick’s speech on November 2, 1912, on his visit to Montessori schools in Rome, Italy.

Dr. W. H. Kilpatrick, professor of the history of education at Columbia University, New York, who has spent some time in Rome observing the Montessori schools and studying the system, in an address before the Connecticut Valley Kindergarten Association, November 2, considered the subject of what we can learn from the Montessori method...Dr. Kilpatrick believed that Madam Montessori had made some contribution in the matter of teaching writing, but that in teaching reading of the English language it would be impossible to use her method, which depends upon a phonetic alphabet. Neither is there a contribution in the study of arithmetic, so that, as a conclusion, in the teaching of the three R’s, he said: “It is not only doubtful that we have here anything to learn, but it is very, very doubtful that we wish to introduce the formal study of these school arts with children below six. Our whole tendency for many years has been to oppose the formal and abstract with very young children. For my part, to put these generally into any sort of kindergarten would be very undesirable.”...In conclusion, Dr. Kilpatrick made the following points:—

Madam Montessori makes very inadequate use of play in her schools...

The use of material to express and test ideas has little or no place in her system...

Stories and literature have little or no place in the schools.

Madam Montessori belongs in the history of American educational theory essentially along with writers antedating 1880. In several fundamental respects she is some thirty years behind the best of our present theory...

In conclusion, the fundamental theories of the Montessori system are not new to us in America. Certain of them we have already consciously rejected. Others we have for some time been advocating. We hope that the persistent advertising given to the system will spread the good only and not the bad.

Kilpatrick made similar speeches at a December 4 conference on the Montessori method organized by the Federation for Child Study at the Meeting House in New York City (*New York Tribune*, 1912) and at a meeting of teachers on December 18 at the Central High School in Detroit, Michigan (*Detroit Times*, 1912ab).

We must conclude that Kilpatrick explained his views on the Montessori method as early as 1912 — based on personal research at Montessori schools in Rome, and well before Montessori's international teacher training program began on January 15, 1913.

Based on his own 1912 research in Italy and his analysis of Maria Montessori's 1912 book *The Montessori Method* and other literature regarding Montessori, Kilpatrick would again express his strong 1912 views in 1913:

- His "Montessori and Froebel," a speech delivered at the Philadelphia Department of Superintendence on February 25, 1913, published in the April issue of *Kindergarten Review* (Kilpatrick, 1913b; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1913).
- His comparable speech delivered on May 2, 1913 at the 20th Annual Meeting of the International Kindergarten Union in Washington, D. C. (International Kindergarten Union, 1913).

In 1914 Kilpatrick published his book *The Montessori System Examined*. He (see *Figure 6*) was thus highly qualified to express a thorough understanding of Montessori's teaching methods and compare them with the practice in American kindergartens (compare Evans, 1914). This qualification would, in fact, form the background to what he put forward at a conference on Marietta Johnson's teaching methods — in Greenwich, Connecticut in July 1913.

Was William Heard Kilpatrick the First Marietta Johnson Fan at Columbia University?

After Marietta Johnson organized an experimental class in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at the Summer School at the University of Pennsylvania in 1911 (Staring, 2020), and hosted an entire Summer School the following year in Arden, Delaware (*Ibid.*), she supervised the Summer School of Organic Education in Greenwich, Connecticut in 1913 (Wallace, 1913).

In August 1913, *Fairhope Courier* published "Good News For Fairhope" — an article praising Marietta Johnson for announcing the creation of a "Fairhope League" and for her success in raising money for her Fairhope School of Organic Education at the Greenwich Summer School of Organic Education — hosted at Havemeyer School by The United Workers of Greenwich, a group of progressive women (Gaston, 1984; Hunt, 1913; *New York Times*, 1913h; Wilcox, 1913ab) who had earlier published Frank Richard Stockton's (1912) *The Lost Dryad*.

On last Monday Mrs. Comings, of the Organic School, was delighted to receive word from Mrs. M. L. Johnson, at Greenwich, Conn., announcing the organization of an enthusiastic "Fairhope League," and the raising of over \$1,400 to aid in the work of Organic education. Inclosed [*sic.*; J.S.] in the letter received by Mrs. Comings were checks amounting to \$1,200. (*Fairhope Courier*, 1913).

The Fairhope weekly newspaper *Fairhope Courier* further noted that the August 6, 1913 issue of *Greenwich News* had highlighted the establishment of the Fairhope League at the Greenwich Summer School of Organic Education closing conference held on July 31; that two interested individuals sent letters of support: Nathan Oppenheim whose 1898 book *The Development of the Child* had greatly influenced Marietta Johnson, and John Dewey; and that William H. Kilpatrick, personally in Greenwich, gave a lecture.

As an indication of the deep interest aroused in the work which is being carried on so successfully by Mrs. Johnson, the Greenwich News of August 6th gives the account of organization of the league the

most prominent position of its first page. Rev. C. E. Taylor presided and read letters from Professor Dewey of Columbia and also from Dr. Oppenheim, whose book first suggested Mrs. Johnson's educational scheme. Dr. Kilpatrick of Columbia also spoke upon the merits of Mrs. Johnson's work. He said that the effort of all educators was to discover the method by which the child could be brought into harmony with society. Mrs. Johnson's method, he believed, would greatly help to solve the problem. He emphasized the importance of continuing the experiment. He said it had no value as an experiment until children had been educated under this system from the first year of school life until prepared for college.

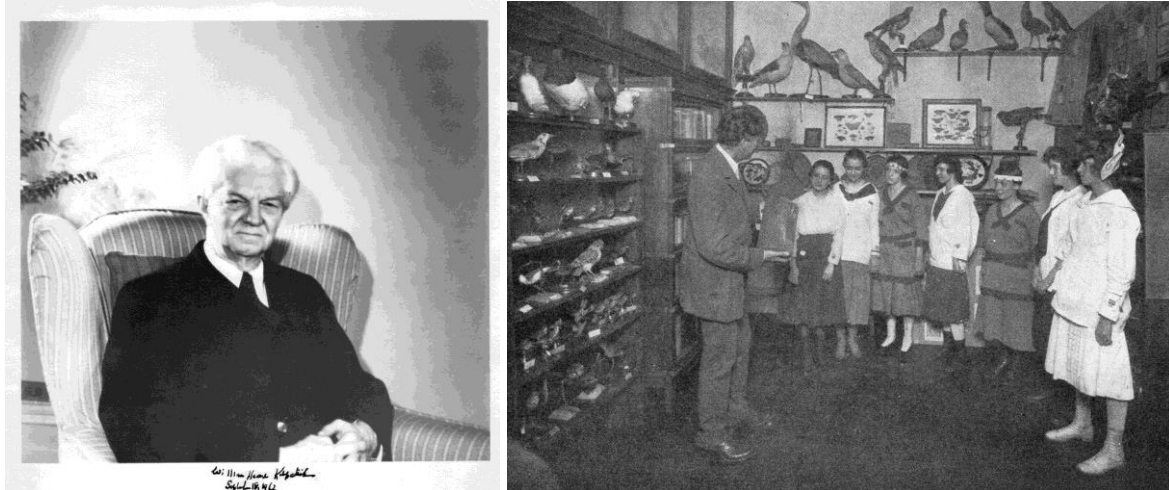


Figure 6 (left): William H. Kilpatrick; signed September 18, 1962. (Jeroen Staring Collection).

Figure 7 (right): Woodcraft League leader Ernest Thompson Seton teaching members of the local Woodcraft Girls tribe how to make a Woodcraft bird box at the Woodcraft League HQ, 13 West, 39th Street, New York City; in the March 1917 *American City* (Miller, 1917, p. 251).

Note that the Library of Congress states that only two US libraries have *Greenwich News* (referenced in the above quote): Greenwich Library (microfilm), Connecticut State Library (original and microfilm) — but neither has 1913 issues of the newspaper, original or microfilm. There seems, therefore, no way to search *Greenwich News* for news of Kilpatrick's speech at the Summer School of Organic Education.

We (therefore) do not know what John Dewey had written in his letter, read by Rev. Dr. Charles E. Taylor of the Second Congregational Church of Greenwich. Most likely it contained words of encouragement, a wish for success addressed to the conference organizers and participants, and a brief excuse to explain his absence.

At the time, mid-1913, the Dewey family was rather focused on Montessori. This may have been the reason that Dewey only sent a letter, to be read at the conference on July 31 (the contents of which are unknown). Alice Chipman Dewey and her and John's daughter Evelyn were preparing for their European tour, where they would also visit Maria Montessori (Staring & Aldridge, 2014ab). John Dewey himself may already have been busy as President of the National Kindergarten Association, preparing to preside over Maria Montessori's grandiose welcome to America, at Carnegie Hall on December 8, under the auspices of the Montessori Educational Association (Kramer, 1976; *New York Herald*, 1913b; *New York Times*, 1913c).

In addition, it is not clear whether John Dewey was already a fan of Marietta Johnson in the summer of 1913. He certainly was after his visit to Fairhope in December 1913, about which he reported in 1914 (Dewey, 1914; *Fairhope Courier*, 1914ab).

Nothing in the literature suggests or indicates that William Heard Kilpatrick may have been asked by John Dewey to represent Columbia University at the Greenwich Summer School of Organic Education in 1913. Kilpatrick's (1913b) diary entry for July 31, 1913 pertaining to his Greenwich speech shows that he was invited independently, on his own merits as a Montessori researcher:

At 2:30 Margaret [= Margaret Manigault (*née* Pickney) Kilpatrick; J.S.] & I leave for Greenwich in somebody's motorcar (whose, we never learn). While the sun was a little hot, still the trip was very enjoyable. It took some hour & a half to make the trip. At the school house we met Miss Hunt, D^r.

& Mrs. . The last named was the one who consulted me some days ago about the Montessori schools. The D^f. presided. First Mrs. Johnson spoke, going into the theoretical consideration of the topic. Then Miss Hunt reported on the school maintained by Mrs. Johnson this summer in Greenwich. Then I was introduced. I spoke about 15 or 20 minutes but had to stop for lack of time. I seem to have the close attention of those present, and I felt that I had gripped them! We then left immediately. A good ride home.

Note that two persons are not mentioned by name in the above quote; instead of their names empty spaces appear in Kilpatrick's diary. Kilpatrick may not have remembered the names when he wrote the diary entry, and made two blank spaces, but forgot to insert the names later. *Fairhope Courier* (1913), cited above, shows that Rev. Dr. C. F. Taylor presided; he must be the "D^f." in Kilpatrick's diary. The "Mrs." in the diary most likely refers to May (*née* Field) Lanier, who was elected first President of the Fairhope League on that July 31, 1913 (~ Mrs. Charles D. Lanier; more on her below).

There was another scholar from Teacher College who spoke at a Summer School in Greenwich: Milo Burdette Hillegas, Kilpatrick's colleague during his 1912 trip to Europe and visit to Maria Montessori and her schools in Rome, Italy. Hillegas spoke at the conference on discipline at the Fairhope Summer School in Greenwich in 1915 (*New York Tribune*, 1915b). However, he does not appear to have left a text or publication of his 1915 speech. One of the principal speakers at the time was Professor George Washington Kirchwey of the Law School of Columbia University (*New York Times*, 1915b). The subject of his talk was neither Marietta Johnson, nor her teaching methods, nor her school in Fairhope — in contrast to speeches delivered by others at the 1914 conference. The main topic then was "The Work of Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson and Its Value to Educators" (*New York Tribune*, 1914abc; see also *Fairhope Courier*, 1914cd).

Considering all this, we may now cautiously conclude that it is becoming necessary to decide who was first fan of Marietta Johnson at Columbia University. Was it John Dewey, as the literature says until this very day? Or was it William Heard Kilpatrick — even though no evidence has emerged to date showing how much and for how long Marietta Johnson and her pedagogy and practice actually influenced Kilpatrick and his theories!

Kilpatrick biographer Beineke (1998, p. 78) indicates that scholars from Teachers College, Columbia University may have met Marietta Johnson for the first time in 1912:

As Teachers College held its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1912, experimenters and educational leaders from across the country visited the campus. Two such innovators were Marietta Pierce Johnson of the Organic School in Fairhope, Alabama, and William Wirt from northern Indiana [...].

Neither Beineke (1998) nor his fellow Kilpatrick biographer Tenenbaum (1951), on the one hand, nor Johnson biographers on the other (Beck, 1987; McGrath, 1996; Newman, 1999, 2002), wrote about possible encounters between Kilpatrick and Johnson in 1912 — or an actual meeting in 1913 for that matter. (Did Johnson and Kilpatrick really meet in Greenwich in 1913? Kilpatrick's diary is silent about having spoken to Johnson personally.)

Additionally, there appears to be no publication by Kilpatrick about Marietta Johnson and her school. Well, this is a mistaken view. On September 18, 1915, that is, two years after the Summer School of Organic Education in Greenwich in 1913, *Survey* magazine published on their "Recent Pamphlets" page details of a then-recently released Fairhope League booklet, with two texts: (*i*) a chapter from *Schools of To-Morrow* on the Fairhope School of Organic Education (~ Dewey & Dewey, 1915ab, pp. 17-40), and (*ii*) a text entitled "The Work of Marietta Johnson, an analysis, by William Heard Kilpatrick."

Here is *The Survey's* (1915) reference:

The Fairhope School, a chapter from *Schools of Tomorrow*, by John Dewey and The Work of Marietta Johnson, an analysis, by William Heard Kilpatrick. The Fairhope League, William J. Hoggson, secretary, Greenwich, Conn.

It is quite possible that Kilpatrick's 1915 article on Marietta Johnson's work equals a (polished, elaborate) text of his 1913 Greenwich Summer School of Organic Education speech. Most likely it was published by the Fairhope League to be sold at the 1915 Fairhope Summer School at Greenwich where two Columbia University scientists spoke (Kirchwey and Hillegas; see above) and more Columbia University

scholars were likely in attendance who would certainly have been interested in purchasing the brochure with Dewey and Kilpatrick's texts.

The booklet may not even have been sold more widely than just at that Summer School. This could explain why, according to Worldcat.org, there is only one copy of the booklet available. It is located in the library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. Their copy, however, contains only the reprint of the chapter of *Schools of To-Morrow* on Marietta Johnson's school in Fairhope, published in May of that year, but unfortunately not Kilpatrick's text on Marietta Johnson's work!

Research by archivists and librarians at the Fairhope Public Library and at the Marietta Johnson Museum in Fairhope, Alabama, amongst others, recently revealed: A copy of the booklet does not appear to be in Fairhope libraries and/or archives! So, at this point, there is no more way to find out what Kilpatrick actually said at the Greenwich Summer School of Organic Education in 1913 than to wait for a copy of the 1915 booklet published by the Fairhope League to miraculously emerge from a private library or a dusty archive?

What is intriguing, of course, is the fact that the title of Kilpatrick's 1915 text is "The Work of Marietta Johnson," while the main topic of the conference at the Summer School in Greenwich in 1914 was "The Work of Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson and Its Value to Educators." It is important to be able to study Kilpatrick's text because it may contain evidence that Marietta Johnson's pedagogy since 1913 influenced his ideas of "wholehearted purposeful activity" in his later Project Method (compare Beineke, 1998, pp. 101-108; Staring, 2016a).

Here the First *Petite Histoire* Ends

Confusing Media Reports of "The Little School in the Woods" in Greenwich, CT

On March 2, 1916, *Oswego Palladium* (1916) reported that Marietta Johnson told the Woman's Municipal League of New York City during a lecture that she was working out "a system based on the belief that no boy or girl should be made to study until he or she is ten years old." The newspaper summarized,

Reading, writing and arithmetic should not be taught until children have passed through a happy childhood without having to enter a grind in which they are forced to acquire nervous trouble, distorted ideas and defective eyesight.

In that year, 1916, Marietta Johnson not solely directed her School of Organic Education in Fairhope. Newman (2002, p. 27) states that she until 1927 also "served as the salaried director, mostly in absentia, of the private Edgewood School [in Greenwich, CT] founded by [Mrs. May] Lanier, a kind of 'Organic School North'." Newman did not mention when exactly Johnson began working at the school founded by Mrs. Lanier (see *Figure 12* and *Figure 14*). Johnson (1974, p. 41) later wrote in her autobiography that she was invited "to direct Mrs. Lanier's little school in Greenwich, which made it possible for me to continue my work in the Fairhope School without compensation," and that she received a salary from this "Northern school" in Greenwich and "supplemented it by part of [her] lecture fees." However, Johnson did not provide the date she began working for Mrs. Lanier's school. According to the chronology in her autobiography, it must have been well after John Dewey delivered his 1914 report on his December 1913 visit to the School of Organic Education in Fairhope (compare Staring, 2021, pp. 124-126).

In 1916, May Lanier's school was also known as "The Little School in the Woods" (Read, 1916, p. 316). A trivial advertisement in the *New York Times* (1915a) of November 7, 1915 reads,

"The Little School in the Woods" is the same Little Red School house of your youth brought up to the highest standards of modern school development—a combination of country and city culture. Give your boy and girl wholesome associations, simple living, interesting work, individual care, and you give them a rare opportunity for developing an ideal citizenship. Come up and see for yourself what can be done at "The Little School in the Woods." Greenwich, Conn. Phone Greenwich 348.

You wonder, "Is this an ad for May Lanier's school?"

Earlier in 1915, in the July 18 *New York Tribune*, Sarah Addington (1915) wrote in an article entitled "Woodcraft Girls and the Kingdom of Outdoors" that British-born Canadian Ernest Thompson Seton (see *Figure 7*) "was found this week at the Fincherie, his summer home at Greenwich, Conn., deep in plans for

Woodcraft girls and the new Woodcraft school, the Little School in the Woods.” Seton was a renowned naturalist, writer, wildlife artist, educator, and founder of the *Woodcraft Indians* movement in 1902 (aka *Woodcraft Indian Scouts*; Forbush, 1910). The *Woodcraft Indians* movement transformed into the *Woodcraft League* in 1915. Seton also co-founded the *Boy Scouts of America* with Robert Baden-Powell and others in February 1910.

Does Addington’s remark mean that Ernest Thompson Seton was planning for the future of May Lanier’s “Little School in the Woods”? Was Seton perhaps the school’s principal in 1915?



Planting bulbs in autumn at The Little School in the Woods

Figure 8: Students of “The Little School in the Woods” (patron: Ernest Thompson Seton), Greenwich, Connecticut; in the November 1915 *Century Magazine* (Adler, 1915).

In November 1915, *Century Magazine* published an illustrated article on open-air schools in America. Hazel H. Adler (1915, p 92), the author, discussed the general idea of well-ventilated classrooms in relation to the open-air school movement “for sickly and anemic children, which has taken deep root in Germany, England, and America,” as well as the application of its elaboration in various so-called ‘Open-air Schools’ in the United States such as the Graham School in Chicago, or the Horace Mann School in Manhattan, and the Misses Mills School, Mount Airy, Pennsylvania. A series of photos illustrate the article.

Adler concluded her review with a description of “The Little School in the Woods” (*Ibid.*, p. 96; Italics by Adler) — three photos show students of the school during activities:

In a broad expanse on the edge of the Connecticut valley, an experiment in *man and woman making* has been going on for the last five years. It is known by the name of “The Little School in the Woods” [see *Figure 8*; J.S.] and has as its patron that beloved friend of children, Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton. The school work is carried on under the broad expanse of heaven [see *Figure 9*; J.S.] on ground which is rich in the fundamental elements of nature. “Ancient trees, glacier rocks, many, many kinds of wild flowers, water running in a stream, little wild wood animals,—and some domestic ones,—birds, and a broad sweep of sky”—all enter into the daily lessons of these fortunate children, and from these they study the various branches of natural science, learning the things of heaven and earth at first hand. These studies are linked with regular graded lessons, but always, when it is possible, the deed is supplied for the written word. History is acted out over and over again in this peaceful valley: Washington crosses the Delaware with a fleet of canoes [see *Figure 10*; J.S.]...When a boy or girl enters the school he learns that it is a place not alone of work, but a place to be happy; and in order to be happy one must always bear his share of the responsibility for the happiness of others. The purpose of the school is to educate by living *with* the children, is the thought of the kindly interpreter, “by enjoying what they enjoy, by showing them how to enjoy what we like, by teaching them how to cultivate their happiness, their intelligence, their skill, by accepting with them and with their enthusiasm the common life and its wonderful procession of creative events from day to day.”

Adler did not mention who the “kindly interpreter” she quoted was.



Figure 9 (left): Students of “The Little School in the Woods;” in the November 1915 *Century Magazine* (Adler, 1915).

Figure 10 (right): Students of “The Little School in the Woods” enacting Washington’s crossing of the Delaware River; in the November 1915 *Century Magazine* (Adler, 1915).

Evelyn and John Dewey and Others Discuss “The Little School in the Woods”

Earlier in 1915, in May of that year, Evelyn and John Dewey’s famous book *Schools of To-Morrow* was not just about schools founded by, for instance, Marietta Johnson or Caroline Pratt, among others, but also schools that now sound ambiguous. Interestingly, father and daughter Dewey wrote about a “Little School in the Woods at Greenwich.”

In the Little School in the Woods at Greenwich outdoor work is the basis of the whole school organization. Nature study plays a large part in this. Groups of pupils take long walks through the woods in all seasons and weathers, learning the trees in all their dresses, and the flowers which come with each season. They learn to know the birds and their habits; they study insects in the same way, and learn about the stars. In fact, so much of their time is spent out of doors, that the pupils acquire first hand a large fund of knowledge of the world of nature in all its phases. The basis of this work, the director of the school calls Woodcraft; he believes that experience in the things the woodman does—riding, hunting, camping, scouting, mountaineering, Indian-craft, boating, etc.—will make strong, healthy, and independent young people with well-developed characters and a true sense of the beauty of nature. (Dewey & Dewey, 1915ab, p. 91).

Questions arise when reading this description of the “Little School in the Woods at Greenwich” by Evelyn and John Dewey. Is this the same school we encountered above, in the Addington and Adler texts referenced? Who was the “director of the school” in *Schools of To-Morrow* who said that “Woodcraft” was the foundation of the school’s curriculum? Was it Ernest Thompson Seton? Was it May Lanier?

Sarah Addington (1915), in her *New York Tribune* article referenced above, stated that “a Woodcraft school [was] in the process of Building.” She traced the history of the “Little School in the Woods” from its beginnings in 1910 to July 1915:

The history of the Little school—once upon a time not connected with the Woodcraft movement—is interesting. Five years ago [= 1910; J.S.], Charles Lanier, son of the poet Sidney Lanier, was looking for a particular kind of outdoor school for his own children. He didn’t find it, so he engaged Bernard Sexton [see *Note 7*], the Woodcraft movement secretary to teach his children, the schoolroom to be a little cabin on the Lanier estate. Mr. Sexton, having strong ideas upon the Schoolmaster as is, set about teaching in a manner quite different from the schoolroom method, and the result was that the Lanier children began having the time of their lives. As Mrs. C. Tarbell Dudley, one of the school mothers and directors, says: “The children under Mr. Sexton are living; they are not preparing to live.” And gradually the little neighbors and friends of the Laniers were drawn into the circle, last year [= 1914; J.S.] the school numbering thirty-two children. Then came along a good fairy—a practical fairy, with money in pocket—saying: “Children, let us have a big Woodcraft school, where our families may live and our children may work and play and learn all year long.” So Mr. Sexton and Mrs. Dudley and Mr. Seton and all the other interesting peoplet [*sic*; J.S.] set about it to make a school for their children and friends’ children, where outdoor life and study and association with rich minds might all blend to make the perfect atmosphere for the completest development of childhood. As a working expression of their idea Mr. Seton’s Woodcraft methods are to be taken over bodily. Even part of Mr. Seton’s Greenwich estate is to be the bidding place of the new big Little School in the Woods, to be ready for use by early fall. “It’s a thing I’ve long dreamed of,” said Mr. Seton, in his even way. “It’s the only enterprise I’d ever sell my land to.” These people who stand for the Little

School in the Woods are a group of friends who will make a settlement of their own right at and around the school. “And we’re to have the most superior talent for our children” exclaimed Mrs. Dudley [...].”

Three photos illustrate the article, one of Ann Seton — Grace (*née* Gallatin) Seton and Ernest Thompson Seton’s daughter — dressed in Native American clothing; another of “Big Wolf” Ernest Thompson Seton, also dressed in native American clothing complete with feather headdress; and the third photo is a group portrait of so-called “Woodcraft Girls” along with Miss Ann Seton and her father Ernest Thompson Seton, all dressed in Native American clothes. What is remarkable is the fact that Addington’s overview starts with a surprise: Bernard Sexton, Secretary of the *Woodcraft Indians* movement founded by Ernest Thompson Seton, was the teacher of the “The Little School in the Woods,” literally a small cabin on the estate of May Lanier and her husband Charles Day Lanier (see *Figure 11*).

The *Daily East Oregonian* (1911) of August 25, 1911 shows that the school was an eight-room cottage and that the school had exactly ten students the year after it was founded:

If one may judge from the story in the September *World’s Work*, Mr. Bernard Sexton has solved the problem of making the schoolmaster’s life not only endurable but unusually pleasant. Mr. Sexton lives and has his school in an eight-room cottage in the woods in Connecticut. His ten pupils take care of the house and of the stable and garden, and they cook luncheon—thus learning many useful things themselves, as well as making things comfortable for their master.

This quote from *Daily East Oregonian* refers to an article in *The World’s Work* of September 1911 for more information. *Woodcraft Indians* Secretary Bernard Sexton, teacher at “The Little School in the Woods,” was the author. (Incidentally, Sexton was also *Boy Scouts of America* Scout Master). Sexton (1911, pp. 14808-14809) began his article,

I will try to tell what is taking place daily, under my observation and guidance in a little school hidden among the woody hills in the outskirts of a town in Connecticut, not forty miles from New York. The men who started this school, when they found their children attaining the age at which education looms up, remembered a school they had gone to in their boyhood—the right sort of school—and looked about for the opportunity to get for their children a training that is of value throughout life. Such places, they learned, were about as scarce as ideal conditions usually are. There was nothing to do but to pioneer, to break a new trail into the world of education, to build up a new school from the foundations; and so, beginning very humbly with a few young boys and girls, an elementary school has been started in a little woodland cottage, with plenty of field and meadow and forested places in the neighborhood, and with cows, chickens, horses, dogs, and rabbits as dumb spectators of the enterprise. There are seven boys and three girls in the school, and their ages range from six to fourteen.

He then (*Ibid.*, p. 14809; Italics by Sexton) explained the school’s aims:

The purpose of the school is to restore to the educative processes that wholeness which comes only when *all* the interests of the child are sympathetically included in the range of instruction. In other words, we who have the guidance of this little institution, propose to educate by living with the children, by enjoying what they enjoy, by showing them how to enjoy what we like, by teaching them how to enlarge their happiness, their intelligence, their skill; by accepting with them and with their enthusiasm the common life and its wonderful procession of creative events from day to day.

It is shown above that Adler (1915) in her text on open-air schools in the *Century Magazine* did not mention the name of a specific person she was quoting. We can now conclude that she used some lines from Sexton’s 1911 *World’s Work* article (quoted above; she misquoted a word: “cultivate” instead of “enlarge”).

Ergo: Sexton was Adler’s “kindly interpreter.”

But this aside, Sexton (1911) in his article entitled “A Little School in the Woods” further described an arbitrary school day and exactly what the different children were doing, at what time and why. Intermediate texts in his story generally explain the school curriculum. Four photos illustrate various activities of the school’s teacher (= Sexton) and his students.

One Little School in the Woods? Two Little Schools in the Woods?

Bernard Sexton (1911) nowhere mentioned the names of the founders of the “Little School in the Woods:” May and Charles Day Lanier. It seems there is no report of Charles Lanier’s (further) involvement with the school in the newspapers, magazines or other literature. May Lanier, on the other hand, was very active in the local social life of Greenwich, mainly involved in associations for educational purposes. And what is important here is that she got to know Marietta Johnson through her work for such organizations. For example, in the early years after its foundation in 1913 she was President of the Fairhope League. She was a member of the reception committee that hosted the conference on “The Work of Mrs. Johnson and Its Value to Educators” at the Fairfield House in Greenwich in 1914 (*New York Times*, 1914; *New York Tribune*, 1914). And in 1915 she was among the leaders of the project to perform Percy MacKaye’s *Sanctuary: A Bird Masque* under patronage of the Fairhope League (e.g., *New York Tribune*, 1915a).

Interesting in the regard of the above-mentioned connections between the “Little School in the Woods” and the *Woodcraft Indians* movement and *Boy Scouts of America* (see also *Note 11*) is the fact that in 1912 May Lanier founded the Chattahoochee Group of *Camp Fire Girls of America* — sister organization of *Boy Scouts of America* — in Greenwich (*Evening World*, 1912; *Washington Herald*, 1912a). From March 1915 she served as Vice-President of the *Camp Fire Girls of America* (*Daily Standard Union*, 1915a; *Sun*, 1915b).

The various newspapers and magazines cited clearly give the impression that sometime in 1915 there was, say, “Head Chief and Medicine Man” Ernest Thompson Seton running a “new big Little School in the Woods to be ready for use by early fall” (Addington, 1915) and there were the Laniers running a “Little School in the Woods” with teacher Bernard Sexton.

What is the solution to this puzzle of different schools in the woods of Greenwich?

New developments had taken place in 1915 regarding the original “Little School in the Woods” founded by the Laniers in 1910. Sarah Addington’s story in the *New York Tribune*, published in the Summer of 1915, quoted above, seems to indicate that the thriving school, first housed on the estate of May and Charles Lanier, was moved to the property of Ernest Thompson Seton, and that Seton somehow took over management of the “Little School in the Woods.” According to Addington (1915), a sort of fairy intervention had happened and triggered the move: “Then came along a good fairy—a practical fairy, with money in pocket—saying: “Children, let us have a big Woodcraft school, where our families may live and our children may work and play and learn all year long.” This line suggests that the “Little School in the Woods” would become the school for children of a kind of commune of like-minded (adult) *Woodcraft Indians* living on the estate of *Woodcraft Indians* leader Ernest Thompson Seton. On July 23, five days after Addington’s article in the *New York Tribune*, the *Bridgeport Evening Farmer* (1915a) reported,

The Little School in the Woods of Greenwich has organized for the purpose of conducting an educational institution, etc. The amount of capital stock authorized as \$25,000, divided into 250 shares par value \$100. The amount of capital stock with which the corporation will begin is \$1,000. The incorporators are Bernard Sexton, Lotus S. Dudley and Charles D. Burnes.

This might indicate that the money of a “good fairy” (Addington, 1915) can be identified as the capital that the incorporated school had collected. Interesting, of course, is the fact that the school’s teacher Sexton was one of the three incorporators.

Three weeks later, on August 14, the *Bridgeport Evening Farmer* (1915b) published “Fight Disrupts ‘Little School in the Woods’,” a second report telling a schism story:

The chipmunks, woodchucks, gray wolves and foxes of the Little School in the Woods, at Rockridge, near Greenwich, Conn., are distressed because their Chief Grizzly, Director Bernard Sexton, is going to other quarters.

They aren’t really the animals they are called—they have real human parents who are engaged in an old-fashioned country school fight which is disrupting the novel nature school founded five years ago by Charles D. Lanier, son of Sidney Lanier, the poet. The result of the fight is the moving of Chief Grizzly Sexton, with some of his pupils arranged in chipmunk and other classes, to new quarters on the Ernest Thompson Seton estate nearby. The other pupils will remain at Rockridge and emulate the woods’ animals in what they will call the Lanier School. Both will retain the self-government, wildwood customs and quality of the sexes of the original school.

These events happened while the Fairhope Summer School took place in Greenwich, and Marietta Johnson and her husband were in Greenwich. In a letter to the editor of *Fairhope Courier*, published on July 7, 1915, Marietta Johnson (1915) wrote from Greenwich: “I enclose announcement of our summer school, which may interest you. Things are moving in a very satisfactory manner, although the weather has been cool, almost cold until now, when we seem to be fairly melting.”

Did Marietta Johnson know what was happening in the education world in Greenwich?

Not long before, in June, in Fairhope, the *Fairhope League South* (meaning: Fairhope League of Fairhope) was organized as a sort of counterpart to the original Fairhope League, founded in Greenwich in 1913 (see above). From that time the (original) Fairhope League was popularly called the *Fairhope League North*. According to Lydia J. Newcomb Comings (1915, p. 161) who co-founded the School of Organic Education in Fairhope with Marietta Johnson in 1907, the *Fairhope League South* was founded “to prevent the [Fairhope; J.S.] school from being moved to some northern point.” Elsewhere Lydia J. Newcomb Comings — then the first President of the Board of Trustees of the *Fairhope League South* — and the first Treasurer of the *Fairhope League South* Clara M. Gaston stated in the *Fairhope Courier*: “The League was formed to obtain funds in the South for the support of the School of Organic Education [in Fairhope; J.S.] as there is danger that the school may be removed to the North [= Greenwich?; J.S.] unless the South rallies to its support” (Newcomb Comings & Gaston, 1915).

Was the creation of the *Fairhope League South* organization the result of some kind of foreknowledge of things about to happen? Did Marietta Johnson know anything about it in mid-1915?

December 1915: Ernest Thompson Seton Quits *Boy Scouts of America*

In the summer of 1915, Bernard Sexton, Secretary of the *Woodcraft Indians* movement, Scout Master of the *Boy Scouts of America*, and the teacher of the “Little School in the Woods” from 1910-1915, moved with part of the school, but including the name of the school, to the grounds of the *Woodcraft Indians* leader Ernest Thompson Seton. It is probably consistent with events to assume that sometime during the Fairhope Summer School in Greenwich in July and August of 1915, May and Charles Lanier as a result asked Marietta Johnson to become principal of the then scaled-down “Little School in the Woods.”

Marietta Johnson started in the fall of that year as principal of the school.

May Lanier and Marietta Johnson became good friends (see *Figure 12* and *Figure 14*). Johnson (1974, p. 39) wrote in her autobiography, “Mrs. Charles D. Lanier...has been one of my warmest friends...and always one of the strongest supporters.” Johnson (1929, p. v) even dedicated her book *Youth In A World of Men* to May Lanier.

On December 3, *Albany Evening Journal* (1915) announced, “Mrs. Lanier will come to Albany today with Mrs. Marietta Johnson, who will speak this evening in the auditorium of the education building under direction of the St. Agnes School.” The next day, *Argus* (1915), another local newspaper in Albany, New York, reported that Marietta Johnson had given a lecture the previous day under the direction of St. Agnes School in Albany. The reporter added: “Mrs. Johnson at present is directing two schools, one at Fairhope, Alabama, and the other at Greenwich, Conn.”

Two days later, numerous newspapers across the United States reported that Ernest Thompson Seton had retired from the *Boy Scouts of America* and would turn his attention to the promotion of the *Woodcraft League* (see *Note 8*). One title of an article was, “Thompson Seton Quits Boy Scouts. Famous Naturalist Objects to Military Spirit in the Organization” (*New York Press*, 1915), while another newspaper headlined, “Thompson Seton Quits As Chief Of Boy Scouts. Too Much Militarism, Too Little Woodcraft” (*Syracuse Herald*, 1915). This probably formed the last step of a larger scheme planned in the spring or early summer of 1915. And, it also turned out that the “Little School in the Woods,” which had been so prominent in Adler’s (1915) *Century Magazine* article on open-air schools the previous month (see above), had been transformed into the Wabanaki Woodcraft School.

The *New York Tribune* (1915d) reported on December 12:

On the estate of Ernst Thompson Seton here [= Greenwich; J.S.] the Wabanaki Woodcraft School, planned last spring and stimulated by the recent controversy between Mr. Seton and the Boy Scouts of America, is now in operation, despite the fact that there are only two small slab buildings on the

grounds. One is used as a schoolroom and the other as a carpentry shop. Mr. Seton, the head, will here foster the Woodcraft movement, which is in opposition to the Boy Scouts in several of its phases, to “get back to the boy or girl.” The school’s professed aim is to combine out-of-door life and nature study with progressive education, and also prepare the boy or girl for college in the most efficient way, as interpreted by Mr. Seton, who says that manhood, not scholarship, is the first aim.

The first article about Seton’s school in 1916 appeared in the *Sun* (1916). The reporter described the “Woodcraft School” or “Wabanaki Woodcraft School.” The illustrated article began with the comment “One of the most interesting of the schools started recently in this part of the country is the Woodcraft School, located on Round Hill Road, Greenwich, Conn.” Three photos illustrate the article: (a). A photo showing a wooden cabin. The caption reads, “The little red roofed schoolhouse on the Mesa.” (b). A photo showing children in a wooded area. The caption reads, “A class in nature study.” (c). A photo showing three students of the school in the company of a teacher sitting on a bench in front of a tent, outdoors. The caption reads, “The algebra lesson.”

This school is unique, for it aims to combine woodcraft pursuits and nature study directed by experts, with instruction of highest academic standard, comprising both primary and collegiate preparatory work. The instruction is given largely out of doors or in open air classrooms. The school makes art, music, folk dancing and handicraft inherent parts of a Woodcraft scholar’s day. A visitor to the school has the following to say about it: “If you have been up the Round Hill road recently you must have noticed two small slab buildings on the hill this side of Ernest Thompson Seton’s place, ‘The Fincherie,’ where the tents were this summer. One of these—the one with the big stone chimney and the windows on the south side—is the schoolroom and the other is the carpentry shop of the ‘Wabanaki Woodcraft School,’ which is perhaps the last word in education. [...]”

“For lunch the children go back up the road to the house on the I. N. Phelps Stokes estate, where some of the children live, and all of them have lunch.

The day program is given, teachers and “regular instructors” are introduced and a list of advisors and counsellors concludes the article.

In another article referring to the school, in April 1916, the Wabanaki Woodcraft School was still mentioned by its former name. In this illustrated article about Seton’s *Woodcraft League* in the *Sioux City Sunday Journal* (1916) one of two illustrative photos shows children during a “Lesson in Archery at Little School in the Woods, Greenwich, Conn.”

1916 also marks the first article on the downsized Lanier School. The *Evening Telegram* of December 3, 1916, had “New Education System, Evolved By Woman, Makes School Work A Joy For Children” — a full-page illustrated article by Ed. A. Goewey (1916) about the Lanier School, now called Lanier Organic School or the private Organic Institution of Learning at Greenwich.

Photographs illustrating the article show (a) children on crutches in “the kindergarten class;” (b) children relaxing on small bed-like structures during “the half hour nap with windows wide open;” (c) children at work in a kitchen (“the kitchen class”); (d) children at a table (“a combination of fresh air and study”); (e) children working in “the work shop;” (f) boys in a forest during “the open air arithmetic class;” (g) a girl (“one of the pupils”); and lastly (h) “the teachers:” Mrs. E. D. Allen, Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Harbon, Mrs. Marietta Johnson, Mrs. Lanier, Dr. Fillmore Moore, and Miss Margaret Poehlmann. (Interestingly, both May Lanier and Marietta Johnson were listed as teachers of the school.)



Figure 11 (left): “The Little School in the Woods;” in the September 1911 *World’s Work* (Sexton, 1911, p. 14811).

Figure 12 (right): May Field, the later Mrs. Charles D. Lanier; in the May 3, 1897, *New York Journal and Advertiser* (1897).

Reporter Goewey portrayed the Lanier Organic School of thirty-seven students just outside Greenwich in the Connecticut hills under the “guiding spirit” of Marietta L. Johnson. Goewey’s text states that Johnson had founded a school in Fairhope to demonstrate her educational approach; that the experiment was successful; that the school at Fairhope had passed the experimental phase for one of constancy; that the school had been approved by John Dewey; that the residents of Greenwich had maintained a small private school, but that the results fell short of expectations and that “Mrs. Johnson was called North to undertake its management;” that success was marked from the start of her pursuit; and that the school then worked “with the perfection of a well-oiled machine.”

The guiding spirit of this school is Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson, of Fairhope, Ala., one of the most widely known educators in the country, who has devoted many years to a study of the child and its needs, and who, as the originator of the Organic System of Education for Children and founder of the Fairhope school, has the eyes of the educational world focused upon herself and her methods...In Fairhope she established a school to demonstrate her system, and so successful has her experiment turned out and so concrete have been the results obtained that the institution long since passed the experimental stage for one of permanency, and has been indorsed by such well known educators as John Dewey, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University.

Paragraph headings such as “Joy in Work,” “No Closed Doors,” “Lie Down and Rest,” and “Songs, Games and Stories, with Exercise in Open Air, No Marks Nor Grades and Pupils the ‘Bosses’ of the Teachers” denote the trusted approach to education that Johnson proudly announced.

Play is the principal feature of the daily program, and most of this is in the open. Two hours a day for inside work is considered amply sufficient. The work in the kindergarten is much the same as found in other schools, except that the children indicate their preferences and the teachers follow...As a rule, when a child is deeply interested in either work, or play, he is not interrupted...There is a large carpenter shop, with all kinds of tools, and an arts and crafts department, with everything necessary to make innumerable pretty things to take home to proud fathers and mothers...The children are permitted to make anything they choose...each child has a place for his or her things in the closets or upon the books and shelves, and when through they are taught to put them away neatly...One of the methods of teaching the children to count, measure and tell color is out of the ordinary. There is a store furnished with everything which the pupils need in their work, from colored papers and tacks to pencils and glue, and while some of the youngsters act as clerks, others serve as customers, and with real money purchase what they desire. What child wouldn’t like to “play store” this way?



Figure 13 (left): In 1916, Marietta Johnson and May Lanier (= Mrs. Charles D. Lanier) were members of the National Council of the *Woodcraft League*, as published first in *The Woodcraft Manual for Girls* (Seton, 1916, p. vii).

Figure 14 (right): Marietta Johnson (left) and May Lanier (right); in the December 13, 1929, *Evening Leader* (1929). (See also Note 10).

Later that month, the *Journal of Education* (1916) published most of Goewey’s article on the Lanier School, but would not attribute it to Goewey. The article was printed without illustrating photos and incorrectly calls the school the “Lenier Organic School.”

Marietta Johnson Member of the National Council of Seton’s *Woodcraft League*

In an article entitled “Seton Names His Council,” the *Sun* of December 25, 1915, reported that Ernest Thompson Seton made public a list of 18 names of individuals invited by him to join the National Council of the *Woodcraft League* — the 1915 sequel to the *Woodcraft Indians* movement — including May Lanier (Mrs. Charles D. Lanier). This shows that there was no animosity between them, and that the whole “Little School in the Woods” schism had not affected their willingness to work together in (educational) organizations.

The *Sun* (1915) article ends in an explicit manner (see Note 12):

The *Woodcraft League* had its origin in April, 1902, and its primary object is to interest boys and girls and men and women in wild life and woodland ways. In many points it closely resembles what Mr. Seton outlined as his Boy Scout policy, but which he says has been marred by the introduction of military tactics by James West, head of the executive board.

What is remarkable is the circumstance that at one point, perhaps in late 1915, but more likely in early 1916, Marietta Johnson was invited to join Seton’s *Woodcraft League* National Council. She accepted the invitation; see, for example, the list of names of members of the National Council in *The Woodcraft Manual For Girls* (Seton, 1916, p. vii; see Figure 13 and Note 13). What is *as* remarkable is the fact that no one seems to have noticed it yet. Biographies of Ernest Thompson Seton do not mention Marietta Johnson, or “The Little School in the Woods” (see, for example, Anderson, 1986; Keller, 1984; and Witt, 2010). And biographical texts discussing Marietta Johnson are also silent about her involvement in Seton’s *Woodcraft League*!

A decade and a half earlier, in the late 1890s, Marietta Johnson, unmarried at that time (≈ Marietta L. Pierce), was a champion of literature on nature study. The following text by Johnson in an advertisement for Nellie Walton Ford’s 1896 book *Nature’s Byways: Natural Science for Primary Pupils* (in Thompson & Thompson, 1899, unnumbered page after p. 104) speaks volumes:

Marietta L. Pierce, Prin. Primary Dept., Normal School, Mankato, Minn.—I am exceedingly well pleased with “Nature’s Byways.” It is a gem as to style, and the sentences, in my judgment, are particularly well adapted to first grade work. I am delighted with the illustrations, especially the reproduction from great artists. I believe the book will be of great value in any primary school. We shall use it in our school.

Johnson will also have enjoyed reading other work from Ford. Ford was ‘First Primary Teacher’ at Irving School in St. Paul, Minnesota, Johnson’s hometown. For example, Ford’s monthly 2-page natural science contribution to *School Education* magazine, entitled “Primary School Leaflet” (in 1898 and 1899) and “Second Grade Leaflet” (in 1899 and 1900). Later, Johnson loved teaching natural sciences outdoors in the field (see *Figure 15*).

Whatever happened in the summer and fall of 1915 and winter of 1916, one thing is clear: Marietta Johnson’s heart for nature education must have been touched (by Ernest Thompson Seton and/or May Lanier?) — to garner her support for Seton’s *Woodcraft League* organization. However, Johnson’s (1974) autobiography is utterly silent about her support of the *Woodcraft League*; about May Lanier’s relationship with Ernest Thompson Seton’s organizations; about Sexton; about Seton; about the history of the Wabanaki School; about the split of “The Little School in the Woods” in 1915.

Here the Second *Petite Histoire* Ends

Marietta Johnson’s Relative Absence From the Public Record, 1917-18

Frank Moore Colby’s *New International Year Book* for the year 1915 mentions Marietta Johnson and her Fairhope School of Organic Education, but not yet the Lanier School in Greenwich. Colby’s lemma “Organic Education” concludes: “Mrs. Johnson has not formulated her work into any system, so it is impossible to state the principles by which she works. The best description of her work is found in *Schools of To-Morrow*, by John Dewey” (Colby (Ed.), 1916, p. 193). As of the following year, Marietta Johnson’s “Organic Education” was not mentioned in the *New International Year Book* (e.g., Colby (Ed.), 1917).

1916 was Marietta Johnson’s first full year of running the School of Organic Education in Fairhope and the Lanier School in Greenwich. The Lanier School would be renamed Edgewood School sometime in 1917 when it moved from the Lanier estate to rooms in the Edgewood Inn Casino (*New York Herald*, 1918a). This location (see *Figure 19*) probably gave the school the name “Edgewood School.” Because the Edgewood Inn Casino and Cottages were sold in the spring of 1917, it does not seem too farfetched to assume that the school received a temporary lease from the new owners (see also *New York Herald*, 1917).

Marietta Johnson (1974, p. 44) wrote in her autobiography, “After I directed Mrs. Lanier’s school for two years, she turned it over to me, and changing its name and location, we proceeded to make of it a center in the North for demonstrating the Fairhope idea.”

Nevertheless, (nationwide) media attention for her and the “Fairhope idea” seems to have faded in 1916, compared to, say, between 1912 and 1915, and certainly did not reach peaks like in those years (Staring, 2020, 2021). It seems Marietta Johnson has not given as many lectures as in previous years, probably due to the fact that in 1916 she had to run two schools, in different states far apart: Alabama and Connecticut. Her autobiography reveals that by the end of 1916, the Fairhope League (North) could no longer pay Jean Lee Hunt, its Secretary. Marietta Johnson (1974, p. 47) stated, “for a number of years the funds were most uncertain, being largely secured by personal solicitation.” The December 23 issue of *The Survey* (1916) reported that one of the aims of the Fairhope League (North) was “to conduct a correspondence school in the principles of organic education for mothers throughout the country.” The magazine further stated that at the time, Johnson was “lecturing weekly in New York city on her methods,” revealing one of her plans: She was about to start a “demonstration school in New York and to secure as pupils a limited number of orphans from the countries at war.”

A month and a half earlier, in November, an author of a letter to the editor of the *New York Tribune* had already called for a school in New York City like the one in Fairhope, stating that such a school would certainly be “a godsend to the community” (Pumpelly, 1916). In 2013, I disclosed that Public School 95, Clarkson Street, Manhattan, principal John E. Wade, was the school implied in Pumpelly’s letter (see Staring, 2013, pp. 62-63; 2014, pp. 217-218; see *Figure 16*).

The archives of the Bureau of Educational Experiments (BEE) at both Bank Street College of Education, New York City (see *Note 14*), and City and Country School, New York City (see *Note 15*), as well as *The Fairhope Courier* (the local newspaper of Fairhope, Alabama), serve as primary sources for the following brief overview of the history of Johnson’s educational experiment in New York City.

“Organic Schools” in Fairhope and in Greenwich in Financial Need?

On January 6, 1917, Marietta Johnson left Fairhope again “for Greenwich, Conn. To resume her work there returning however for the month of February” (*Fairhope Courier*, 1917e). On March 2, 1917, *Fairhope Courier* (1917k) published a short article entitled “Support The Organic School.” The tone was extremely urgent. The newspaper stated that there was a firm need for money to support the School of Organic Education in Fairhope. The text in the *Fairhope Courier* gives the robust impression that here was some kind of competition between the Lanier School in Greenwich and the School of Organic Education in Fairhope:

The feeling in the Fairhope League North that Mrs. Johnson should give all of her time to the school at Greenwich, Conn., and the lecture platform grows apace. This means that unless the friends of the school rally to its support, it will be abandoned. The Fairhope League South was formed for the sole purpose of aiding in raising funds for the school outside of territory covered by the Fairhope League North and especially in the south. The minimum fee is \$1.00, the maximum (?). An effort is being made to secure pledges for 10,000.00 per year for ten years. Pledges of \$1.00 or more are asked. A blank form is given...

I hereby promise to pay to the Fairhope League South the sum of

\$ _____ on or before

of each year for a period of _____ years

Name _____

PO _____ State _____

Fairhope people especially are asked to do all they possibly can as the loss of the school will mean disaster to many of our interests.

As funding for the ‘Southern’ school budget likely remained Marietta Johnson’s first ongoing struggle, she wrote (on March 24, 1917) to the then-recently organized Bureau of Educational Experiments in New York City for assistance in supporting the Fairhope School of Organic Education (see *Note 16*). She noted that for the past ten years, the school had only been supported by voluntary donations. Every year in May it became uncertain whether the school would continue after the summer holidays. She therefore asked support for ten years and wrote that the school needed \$100,000. She asked, “I am making an effort now to secure \$100,000 which will support the school for ten years. Will you not help toward this fund?” And she assured, “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.”

It appears she did not receive a gift (see *Note 17*). Instead she was offered to teach and mentor teachers at Public School 95 in exchange for a generous salary.



Figure 15 (left): Photo in *Scientific American Supplement* of November 14, 1914, showing Marietta Johnson and her students outdoors while studying erosion (Gruenberg, 1914, p. 316).

Figure 16 (middle): Front door, P.S. 95, Clarkson Street, NYC (Photo: Jeroen Staring, 2011). **Figure 17 (right):** Mrs. Marjorie Merriweather (*née* Post) Close (Mrs. Edward B. Close); in the November 10, 1919, *Evening World* (1919).

Johnson's letter to the Bureau of Educational Experiments in March 1917 arrived at a time when in the previous year, in the spring of 1916, the Bureau had already discussed plans to invite her to serve on their so-called 'Working Council' that addressed matters related to the work and aims of the BEE. On May 24, 1916, the BEE had held a vote that "Mrs. Marietta Johnson, Mr. Wirt, Mr. Patri, Miss Persis Miller, and Miss Alexander be approached by individual members, as appointed by the Chair, in regard to their willingness to serve on the Working Council" of the BEE. There is no data showing that Johnson was willing or accepted (see *Note 18*).

The following year, 1917, the Bureau of Educational Experiments decided to invite her to teach a class of six-year-old children in Public School 95 (P.S. 95) as an experiment in her particular approach to education. On February 26 of that year, the BEE Working Council voted that the so-called Summer Work Committee would consult Marietta Johnson "with the hope of interesting her in undertaking supervision of [an] educational experiment proposed in P.S. 95" (see *Note 19*). This specific experiment is also mentioned on page 4 of the Annual Report of the Chairman of the Working Council, Bureau of Educational Experiments, 1916-1917: "An experimental class of six year old children in P.S. 95, in charge of Mrs. Marietta Johnson, is also planned in detail" (see *Note 20*).

On March 5, 1917, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Chair of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, reported that Johnson "was favorably disposed toward the scheme for a class in P.S. 95." 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" (see *Note 21*).

On March 12, 1917, the so-called BEE Committee on Greenwich House Plans reported to the BEE Working Council, "Mrs. Johnson had met with them and with the Principal of P.S. 95 and P.S. 64 (the latter school to be included in the plan) and that she had been much interested" (see *Note 22*). The BEE Executive Committee reported the same day that "the plan for cooperation with Mrs. Johnson, P.S. 95 and Greenwich House" was considered (see *Note 23*). Note that this timing of events coincided exactly with the moment in time Marietta Johnson wrote a letter to the BEE (on March 24, 1917) for assistance in supporting her Fairhope school. Of course: the exact who (first), when, where, why, whether, cannot be deduced from the BEE minutes.

On May 12, 1917, the BEE Executive Committee reported there should be a budget of \$3,000 for "Mrs. Johnson's Public School Work" (see *Note 24*). A few weeks later, on June 1, *Fairhope Courier* (1917j) reported that the 1917 summer school session would begin in Fairhope on Monday, June 4, and that someone other than Marietta Johnson would be in charge "until Mrs. Johnson return as she will be detained a few days in the north but will be here until the close of the [summer] school [on Friday, July 13]." Then, and this is extremely remarkable, *Fairhope Courier* (1917g) wrote two weeks later, on June 15:

Mrs. Johnson's home coming has brought a feeling of security in regard to the school such as has not been felt for a number of years. She has secured promises of about \$5,000 per year for ten years toward the support of the school and is now working to bring the amount to \$10,000 per year. Most of these subscriptions are in large sums but we welcome them from our friends in any amount.

This has most probably everything more to do with Marietta Johnson hoping for a hefty pot of BEE money than reality. Maybe she spoke to the editor of *Fairhope Courier* about her hopes — enthused, but completely out of turn?

Next, a week later, on June 22, *Fairhope Courier* (1917b) published a short article taken from the *Mobile Register* (date unaccredited):

Fairhope's Organic School has a claim upon the friends of education. It is doing a work that is attracting attention not only to the school, but to Fairhope and the South. The little community, however, is not able to give it support that justifies its full development along the lines adopted for it; and Mrs. Johnson, who began it and who has kept it going by her indefatigable labor, is now in the North asking for assistance to make the school what she believes it ought to be. The Southern people just at this time have many obligations to meet, yet, no doubt, some will be glad to learn that here is an institution they can help, and that in helping they will encourage Northern people to help. The school certainly should remain in the South.—*Mobile Register*.

And in the same June 22 issue, *Fairhope Courier* (1917a) wrote the following in an article entitled “Fairhope’s Famous Organic School:”

The Courier let past week without editorial comment, the announcement made in the Organic School notes, that Mrs. Johnson had secured promises of \$5,000 a year for ten years for the Organic School, and was working to increase the amount to \$10,000, but we wish now to say that this is one of the most important notices which it has ever been the privilege of this paper to make. From many standpoints the Organic School is one of the most important institutions of Fairhope...The courier is very glad that Mrs. Comings, president of the Organic School, in the School Notes, in this issue, announces a meeting on next Monday evening, of the friends of the school, to congratulate Mrs. Johnson on the successful result of her efforts for financing it, and to counsel together for the greater success of the school in the future...This is not a meeting to solicit local contributions.

On June 29, *Fairhope Courier* (1917c) reported about the meeting where Marietta Johnson would show her cards and share her adventures to ensure the school’s survival for another ten years. Several resolutions were resolved; among these the following two cited here (below). The article also describes Marietta Johnson’s happiness in achieving her goal.

“Resolved that we express our fullest appreciation of the successful efforts of Mrs. M. L. Johnson, and associates, for the Organic School and our hearty thanks to those outside of Fairhope who have so generously aided financially in this work.

“Resolved, that we recognize the school as one of the most important influences for the advancement of our community, educationally and economically, and therefore deserving of the fullest support the community can give it. [...]

Mrs. Johnson was much affected by the hearty expressions of appreciation of her and her work and responded feelingly. She gave a number of interesting incidents of her work in the east when presenting the principles of Organic Education and soliciting support for the demonstration of the same.

Note that at that meeting on Monday, June 25, no word or syllable appears to have been spoken to congratulate Marietta Johnson for contacting the Bureau of Educational Experiments in New York City, or Johnson’s upcoming work in Public School 95 and Public School 64. It seems she said nothing about it, nor about a royal salary she would earn in New York City.

Note further that Johnson’s autobiography (1975, pp. 41-45) page after page in “Finding Support” — the chapter recounting her quest for financial contributions between 1914 and 1918 — is completely silent on the Bureau of Educational Experiments; on the work in Public School 95 and Public School 64; and on the salary she earned in New York City.

Still, the minutes of the Bureau of Educational Experiments show that the recommended budget, dated June 1917, was, “Mrs. Johnson expenses \$2,500” (see *Note 25*). In addition, the final 1917-1918 budget plans from around October 1917 show that Johnson received \$2,500 in salary and an additional \$300 in expenses (see *Note 26*).

Marietta Johnson Worked at P.S. 64 and P.S. 95; Employed by the BEE

On August 24, 1917, *Fairhope Courier* (1917d) published an article entitled “Mrs. Johnson’s Good Work,” taken from the *Mobile Register* (date unaccredited), stating that the School of Organic Education in Fairhope had “a very great success, but is not situated in the center of large population. For this growth there is need of a larger and assured income. Mrs. Johnson, the founder, has been up North and will go again in a few days, and there she has met with much encouragement.” The article appears to be a follow-up to the article published in the June 22 *Fairhope Courier* (1917b), quoted in full from the *Mobile Register*.

Elsewhere in the same August 24 issue, *Fairhope Courier* (1917h) cryptically reported that Marietta Johnson was leaving Fairhope the previous day to “the north”. She would go to Nantucket first; then Greenwich; then New York City, “to supervise the opening of school there.” No further explanation; no mention of Public School 95; and no mention of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, her employer in New York City. It is striking that the *Fairhope Courier* delivered relatively meaningless messages in this

regard where in fact no facts were reported, but where facts were circumvented by obfuscated language. Both their own articles and those taken from the *Mobile Register* (reprinted in *Fairhope Courier*) about what Marietta Johnson was doing in “the North” were more concealing than revealing in 1917.

From September 1917 to June 1918, Marietta Johnson supervised a number of teachers and taught a class in P.S. 95 in New York City. It appears that she was satisfied with the results of her work. On February 6, 1918, she reported to the BEE Working Council. About her class in P.S. 95, she noted a “great improvement in the children’s voices, their poise, and their self-direction” (see *Note 27*).

Earlier, in October 1917, the BEE Working Council voted that Johnson’s name would “be referred to the Membership Committee as a non-resident member” (see *Note 28*). The BEE Report of the Membership Committees of December 6, 1917 states, “The Committee thinks that Mrs. Johnson’s chief contribution relates to the connection between health and education: she realizes that the child has a nervous system. In addition she has marked ability in inspiring teachers. Non-resident membership would enable Mrs. Johnson to attend meetings of the Working Council and its committees, which would be profitable to both parties” (see *Note 29*). At the time, Johnson was already teaching in P.S. 95, but she was also lecturing — on her methods and on ‘free education’ — at teachers’ conferences in the Greenwich House settlement on Barrow Street, New York City, and elsewhere (see *Note 30* and *Figure 16*).

Furthermore, the Bureau proposed plans to move Marietta Johnson’s Summer School to Hopewell Junction near Fishkill (near Beacon, near Poughkeepsie), in Dutchess County, New York, on a farm the Bureau wanted to buy in 1917, but rented it instead in 1918 (see *Note 31*). They wanted Johnson to train teachers during the summer months (see *Note 32*).

After a lecture “to an old-fashioned dinner in the country” (Zigrosser, 1917b, p. 172) — date and other details unknown — Johnson was on a train accompanied by Carl Zigrosser, at the time editor of *The Modern School* magazine published by the Ferrer Colony at Stelton, New Jersey. Zigrosser took the opportunity to interview Johnson for his *Modern School* magazine. In “Note and Comment,” his editorial, Zigrosser (1917a, p. 190) stated that Marietta Johnson was director of a so-called “Modern Experimental School,” even though her school was not as “thoroughly radical as the logical extremist might desire,” adding, “but it is ever so much more liberal than the orthodox school.”

The interview appeared in the December 1917 issue (see *Note 33*). During the interview, Johnson did not say a single word about the sensitive issues of her work at P.S. 95; the BEE plans to relocate her Summer School to Hopewell Junction; to let her train teachers during summer months; or, her non-resident Bureau membership. She only mentioned her schools in Fairhope and in Greenwich, which in her words were not “libertarian in the sense of allowing children to run riot, to grow wild like weeds, but...are libertarian in an enlightened way, in studying the needs of the child and ministering to them” (Zigrosser, 1917b, p. 172). Johnson gave examples of how the children learned; how they followed their spontaneous interests “in the doing of the thing;” and how teachers who stimulated their interests in the workshop, geography, and music class guided them. She warned against external stimuli that make children “self-conscious.” Praise should encourage children to move on to further activity (Zigrosser, 1917b, p. 175; see *Note 34*):

But when we give him high marks for studying all his lessons, we transfer the emphasis from cultural training to arbitrary rewards. It is disconcerting to do a thing with one purpose and then be praised for some other reason. It makes a child sit back and feel superior just because someone tells him so.

In the spring of 1918, the Bureau of Educational Experiments planned to continue Johnson’s classes in P.S. 95 for another year (= 1918-1919) and to conduct a “new experiment involving two classes in P.S. 64” (see *Note 35*). In April 1918, however, gloomy clouds suddenly crushed the horizon. Minutes of the meeting of the BEE Executive Committee, held on April 24, 1918, state (see also *Note 36*):

It was the sense of the meeting that the Executive Committee recommend that the Bureau should discontinue its work in P. S. 95 beyond the present school year. The weightiest reasons for this decision are: 1. There is no teacher in sight who is interested in taking up the work of formulating a curriculum with Mrs. Johnson [...]. 2. [...]. 3. [...]. 4. 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.

Less than a month later, all Johnson-related planning for the 1918-1919 school year ended *abruptly*, when John E. Wade, the principal of P.S. 95, condemned all plans in May 1918. The reasons are not stated in the Bureau records (see *Note 37*). While the BEE archives do not contain any data revealing Johnson's response, it is extremely likely she felt insulted that a BEE letter addressed to her had damaged her professional reputation (see *Note 38*).

In mid-1918, after her one-year job at P.S. 95, paid for by the Bureau of Educational Experiments, Marietta Johnson embarked on a different phase in her life, which meant returning 'home' to Fairhope and Greenwich — where she began planning nationwide tours again to give lectures to raise money. In fact, this new phase began with some tremendous good news from Connecticut. On May 20, 1918, the Edgewood School (the renamed Lanier School) was offered to use a large mansion — worth \$300,000 — in the Rock Ridge area of the city. The *New York Herald* (1918b) of May 21, 1918 reported in an article, illustrated with a photo of Mrs. Edward B. Close:

Mrs. E. B. Close, daughter of the late Charles W. Post, has offered to the directors of the Fairhope School, an institution for the education of poor boys and girls along the lines of national history and citizenship, her mansion, Boulders, in the Rock Ridge section of Greenwich, Conn. The offer will be accepted.

The school originally was known as the Lanier School, and was established eight years ago. About fifty pupils attend the institution now, and the classes have grown to such an extent in the last few months that more room is necessary.

About a year and a half ago one wing of the Boulders was destroyed by fire of mysterious origin, which was one of many such fires in the residential section of Greenwich. Mrs. Close has not lived there since the fire. The destroyed part will be rebuilt, and the entire house, which is of stone and wood, three stories high and extending almost a block in each direction, will be used by the school. Miss [*sic*] Marietta Johnson, superintendent of the school, said last night the offer of the Close mansion had come as a very pleasant surprise, and that a very great amount of good work would be done for the children of the poor as a result.

The next day, the *New York Herald* (1918a) published a sequel to their scoop.

Mrs. Marietta Johnson, director of the Edgewood School for Organic Education, in Rock Ridge, outlined to-day the programme for the extension of the school when it is moved to the estate, in Rock Ridge, of Mrs. E. B. Close, daughter of the late C. W. Post, of Battle Creek, Mich...It involves training of boys and girls from kindergarten to high school grades with the least possible adherence to grading and strict markings, which Mrs. Johnson believes is uneducational in that it produces a weakness and timidity in the pupil.

The school was founded eight years ago in the stable of the home of Charles D. Lanier. It grew to such proportions that the Edgewood Inn Casino was occupied. In the autumn it will be housed temporarily over the stables of the Close place, but later will occupy a large building there, where the boarding pupils will live. The grounds, with their many trees and private lake, will afford good opportunity for outdoor sports. Those most interested in the project are Mr. and Mrs. Close, Mr. and Mrs. Lanier, [...].

Marjorie Merriweather (*née* Post) Close — during the 1910s better known as Mrs. Edward B. Close and later known as Marjorie Merriweather Post — had inherited fantastic wealth. She was one of the wealthiest women in the United States and later became a renowned art collector and philanthropist. During the 1910s, she was a welcome socialite and belonged to the so-called 'world of society' of Greenwich and New York City, attending numerous weddings, parties, dances, balls and dinners (see *Note 39* and *Figure 17*).

Around 1917, mysterious fires broke out in Greenwich that destroyed homes of wealthy residents (e.g., *Sun*, 1918). One fire broke out on the estate of the Closes on the night of May 29, 1917. However, it was unrelated to the other fires as it was due to defective electric wiring in Marjorie Close's bedroom (Rubin, 1995). Until the fire in 'The Boulders,' Marjorie Close was active in Greenwich social life. For example, in 1912 she co-organized the Second Charity Ball in Greenwich as chairwoman of one of the special committees. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (1912d) wrote that the ball promised to be "the finest society event ever in Greenwich" and that it was estimated that "about \$5,000 would be cleared for the treasury of the United Workers [of Greenwich]," that is, the association that would invite Marietta Johnson the following year to host the Greenwich Summer School of Organic Education (see above). Among the 200 'patronesses' were also May Lanier (Mrs. Charles D. Lanier) and Grace Seton (Mrs. Ernest Thompson Seton).

Marjorie Close was also involved in the Fairhope League. For example, along with May Lanier, she was one of the leaders of the project to perform Percy MacKaye's *Sanctuary: A Bird Masque* under the patronage of the Fairhope League in September 1915 (*New York Tribune*, 1915a). She also chaired the organizing committee of the 'Bird Ballet' that was organized in conjunction with the *Sanctuary* performance (*New York Times*, 1915c; *Sun*, 1915a). It is therefore very likely that Marjorie Close knew Marietta Johnson personally in 1918 when she offered 'The Boulders' for use by the school run by Marietta Johnson.

According to the first 1918 article in the *New York Herald* (1918b) quoted above, Marietta Johnson was completely surprised by Marjorie Close's generous offer of her 'Boulders' mansion. But was she? In her autobiography, Johnson (1974, pp. 45-46) wrote:

A beautiful residence had been partially burned and I set my heart upon securing that place for the school...One morning I went to the owner's residence [in New York City; J.S.]...Her first question was: "What do you want?" I replied: "I want your place at Greenwich." "What for?" she asked. "A school," I answered. She then asked, "Do you want me to give it to you?" "Yes", I answered. "Do you know," she cried, "that you are asking for three hundred and sixty thousand dollars' worth of property?" "People have given more than that for an idea," was my reply. I then explained briefly the aim of the school. She then said, "You could not use it if I should give it to you." "Why not?" I urged. "It will cost you forty thousand dollars to put it in condition." "Then," I replied, "we cannot use it, but isn't there a garage or something we can use?" "There are the stables," she replied. "You might use them. Go and look them over and if you can use them I shall be glad to let you have them for a couple of years." "Rent free?" I queried. "Certainly"...She gave us a two-year lease, which was afterwards renewed for one year.

Marjorie Merriweather Post (= Marjorie Close) biographer Nancy Rubin (1995) is almost silent about the fate of 'The Boulders.' Rubin (1995, p. 99) states:

In the end the fire had shattered far more than the eaves of Marjorie's house; it forced [her] to examine the basic framework of her existence. In her heart Marjorie already knew that the tranquil teas of a Greenwich afternoon were too pallid to last a lifetime...After careful consideration Marjorie gave up on The Boulders. It was, as she later said, "silly to put it back in order...because within a short time of the fire we decided not to go on living there." Eventually [she] sold the damaged Boulders to a private school.

William Wright (1978, p.66), another Marjorie Merriweather Post biographer, outlined a different story about what happened after the fire in 'The Boulders,' showing that Marjorie Close played her own specific role in this. Her husband Edward and daughters Adelaide and Eleanor, unlike her, loved Greenwich life; the husband liked to "tend the garden," the daughters "loved Greenwich with its brook, lake, and ponies." But Marjorie Close ardently wanted to live in New York City — in her 'Burden' mansion, corner Fifth Avenue and East Ninety-second Street, in Manhattan. According to Wright (*Ibid.*, p. 67), events can be summarized as follows:

Marjorie was taking charge. She countered any back-to-Greenwich movement on the part of her husband and daughters by giving the Boulders—still a valuable property even with a partially burned house—to the Lanier family to use as a school.

Problem solved!

The authorization to use the mansion as a schoolhouse was turning strange ways. According to the *New York Herald*, Marietta Johnson was completely surprised by Marjorie Close’s kindness. However, according to her autobiography, Marietta Johnson enforced events by persuasion. Finally, it seems Marjorie Close’s biographer Wright had sources to tell a story of clever intrigue and that ‘The Boulders’ was given to “the Lanier family to use as a school.” Note that Marietta Johnson did not mention the role of the Laniers in her autobiography. And, she did not mention the name of the school’s benefactor at all!

On September 20, *Fairhope Courier* (1918b) reported, “Mrs. Johnson leaves on Saturday for Greenwich, Conn., to be present at the opening of the Edgewood School” (see *Note 40*).



Figure 18 (left): *Evening Post* article of August 21, 1920, saying that “two of the New York public schools are testing [Marietta Johnson’s] methods throughout all the grades” (Sinclair, 1920).

Figure 19 (right): Edgewood Inn Casino, Greenwich, Connecticut.

References to Marietta Johnson’s Work at Public School 95 and Public School 64

Early in 1918, Marietta Johnson had approached Stanwood Cobb with a suggestion to prepare for the creation of a national association bringing together teachers who supported the progressive approach to education (Gaston, 1984, 2010; Graham, 1967; Newman, 2002). This move strongly suggests the impression that Johnson may already have had plans for future events in 1918 (see *Note 41*). The actual rise of the Progressive Education Association (PEA) in the spring of 1919 (initially called Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education) — and the associated organizational tasks, combined with lectures, now increasingly nationwide — indeed gave her many opportunities to raise money for her schools in Fairhope and Greenwich. Lecturing in many parts of the United States created opportunities to recruit gifted teachers to her Fairhope school to ‘complement’ the teaching staff that was constantly being depleted by the ‘loan’ of teachers to Edgewood School in Greenwich — such as Lillian Rifkin who later taught at Modern School, Stelton, New Jersey, and Walden School, New York City (Rifkin Blumenfeld, 1978, 1995) and Grace Rotzel, later founder of the School in Rose Valley, Moylan, Pennsylvania (Rotzel, 1971, 1974. See also Perrone, 1989; Wolfe, 2002).

All the same, and this is telling, Johnson’s publications during the 1920s never mentioned her 1917-1918 work in New York City. Nor does her autobiography disclose her involvement with the Bureau of Educational Experiments from 1917-1918, nor her work in P.S. 95, as described above. Much later, in the 1950s, Lucy Sprague Mitchell (1953, p. 457), during the late 1910s and in the 1920s and 1930s, Chairwoman of the Bureau of Educational Experiments, wrote in her autobiography *Two Lives*:

We conducted two, and not very successful, brief experiments in two public schools, one in nutrition and the other, directed by Mrs. Marietta Johnson, in what she called “organic education.”

In an endnote to the comment, Mitchell (*Ibid.*, p. 575) stated even more damning,

Mrs. Marietta Johnson had carried out an experimental school in Alabama, based largely on what we should now call children's physiological "readiness" for learning experiences. She seemed, however, unable to adapt her methods and curriculum to city conditions.

In her dissertation, Jane M. Bailey (1991, pp. 44-45) referred to Johnson's work at a "New York City public school" and Lucy Sprague Mitchell's opinion in her *Two Lives*.

[A] project which the Bureau supported was a grant to Mrs. Marietta Johnson to try out her method of "organic education" (which she had developed in Fairhope, Alabama) in a New York City public school...The bureau's monetary support to Mrs. Johnson's urban experiment included money for an extra substitute teacher (added to the public school teacher) and to retain Mrs. Johnson's services to supervise the teachers and give a series of lectures to a group of public school teachers. Lucy Mitchell notes in her autobiography...that the experiment was not very successful. Apparently Marietta Johnson had trouble adapting her curriculum to city conditions... This particular experiment was also representative of the nature of the relationship between the Bureau and the New York City public schools. The Bureau yearned to play a pivotal role in public education. However, its relationship was reduced to the funding of minor spot experiments (such as Mrs. Johnson's work and a nutrition experiment in P.S. 64)--experiments deemed unsuccessful even by the Bureau.

Bailey (*Ibid.*, p. 55) further indicated that the Bureau of Educational Experiments grouped Johnson's work for the BEE under "experiments not controlled by the Bureau, but in which it had advisory powers (e.g., Mrs. Marietta Johnson's urban version of her "organic" Fairhope, Alabama curriculum)."

In her biography of Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Joyce Antler (1987, pp. 566-567) wrote:

The experiment took place in a first-grade class in a New York City public school, the bureau paying for an extra teacher and for the services of Mrs. Johnson, who supervised the teachers and gave a series of lectures...Marietta Johnson's efforts to apply her philosophy of organic education to city conditions was quickly deemed a failure.

Are there other references to Marietta Johnson's work for the Bureau of Educational Experiments? Yes; consult for instance Cenedella (1996, pp. 111, 121). And indeed, there are more references in the literature to Johnson's 1917-1918 work in New York City. These are listed below, in chronological order.

i). The first reference mentioned here appeared in the *Journal of the New York State Teachers' Association* (1918, p. 256) of November 1918. The Final Program of the 73rd Annual Meeting of the New York State Teachers' Association and Affiliated Organizations, Albany, New York, November 25, 26, 27, 1918 indicates that Marietta Johnson would deliver a speech on "Education and Progress," Section for Study of Subnormal and Backward Children, on Tuesday November 26, 1918 at 3:00 pm. The program explained that she was founder and director of Fairhope's School of Organic Education, stating that she was "conducting experimental classes in Public School No. 95, New York City, as well as classes in Greenwich, Connecticut." Most likely, this program was based on outdated information about Johnson's work at P.S. 95, as her work ended before the summer vacation of 1918.

ii). The November 16, 1918 magazine of the *New York Call* contains a reference, but without particulars. "For 10 years in Fairhope, Ala., and more recently in Greenwich, Conn., and in New York, Mrs. Johnson has been trying to put the idea of organic education into school practice" (Thompson, 1918, p. 9; emphasis J.S.).

iii). *Independent Press* (1920; Italics J.S.) of January 30, 1920 mentioned P.S. 95 in an article entitled "Series Of Lectures On Educational Problems:"

This is a time when all educational methods are in question: to some people Mrs. Johnson's theories of "organic education" may seem visionary, but how practically they can be carried out is proved by the success of her schools at Fairhope, Ala.; Greenwich, Conn.; Upper Montclair, and *Public School No. 95*, New York city.

No further details were given about P.S. 95.

iv). The *Evening Post Magazine* of April 3, 1920 has a reference in an article written by Marion Nichol Rawson, illustrated with a photo of Marietta Johnson.

Rawson (1920; Italics J.S.) stated,

By the waters of Mobile Bay at Fairhope, Ala., in a grove of rare old trees at Greenwich, Conn., and within the walls of two public school rooms in congested parts of New York City, Mrs. Johnson is working out her modern plan of education...*Three years ago she was permitted to introduce her methods into two classes in the New York schools [P.S. 95 and P.S. 64; J.S.]*, and it seemed to her then that at last she was accomplishing what she had first set out to do, namely, prove that her vision was not merely a beautiful dream, but something practical enough to be applied to Tom, Dick and Harry, each one of whom—bless his heart—wanted to grow the way he was meant to grow.

In fact, the article tells a story as if Johnson were still teaching the experimental classes in P.S. 64 and P.S. 95, as shown in this next section of a line: “It needs only a short visit to one of the *public schoolrooms* in which Mrs. Johnson is testing her ideas to be convinced that [...]” (*Ibid.*; Italics J.S.). The article does not say that Marietta Johnson had not taught at P.S. 95 for two years. But then: did she teach at P.S. 64 in 1920?

v). In the May 1920 issue of *The Public and The Schools* (Irwin, 1920b, p. 6) as well as in the July 1920 issue of the *Canadian Journal of Mental Health* (Irwin, 1920a, p. 188), Public Education Association of the City of New York psychologist and member of the Bureau of Educational Experiments Elisabeth A. Irwin wrote:

The most important experiment in connection with actual modification of the curriculum is that which is being undertaken by Mrs. Marietta Johnson of the School of Organic Education, Fairhope, Alabama. Mrs. Johnson has raised her own budget and provided her own equipment and supplies as well as the salary of a specially trained teacher.

Irwin stated that the experiments she described had been organized in Public School 64 (consult also, for example: Bailey, 1991; *New York Tribune*, 1920; *Sun*, 1919). Do the financial details mentioned relate to the support of the Bureau of Educational Experiments in 1917-1918, or perhaps Johnson sharing financing experiments in P.S. 64? If so, how long has she co-funded those experiments, and when exactly, and why?

vi). The *Evening Post* (1920) of June 5, 1920 in an article entitled “School Grading Plan Now Three Years Old” discussing a report by the Public Education Association of the City of New York on the experimental work conducted by Elisabeth Irwin at P.S. 64, was very specifically in praising Johnson’s work, “Mrs. Marietta Johnson of the School of Organic Education, Fairhope, Ala., has carried on important experiments in modification of the curriculum.” No details about exact dates were given.

vii). In “New Kind Of Education Is Aim Of Mrs. Johnson’s School,” an article in the *Evening Post* of August 21, 1920, illustrated with two photos, Kathleen Sinclair (1920; Italics J.S.; see *Figure 18*) reported that in addition to Marietta Johnson’s school in Fairhope, “five other schools in different parts of the country following out [Johnson’s] general principles and several new ones opening this fall;” that the Fairhope Summer School was in its sixth year; that the “educational features of the New Jewish Centre will be under [Johnson’s] supervision;” and finally, that “two of the New York public schools are testing her methods throughout all the grades.”

Sinclair’s article does not mention which public schools tested Johnson’s methods and by whom. Did Sinclair mean P.S. 64 and P.S. 95? Was she indirectly referring to Johnson?

viii). Two references appeared in the 1924 book *Fitting the School to the Child*, written by Elisabeth A. Irwin and Louis A. Marks (then director of Public School 64). The authors underscored the importance of Johnson’s work to P.S. 64 (Irwin & Marks, 1924, pp. vii-viii):

The most important experiment in the school in actual modification of curriculum was directed by Mrs. Marietta Johnson of the School of Organic Education, Fairhope, Alabama. Mrs. Johnson visited our school weekly, raised the necessary budget for her experiment, provided her own equipment and

supplies, and furnished the salary of a specially trained teacher for a year. Several of the regular teachers have undertaken experiments on their own initiative under her direction.

This passage gives the strong impression that Johnson, no longer funded by the Bureau of Educational Experiments since mid-1918, continued the experiments with Elisabeth Irwin in P.S. 64 for several years and financed those experiments herself.

Elisabeth Irwin and Louis Marks have described and commented Johnson's experiment in P.S. 64 in more detail. The section is too long to quote here, so a reference should suffice (see Irwin & Marks, 1924, pp. 115-131). Irwin and Marks (*Ibid.*, p. 115) specified that Marietta Johnson had "raised a fund sufficient to provide an extra teacher for three terms." Sol Cohen (1964, p. 125) would later state, "Under Dr. Marks P.S. 64 became truly 'an experimental school.' There was a class for 'neurotic children.' Miss [*sic.*; J.S.] Marietta Johnson gave a demonstration of her 'organic education' here."

ix). The penultimate reference mentioned here appeared in *Mental Growth of Children in Relation to Rate of Growth in Bodily Development*. The author, Bureau of Educational Experiments psychologist Buford J. Johnson (1925, pp. 4-5), referred to a "kindergarten class conducted under the supervision of Mrs. Marietta Johnson" on an *undisclosed* "public school in an Italian section of New York City."

In addition to these groups eighty-eight children in a public school in an Italian section of New York City were examined. One group was a kindergarten class conducted under the supervision of Mrs. Marietta Johnson as a school experiment and the other were of the same ages but formed the regular first grade of the school.

Buford Johnson (*Ibid.*, p. 115) also mentioned Marietta Johnson's name in a chapter on "Rossolimo Series of Dissected Pictures."

x). The final reference listed here appeared in *Our Enemy The Child*. Independent journalist and writer Agnes de Lima (1926, pp. 123-124; Italics J.S.) cryptically wrote the following comment about the so-called Wirt Plan to revamp New York's public schools into "work-study-play schools."

It is probable that many of the shortcomings of the plan will pass with time. Superintendents adopting it are likely to be of the temper of Mr. Wirt who welcomes educational experimentation of every kind, even with curriculum and subject matter. "Organic education" classes directed by Mrs. Marietta Johnson of Fairhope, Alabama, were planned for certain Wirt schools in New York City.

De Lima was most likely referring to P.S. 64 and P.S. 95. The Bureau of Educational Experiments, as noted above, made the planning. Interesting in this regard: William Wirt, like John Dewey, was an honorary member of the Bureau of Educational Experiments (Staring, 2013).

Considering that Marietta Johnson never made public anything about her 1917-18 New York City ventures at P.S. 64 and P.S. 95 for the Bureau of Educational Experiments, and likely a self-funded venture at P.S. 64 as a follow-up to her 1917-1918 work there, it is not surprising that the remarkable events never really became a part of the history of Progressive Education.

Here the Third *Petite Histoire* Ends

Notes

1. In my two-part article "Marietta Johnson, Illustrated Newspaper Articles, Women's Magazines, 1907-1916" (Staring, 2020, 2021) I forgot to describe the "Fitting the School to the Child" article in the *Literary Digest* (1914), despite the fact that I had mentioned it in the bibliography (Staring, 2021, p. 153).
2. See, for example, Bennett, 1912, 1913ab, 1914; *Boston Globe*, 1912; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1912a; Case, 1914; *Christian Science Monitor*, 1911; Edwards, 1913; Gilliams, 1915; Hunt, 1913; Johnson, 1913; *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1914; Marshall, 1914; Potter, 1911ab; *San Francisco Call*, 1912; *Washington Herald*, 1912b; Young, 1914.
3. See, for example, *American Stationer* (1910); *Argus* (1912); *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (1912b); *Christian Science Monitor* (1912abc); *Current Literature* (1912); *Detroit Free Press*, 1912; George, 1912b; *Good Housekeeping* (= George, 1912a); *Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* (= Merrill, 1909, 1910abc); *McClure's Magazine* (= McClure's Magazine, 1911; *New York Tribune*, 1912; Stevens, 1912; Tozier, 1911ab, 1912); *Pottery, Glass & Brass Salesman*

(1910); *Rome Daily Sentinel* (1909); *Scientific American* (= Gruenberg, 1912); Stewart, 1912; *Sullivan County Record* (1909; see *Figure 5*); *Sun* (1911, 1912ab); and *Wyoming Reporter* (1909).

4. See, for example, George, 1912b; Stevens, 1912; Tozier, 1912.

5. See, for example, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1913; *Daily Standard Union*, 1913; Kramer, 1976; Montessori, 2013ab; Naumburg, 1913; *New York Herald*, 1913ab; *New York Press*, 1913abc; *New York Times*, 1913a-g; *New York Tribune* 1913; *Sun*, 1913ab.

6. See, for example, Bureau of Education, 1914; Gutek & Gutek, 2020; Povell, 2009; Staring, Bouchard, & Aldridge, 2014; Stevens, 1913.

7. *Morning Telegraph* (1922) states, “Mr. Sexton, aside from being a writer on public questions, known through his articles in *Current History* and other magazines, and in various newspapers, is a noted educator, having made his “Little School in the Woods” a mecca of educators everywhere.”

8. See also *Daily Ardmoreite*, 1915; *Daily Standard Union*, 1915b; *Evening Star*, 1915; *Evening Telegram*, 1915; *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, 1915c; *Ithaca Daily News*, 1915; *Medina Daily Journal*, 1915; *New York Herald*, 1915; *New York Tribune*, 1915c.

9. *Indianapolis Star* (1916), *Atlanta Constitution* (1916) and other newspapers wrote the following line about the Wabanaki School where Seton’s Woodcraft ideas were introduced:

The woodcraft idea is quite in harmony with many newer educational movements, such as the “organic education” pioneered by Marietta Johnson in Alabama.

In 1917, this ad appeared in the October 1 and 2 issues of the *New York Tribune* (1917ab):

Wabanaki School Now Open For Boys and Girls 5 to 14. High Scholarship. Health Through Sleep and Study Out of Doors. “Better than to leave your child a million dollars is to give him such a schooling as this.”—Dr. Frank Crane. Mrs. Charles Tarbell Dudley, Round Hill Road. Greenwich, Conn. Tel. 348 Greenwich.

Compare also advertisements in the August and September 1917 issues of *St. Nicholas* (1917ab). Earlier in June 1917, *Nashville Tennessean* (1917) and *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (1917) indicated in an illustrated article entitled “Children Who Play ‘Indian’ for Their Health” that Mrs. Charles Tarbell Dudley founded the Wabanaki School, or “Little Indian School,” in Greenwich (compare also *Guide To Nature*, 1916, 1917ab).

Connecticut Western News (1917) of May 3, 1917, had another interesting newspaper article. They reported that the Rosemary Woodcraft Girls of Greenwich had formed a Woodcraft Potato Club to help grow potatoes to ensure that the American population during the war in Europe has enough to eat. The paper stated, “The Wabanaki school at Greenwich is also being organized as a Woodcraft potato club.”

Porter Sargent (1917a, p. 62) wrote in the third edition of his *Handbook of American Private Schools*, “Greenwich has witnessed in the last few years the development of another experimental school,—Wabanaki, the Woodcraft School, founded by Mrs. Charles Tarbell Dudley.” Note that Sargent (1917a, p. 226; 1918a, p. 250) also wrote about the Wabanaki School in the 1917 and 1918 editions of his *Handbook of American Private Schools*:

Wabanaki School, Round Hill Road, Greenwich, is a most interesting and novel enterprise for both boys and girls. It was begun in 1915 as the “Little School in the Woods” under the direction of Mrs. Charles Tarbell Dudley, a graduate of Bryn Mawr [see Bryn Mawr College, 1919, p. 41; J.S.], with the support and backing of Ernest Thompson Seton and other residents of Greenwich. It is a modern experimental school applying the best of progressive theories. In an interesting environment the educational appeal is made through the senses. Art, music, folk dancing, and handicraft are inherent parts of the pupil’s day. Much of the work is accomplished in the outdoors...Edward A. C. Murphy, A.M., Brown, ’13, is head master. Hamlin Garland is a lecturer at the school. Dr. Edward F. Bigelow takes charge of the science and nature work. In 1918 the academic work will be under the supervision of Dr. Adolf A. Berle.

Note further that the 1917 edition of *Handbook of American Private Schools* also includes a full-page ad of the Wabanaki School (Sargent 1917a, p. 587). Interestingly, Sargent (1917b, p. 77) included information about Marietta Johnson’s Summer School in Greenwich in the second edition of his *Handbook of New England*:

On Round Hill Road is the “Frinchries [*sic.*],” the estate of Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton, and adjoining is Wabanaki, the Woodcraft School. It is a modern outdoor school ably conducted on original lines by Mrs. Charles Tarbell Dudley with the cooperation of Mr. Seton and others. The Fairhope Summer School is conducted by Mrs. J. F. Johnson, who has developed novel and promising educational methods, in the Greenwich Academy building on Maple Ave.

Later, Sargent (1918a, p. 28) would elaborate on Johnson’s pedagogy in relation to the “Lanier now the Edgewood School” in Greenwich:

The schools of Organic Education established and supervised by Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson have attracted considerable public attention. Mrs. Johnson's original school begun in 1907 grew up out of her direction of the activities of the children of her own household. She insists that teachers should not do for boys and girls what they can do for themselves and that the prime need in education is freedom for children to work out their native impulses and natural desires, for she holds that such are evil only when perverted. This theoretical attitude Mrs. Johnson in practice does not permit to interfere with the success of her work. Her system stimulates children to activity and initiative, while leading the same natural life in school as in homes of the right sort. Educational progress is made without pressure, rewards, or examination... This organic education is life itself, not merely a preparation for it. At Greenwich, Conn., Mrs. Johnson has since 1915 directed the Lanier now the Edgewood School. A Fairhope League has been formed to further her plan of education and establish schools in many centers [...].

Sargent (1918a, p. 250) also had some more information about the Edgewood School (note that Sargent now states that Johnson had run the school since 1917):

The Edgewood School, Edgewood Drive, Greenwich, formerly the Lanier School, has since 1917 been under the direction of Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson, the founder of the Organic School at Fairhope, Ala. The same principles are applied to the education of boys and girls from four to sixteen years of age. Both boarding and day pupils are accommodated.

10. *Figure 14* is part of a photo showing 7 members of the Fairhope Educational Foundation. Photo and caption also appeared in *Altoona Tribune* (December 9, 1929); *Amsterdam Evening Recorder* (December 20, 1929); *Arizona Daily Star* (December 13, 1929); *Bryan Daily Eagle* (December 10, 1929); *Capital Journal* (December 24, 1929); *Freeport Journal-Standard* (December 12, 1929); *Geneva Daily Times* (December 15, 1929); *Greenfield Recorder* (December 11, 1929); *Hanover Evening Sun* (December 9, 1929); *Index-Journal* (December 15, 1929); *Las Vegas Daily Optic* (December 11, 1929); *Portsmouth Herald* (December 11, 1929); *San Bernardino County Sun* (December 13, 1929); *St. Cloud Times* (December 12, 1929), and probably in numerous other newspapers in December 1929.

11. During the 1910s, interconnections existed between experimental schools, such as the “Little School in the Woods” and the Stelton, New Jersey, Modern School. Avrigh (2005, p. 230) wrote:

From time to time, Bernard Sexton, director of the Little School in the Woods at Greenwich, Connecticut, came down and taught Indian lore to the children, including a “caribou dance” and games [...].

12. On September 23, 1927, Seton wrote a letter to journalist Mark Sullivan, one of the first members in 1915 of the so-called National Council of the *Woodcraft League* (see *Figure 13*, above). Since Baden-Powel might be awarded the Nobel Prize, Seton wanted to contact the Swedish Consul, and tell them about the history of *Woodcraft Indians*, the *Boy Scouts* and Baden-Powel's role in copying the *Woodcraft Indians* scheme, but with a kind of militarization added to it in the *Boy Scouts* organization. On November 2, 1927, Seton wrote another letter to Sullivan asking him to sign a six-paragraph declaration, entitled “Statement,” written by Elon Huntington Hooker, another member of the *Woodcraft League* National Council (see *Figure 13*, above). Seton wrote that seven others, including Hooker and *Woodcraft League* Vice-President Raymond V. Ingersoll, would also sign the document. Photocopies of both letters and the original “Statement” sent to Sullivan are still for sale on Ebay.com at the time of writing this note. See:

<https://www.ebay.com/itm/333401752938?hash=item4da04b056a:g:ZCgAAOSwC-5d0T5k>.

Retrieved on May 10, 2021.

13. Compare also *The Woodcraft Manual For Boys: The Fifteenth Birch Bark Roll* (Seton, 1917, p. ix). Later National Council was renamed Advisory Council; see for example *The Woodcraft Manual For Boys: The Fifteenth Birch Bark Roll* (Seton, 1921, p. xi), or the twentieth edition of *The Birch Bark Roll of Woodcraft; For Boys and Girls from 4 to 94* (Seton, 1925, p. xi).

14. *Archives at Bank Street College of Education, New York City.*

Minutes Working Council, May 24, 1916. Minutes Working Council, February 26, 1917. Minutes Executive Committee, March 5; March 13; April 2; April 16, 1917. Minutes Working Council May 12; May 18; June 25, 1917. Minutes Executive Committee, May 12, 1917. Budget Recommended, June 1917. Report of the Committee on Teaching Experiments, June 4, 1917. Minutes Working Council, October 1; October 29; November 9; November 12; November 16; November 22; November 23; December 10; December 17, 1917. Budget – 1917-18. Report of the Membership Committees, December 6, 1917. Minutes Department of Information, December 6, 1917. Minutes Department of Teaching Experiments, December 6, 1917. Minutes Teaching Committee, December 14, 1917. Minutes Department of Teaching Experiments, October 19, 1917. Minutes Working Council, January 21; February 1; February 18; March 4; March 18; April 22; April 29, 1918. Statement to the Trustees, April 1918. Statement and Budget, as approved by the Working Council, sent to Dr. David Mitchell, June 1918-1919. Minutes Department of Teaching Experiments, January 18, 1918. Minutes S. P. & M. Department, January 23, February 6, 1918. Minutes Teaching Department, March 1; March 22, 1918. Minutes Executive Committee, January 30; April 10; April 17; April 22;

April, 24; May 1; May 3; May 8; May 13; May 27, 1918. Plan for Teachers Forum, March 1918. Work Accomplished and Work Proposed by Psychological Department, David Mitchell, April 20, 1918. Minutes Executive Committee, April 10; April 22; April 24; May 1; May 8; May 27, 1918. Bureau of Educational Experiments Statement to the Trustees, April 1918. Work Accomplished and Work Proposed; no date, most likely ± April 1918.

15. Archives at City and Country School, New York City.

A Trial Outline (no date; J.S.). Plans Submitted to the Bureau of Educational Experiments, 1916-1917. Minutes Working Council, February 26; March 12, 1917. Annual Report of the Chairman of the Working Council, Bureau of Educational Experiments, 1916-1917. Copy letter by Marietta L. Johnson, dated March 24, 1917. Letter by Lucy Sprague Mitchell, dated May 17, 1917. Minutes Executive Committee, May 12, 1917. Report of the Executive Committee, March 12, 1917. Report of the Executive Committee, May 1917.

16. Copy letter by Marietta L. Johnson, dated March 24, 1917. Archives at City and Country School.

17. On April 2, 1917, Johnson's March 24, 1917 letter was forwarded to the BEE Executive Committee. See Minutes Working Council, April 2, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

18. Minutes Working Council, May 24, 1916. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

19. Minutes Working Council, February 26, 1917, in Archives at Bank Street College of Education and in Archives at City and Country School.

20. Annual Report of the Chairman of the Working Council, Bureau of Educational Experiments, 1916-1917. Archives at City and Country School.

21. Minutes Executive Committee, March 5, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

22. Minutes Working Council, March 12, 1917. Archives at City and Country School.

23. Report of the Executive Committee, March 12, 1917. Archives at City and Country School.

24. Minutes Executive Committee, May 12, 1917. Archives at City and Country School.

See also Report of the Executive Committee, May 1917. Archives at City and Country School.

See also Minutes Executive Committee, May 12, 1917. Archives at City and Country School.

25. Budget Recommended, June 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

26. Budget – 1917-18. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

27. Minutes S. P. & M. Department, February 6, 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

See also Statement to the Trustees, April 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

See also Work Accomplished and Work Proposed by Psychological Department, David Mitchell, April 20, 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

See also Work Accomplished and Work Proposed; no date, most probably ± April 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

28. Minutes Working Council, October 1, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

29. Report of the Membership Committees, December 6, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

See also Minutes Department of Teaching Experiments meeting – December 6, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

See also Minutes Working Council, December 10, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

See also Minutes Working Council, December 17, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

30. Minutes Working Council, November 12, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

Minutes Department of Teaching, November 16. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

Minutes Department of Teaching, November 23, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

Minutes Department of Information, December 6, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

Minutes Department of Teaching Experiments, January 18, 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

Consult also Montgomery (Ed.), 1905, pp. 76-77.

There is no information in the books of Greenwich House Director Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch.

31. See, for instance: "A (Country) Summer Play School," Bureau of Educational Experiments; 1917. Archives at City and Country School.

See also Minutes Department of Teaching, November 23, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

See also Hauser, 2006, p. 73.

32. Minutes Department of Teaching, November 9, 1917. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

33. I thank Mrs. Fernanda H. Perrone, Archivist and Head Exhibitions Program, and Mr. David Kuzma, Librarian — both with the Special Collections and University Archives at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey — for their help in finding articles in *The Modern School*.

34. It is interesting to note that the January 17, 1918, *Evening Post* reported that the Ferrer Association had announced that it organized a series of conferences on "libertarian education" during January, February and March, 1918 — at 2 East 31st Street, New York City. Marietta Johnson would lecture about Organic Education at Fairhope. Prior to these

1918 lectures, the December 1917 issue of *The Modern School* magazine published Zigrosser's interview with Johnson.

35. See, for instance: Minutes Working Council, April 29, 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

See also Minutes Teaching Department, March 22, 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

See also Minutes Executive Committee, April 22; May 1 and May 3, 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

36. Minutes Executive Committee, April 24, 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

37. See, for instance: Minutes Executive Committee, May 6; May 8; May 13; May 27, 1918; Minutes Working Council, May 6, 1918; Statement and Budget, as approved by the Working Council, sent to Dr. David Mitchell, June 1918-1919; Work Accomplished and Work Proposed; no date, most probably ± April 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

Perhaps Marietta Johnson and the BEE foresaw the P.S. 95 principal's mid-May 1918 actions? Consult, for instance: Minutes Executive Committee, May 3, 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

38. The May 13, 1918, BEE minutes discuss the question a BEE letter may possibly have effected Johnson's "professional reputation." See Minutes Executive Committee, May 13; May 27, 1918. Archives at Bank Street College of Education.

39. Today, former President of the United States Donald Trump lives in one of the luxurious homes of Marjorie Merriweather Post, *Mar-a-Lago*, a Palm Beach, Florida villa built between 1924 and 1927. Trump purchased the estate in 1986.

40. As noted above in the first *petite histoire*, Newman (2002, p. 27) states that Marietta Johnson was the paid principal of the Edgewood School until 1927, but that she was mostly principal in absentia. It is not very clear from the literature how much time she actually spent at the school in Greenwich during the years up to 1927. For example, *Forest Hills Gardens Bulletin* (1920) indicated in 1920 that Johnson "during the summer" conducted a "normal school...at the Edgewood school, Greenwich, Conn." This seems to mean that she only taught there during the summer months. And in 1924, *Detroit Jewish Chronicle* (1924) stated that, in addition to her work at the Fairhope school, "Mrs. Johnson also conducts a six weeks' summer course for teachers, parents, social workers and children at the Edgewood School, Greenwich, Conn." Such newspaper reports seem to suggest that she only taught in Greenwich during the summer schools held annually at the Edgewood school.

The January 7, 1927, *Manchester Evening Herald* (1927) reported:

Fire supposed to have started from an overheated furnace, complete destroyed the Edgewood school in the Rock Ridge district [of Greenwich; J.S.], during the night...The structure was a 20-room affair, stucco covered. Nearby was an auxiliary structure used in the summer as a hotel and as a boarding house for students in winter. Firemen kept the flames from this and from other buildings in the group.

Newman did not explain what happened in 1927. It appears that fate, most likely as a result of the fire, ended Johnson's work at the Edgewood School. Further research is needed.

41. See Staring (2013, pp. 104-106; 2014, p. 219) for a new history of the origins of the foundation of the Progressive Education Association.

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