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## The Three Photos of Marietta Johnson's School of Organic Education In Evelyn & John Dewey's *Schools of To-Morrow*

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**Abstract:** *This case study describes the quest to find out whether philosopher and educator John Dewey took the top photo of two photos facing page 30 of Evelyn and John Dewey's **Schools of To-Morrow** in the chapter discussing Marietta Johnson's School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama.*

**Key Words:** *Helen Christine Bennett (1881-1969), Evelyn Dewey (1889-1965), Lydia Jane (Newcomb) Comings (1849-1946), Marietta Louise (Pierce) Johnson (1864-1938). John Dewey (1859-1952), Frank Stewart (1855-1942). School of Organic Education.*

**Disclosure Statement:** *The author owns several RPPCs, photographs, and glass negatives discussed in this case study.*

### **Introduction: Photos of the School of Organic Education in *Schools of Tomorrow***

In mid-1913, the Fairhope League, an association that promoted Marietta Johnson's Organic Education, invited philosopher and educator John Dewey to visit Johnson's School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama; form his opinion about it; and write a report on it (Staring & Aldridge, 1914; McGrath, 1996). Dewey accepted the invitation. After successfully chairing Italian educator Maria Montessori's visit to New York City the first few weeks of December 1913, Dewey and his son Sabino left for Fairhope, where they experienced the ins and outs of Johnson's experimental school in the form of "participant observation" during Christmas week of 1913. A little more than a fortnight later, the *Fairhope Courier* published a letter of thanks from John Dewey (1914), sent to Jean Lee Hunt of the Fairhope League, in which he described his stay as "pleasant and instructive" and in which he also announced the soon appearance of his report. He ended his letter with the words, "I wish to thank the Fairhope League for having made possible for me such an enjoyable and profitable educational experience."

Next, in February 1914, the *Fairhope Courier* reported that Dewey's complete report had been delivered to the newspaper, while later that month they published Dewey's *Report on the Condition of the School for Organic Education, Fairhope, Ala.* — albeit with a few omissions (see *Fairhope Courier*, 1914ab). The *Survey* (1914) later that year discussed the report in detail.

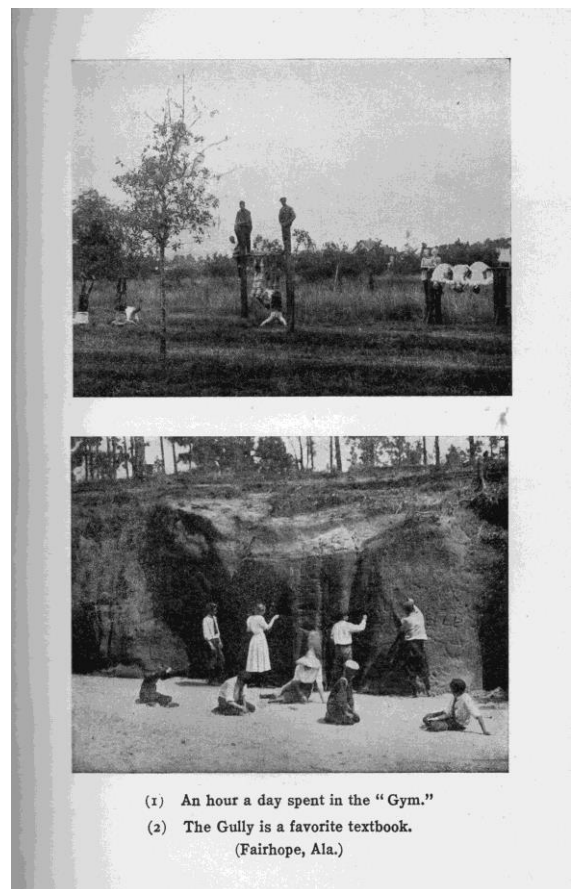
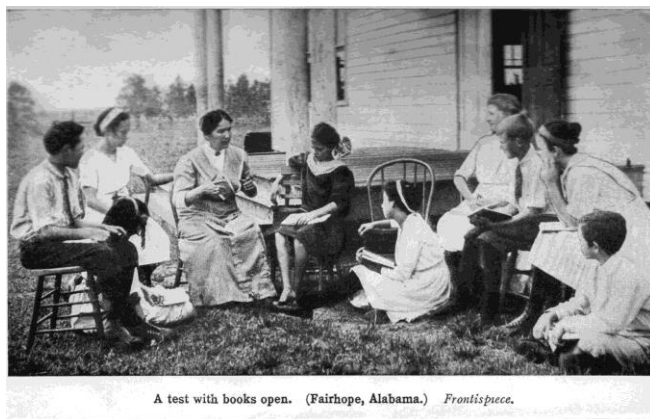
And then, in May 1915, Evelyn Dewey and her father John Dewey published *Schools of To-Morrow* in which they analyzed various American experimental schools of the day, describing Johnson's School of Organic Education in Fairhope in 'An Experiment in Education as Natural Development,' the second chapter in the book (see Dewey & Dewey, 1915ab, pp. 17-40). In addition to opening the book with a *frontispiece* photo of Marietta Johnson in front of the Bell Building porch in Fairhope with nine children

listening (caption: “An Open Book Test;” see *Figure 1*), the second chapter of the book is illustrated with two photos of students from the School of Organic Education (see *Figure 2*).

These three photos are interesting because *Schools of To-Morrow* does not mention who the photographer was, or which photographers took the photos, or when. Until recently, the photograph that forms the book’s *frontispiece* was attributed to John Dewey himself. For example, Wolfe (2002, p. 201) states that when Dewey visited Marietta Johnson’s school in Fairhope in 1913, he himself took the photo. Editors Semel and Sadovnik (1999, p. *xix*) of “*Schools of Tomorrow,*” *Schools of Today* also state that John Dewey made the photograph. And in *Organic Education: Teaching Without Failure* the photo also appears; the caption reads: “Photograph made by Dr. John Dewey when he visited the school in 1919 [*sic.*; J.S.]” (Johnson, 1996, p. 180).

This, however, turns out to be incorrect (Staring, 2023). The photo had already been published in the ‘Interesting People’ column in the July 1913 *American Magazine*, which featured a sketch of Marietta Johnson, written by Helen Christine Bennett (1913a) — journalist, writer and former neighbour of Marietta Johnson in Fairhope (see Bennett, 1914, p. 13; Comings, 1915, p. 160). Bennett’s *American Magazine* article appeared the same month in the *Social-Democratic Herald* (Bennett, 1913b), and probably also in several other newspapers. This is six months *before* Dewey visited Fairhope! Therefore, Dewey could not have been the one who took the photo, as his visit to Fairhope took place in December 1913.

Research has revealed that it was Frank Stewart — Fairhope’s local photographer — who took the photograph that forms the *frontispiece* in *Schools of To-Morrow* (Staring, 2023; see also *Note 1*). Moreover, the photo is *virtually* identical to the one first published in Davis Edwards’ March 16, 1913, *New York Times* article about Marietta Johnson and her school (Sobe, 2019, p. 171). Local photographer Frank Stewart took both photos during the same shoot, possibly early 1913, probably earlier — between 1909 and 1913.



**Figure 1: Frontispiece + caption in Dewey & Dewey, 1915ab.**  
**Figure 2: Photos + captions opp. page 30 in Dewey & Dewey, 1915ab.**

## Marietta Johnson and the School of Organic Education

Marietta Louise Pierce, born in 1864 near St. Paul, Minnesota, was a daughter of Rhoda Mathilda (Morton) Pierce and Clarence D. Pierce. She attended high school at the Humboldt School in her hometown, where she graduated with honours in 1881. Four years later, in 1885 she graduated from the State Normal School in St. Cloud, Minnesota, after which she taught elementary schools in rural Minnesota for five years. Throughout the 1890s she trained future teachers, first at St. Paul State Normal School (1890-1892), then at Moorhead State Normal School (1892-1896), and finally at Mankato State Normal School (1896-1899).

In June 1897, Marietta Pierce married carpenter John Franklin (“Frank”) Johnson (1860-1919). They lived in Mankato until the late 1890s. In *Thirty Years with an Idea*, her autobiography published posthumously in 1974, Marietta (Pierce) Johnson reported that she had a kind of conversion experience after reading Robert Nathan Oppenheim’s (1898) book *The Development of the Child*, which led her to reexamine her life and her career as a teacher and educator.

Around the turn of the century, the Johnsons entered a time when they moved often and did constantly changing work, and in which they also became parents of two children. First, they moved to North Dakota, where first son Clifford Ernest was born in the spring of 1901. Then, in the fall of that year, they moved to St. Paul, where Marietta returned to teaching at the State Normal School. In late 1902 the family moved to Fairhope, Alabama, where Marietta taught at Fairhope Elementary School in 1903 and where she befriended former physical culture teacher Lydia Jane (Newcomb) Comings (*Journal of Education*, 1894; Newcomb, 1893, 1894). But in 1904 the Johnsons moved again, this time to a pecan farm in Barnett, Mississippi, where Marietta had Franklin Pierce, her second son, in 1905. In 1907, they moved back to Fairhope, Alabama (see *Note 2*).

Two other writings reinforced Marietta Johnson’s 1898 choice for a new pedagogical direction (Bennett, 1914). First, *Should Children Under Ten Learn to Read and Write?*, an essay written by George Thomas White Patrick (1899), professor of philosophy at the State University of Iowa; and second, Charles Hanford Henderson’s (1902) book *Education and the Larger Life*. Henderson, who had taught physics and chemistry at the Philadelphia Manual Training School since 1886, developed his own approach to education. Henderson (1896) recognized that “progressive education would be one in which the educational process [is] continually modified to meet ... changing conditions” (p. 487) in society as a whole. He advocated educating students physically, intellectually and morally. He stated that children are born researchers and experimenters and want to be engaged “with something that interests them, not something that interests” mom or dad or the teacher (p. 496). From 1897 onwards, Henderson actively endorsed his views through public lectures on what he called Organic Education. He advocated the implementation of Organic Education in kindergartens and schools.

In November 1907, Marietta Johnson and her friend Lydia Comings opened a school in Fairhope, the curriculum of which was based on Henderson’s Organic Education views (Alyea & Alyea, 1973; Henderson, 1915; Johnson, 1920, 1923, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1974; Potter, 1911ab; Rawson, 1920; see also *Note 3*).

Marietta Johnson recalled twenty years later (cited in Adams, 1927, p. 13):

“In 1907 the chance came to put some of my new theories into practice. That year we—my husband, my two babies and I—moved to Fairhope, Alabama, and the town asked me to start a free kindergarten. I jumped at the chance, and began a series of new experiments with a handful of children, including my own small son, as material. It was just such a chance as I had dreamed of.”

Invited by the Comingses, Henderson spent a week in Fairhope and gave a speech at the opening of Johnson’s school (Henderson, 1915, p. 7).

During the early years of its existence the school had various names, including School for Organic Training (cf. Henderson, 1902, pp. 156, 209) and School of Organic Education.

Around 1912, Marietta Johnson increasingly took to the pulpit in numerous cities to inform her audiences, who paid a \$1 fee to listen to her expertise about her school and its curriculum. At the time, *Pictorial Review* had a well-read multi-page illustrated article about Marietta Johnson and the Fairhope school written by her former neighbour Helen Christine Bennett (1912). The *San Francisco Call* (1912) published a richly illustrated article on a Summer School Camp in Arden, Delaware, where Johnson demonstrated her Organic Education principles (see *Note 4*). Before the Fairhope League was founded on

July 31, 1913, during the first Fairhope Summer School in Greenwich, Connecticut, a number of newspapers and magazines featured articles, sometimes illustrated with photographs, about the Fairhope School of Organic Education, its educational principles and its curriculum (see *Note 5*). Until 1915, more and more influential newspaper and magazine articles appeared (see *Note 6*), including from the pen of Marietta Johnson (1913) herself and from the secretary of the Fairhope League, Jean Lee Hunt (1913).

All of this means that Marietta Johnson was well known in many homes throughout the US. She had reached a firm reputation years before Evelyn and John Dewey published their *Schools of To-Morrow* in 1915.

### Three Photos of Students of the School of Organic Education in *Schools of Tomorrow*

All three illustrations in Evelyn and John Dewey's *Schools of To-Morrow* about Marietta Johnson and the School of Organic Education in Fairhope feature the school's students.

(a). The *frontispiece* shows Marietta Johnson and nine students sitting in front of the main building of the school, the so-called Bell Building. The caption reads, "A test with books open. (Fairhope, Alabama.)" (see *Figure 1*). There is no information in *Schools of To-Morrow* about who took the photo, nor in articles in which the photo appeared before May 1915, but research shows it is certain that Frank Stewart was the photographer. In 2022, a copy of the photo surfaced in the form of a Real Photo Post Card (RPPC) and Stewart's signature and a title (in white) that he often included on RPPCs he created and sold (Staring 2023). This is proof that Frank Stewart made and marketed the photo (see *Figure 3*).



**Figure 3: RPPC from photograph taken by Frank Stewart, with white title and white signature. (Jeroen Staring Collection).**

(b). Then there is a photograph of children doing gymnastics. The caption reads, "An hour a day spent in the 'Gym'" (see *Figure 2*, top photograph; for a description of the outdoor gymnasium, see Dewey & Dewey, 1915ab, pp. 30-31). There is no information about who took the photograph.

(c). And finally, *Schools of To-Morrow* includes a photograph of children "scratching" the wall of a Fairhope gully and sitting on the sandy bottom of the gully. The caption reads, "The Gully is a favorite textbook. (Fairhope, Ala.)" (see *Figure 2*, bottom photograph).

However, at least one illustrated magazine article — that appeared *before* May 1915 when Evelyn and John Dewey's book was published — already contained this third photo about Marietta Johnson and her school in Fairhope in *Schools of Tomorrow*. Fifteen days before John Dewey arrived in Fairhope, on December 6, 1913, Marietta Johnson's (1913) article entitled 'Education as Growth' appeared in the *Survey*. Three photos illustrate her explanation of her work in Fairhope: A photo of children throwing stones; a photo of Johnson teaching students, outside on the grass; and the photo of children "scratching" the wall of a Fairhope gully and sitting on the sandy bottom of the gully. The article provided no information about who took which photo.

**Addendum i.** Helen Cristine Bennett (1912) had published an article about Johnson and her school in the *Pictorial Review* two years earlier. Five photos illustrate the article: A photograph of children standing in

front of two teepees; a photograph of children roofing a wooden one-story building; a photo of children playing in the playground next to the main school building — the so-called Bell Building; a photo of children cleaning a street; and finally, a photo of children “scratching” the wall of a Fairhope gully and sitting on the sandy bottom of the gully that is *virtually* identical to the bottom photo facing page 30 in *Schools of To-Morrow* (see *Figure 4*; see also *Note 7*). Simply put: the boy standing on the far right “scratching” holds his right hand further to the right than in the photo in Marietta Johnson’s 1913 article in the *Survey* and in the photo in *Schools of To-Morrow*.

The photographer of this photo was not named (see also *Note 8*).

**Addendum ii.** Rose Young published ‘Guilty of Motherhood’ in the January 1914 number of *Good Housekeeping*. What is interesting is the fact that Marietta Johnson is mentioned among other famous educators and feminists, such as Marie Turner Harvey, Maria Montessori and Ella Flagg Young: “Mrs. John Franklin Johnston [*sic.*; J.S.], who has worked out a theory of ‘organic education’ [...] is applying it in her ‘do-as-you-please schools’ [*sic.*; J.S.] down on Mobile Bay” (Young, 1914, p. 30). Two of the eight illustrations in the article show Marietta Johnson and her students: *first*, the photograph of her in the company of nine children, first published in the July 1913 *American Magazine*; and *secondly*, the photograph of children “scratching” the wall of a Fairhope gully and sitting on the sandy bottom of the gully, as it had first appeared in Bennett’s *Pictorial Review* article of September 1912 (see **Addendum i**, above). Also in this case: it was not stated who took which photo. However, it has now been established that the *first* photo was taken by Frank Stewart (Staring, 2023). Additionally, note that the photographer of the *second* photo of the School of Organic Education students in the gully in the January 1914 *Good Housekeeping* remains unknown.



**Figure 4:** Photo of children “scratching” the wall of a Fairhope gully and sitting on the sandy bottom of the gully in the September 1912 *Pictorial Review* (Bennett, 1912, p. 13).

### The “An hour a day spent in the ‘Gym’” Photo in *Schools of To-Morrow*

Education historian Noah Sobe (2019, p. 176) at Loyola University Chicago states in his article entitled ‘Affect, Embodiment and Pedagogic Practice in Early-Twentieth-Century American Progressive Education: The School of Organic Education and John Dewey’s *Schools of To-morrow*’ that research had allowed him to propose that the photograph of children doing gymnastics included in *Schools of To-Morrow* “might be a snapshot taken by John Dewey himself.” He added that if his conclusion is correct the photo represents “the only known photographic framing of American progressive education by John Dewey himself.”

Sobe has three good reasons to believe that John Dewey himself had taken the “An hour a day spent in the ‘Gym’” photo: (1). The photo (see *Figure 2*, top photograph) — which has not appeared in print anywhere other than in *Schools of To-Morrow* — has probably never been in a stock of School of Organic Education promotional photos, and therefore most likely has its own provenance (that is: John Dewey). (2). A theme within the Fairhope oral history is that Dewey took photographs during his visit to Fairhope in

December 1913. (3). The photo has an “amateurish feel” (Sobe, 2019, p. 178); it represents a snapshot of a scene that Dewey may have casually captured on the photographic plate.

When the “An hour a day spent in the ‘Gym’” photo appeared in *Schools of To-Morrow* in May 1915, there were not many newspaper and magazine articles about the School of Organic Education that were illustrated with photographs. As far as I was able to find out, the Fairhope local newspaper — the *Fairhope Courier* (1910) — had the scoop in its September 16, 1910, edition by printing a photo showing a class of students in the company of their teachers (the caption reads: “Life Class of Organic School”), taken by Frank Stewart, on the front page (see also *Note 9*).

An inventory of all (known) photographs that have appeared as illustrations for articles in newspapers and magazines has shown that Sobe is right in his first argument. Until mid-1915, not a single photo had appeared in print that even remotely resembled the “An hour a day spent in the ‘Gym’” photo in *Schools of To-Morrow* (see *Note 10*). And it appears also, in texts published between May 1915 and 2019 about Marietta Johnson and her School of Organic Education, not one even remotely comparable illustrative photograph was ever printed.

I am not really familiar with the local oral history regarding Dewey’s visit to Fairhope in December 1913, but after reviewing the literature provided by Sobe (= McGrath, 1996), I also agree with his second point.

And I would like to add that I also agree with Sobe’s third point *if* Dewey was indeed the photographer of the specific photo.

Sobe (2019, p. 178) hopes,

The added value that comes from the possibility of this being a 1913 snapshot taken by John Dewey himself inheres in this being a particular visual framing (selection, valorization) through his lens and in what the taking of this picture suggests about the way the photographer affectively related to the school he was visiting.

And Sobe (2019, p. 181) adds,

The bodies on display in the “gym” image (Figure 2) are shown in possession of strength — physical strength in that many are in gymnastic poses — but rather than meditateness as in the other two photographs, they show an ease and playfulness. It would appear that the effort of holding a pose for the period that it took the photographer to set up and adjust the camera was too much for some of the students as several bodies appear to be falling out of position. The image shows confident, comfortable playful movement that has been frozen for a brief moment — again, not just by the camera in the act of recording that brings this visual into our time, but frozen by the suspension and momentary pausing that was necessary to photographically capture what was occurring. The children in the image seem also to reveal some bemusement and awareness of the spectacle they were presenting the visiting luminary philosopher. If in fact it was taken by Dewey during his December 1913 visit, the image reveals something about the interaction between photographer and the bodies pictured. If Dewey selected this moment to photograph, then something arguably touched him about the particular tableau unfolding across the field in front of him and he had them hold their poses for the purposes of taking a photograph.

But:

Does not this set of thoughts about the moment the photo was created essentially apply to every photographer who would have taken this photo?

### Who took the photos in *Schools of To-Morrow*?

In 2022, a copy of the photograph included as a *frontispiece* in Evelyn and John Dewey’s *Schools of Tomorrow* surfaced in the form of an *RPPC*, bearing Frank Stewart’s signature that he often placed on *RPPCs* he sold (see *Figure 3*). *Ergo*, the name of the photographer of the *frontispiece* photo in *Schools of Tomorrow* is Frank Stewart.

The photo of children “scratching” the wall of a Fairhope gully and sitting on the sandy bottom of the gully in *Schools of Tomorrow* is one of at least two photos taken in just seconds by a professional photographer (see *Addendum i* above, and see *Note 7*), both photos published in magazines before daughter

and father Dewey's book was published in May 1915. It is extremely likely that Frank Stewart was the photographer.

As of yet, it has not been definitively determined who took the “An hour a day spent in the ‘Gym’” photo in *Schools of To-Morrow*. As far as Noah Sobe and I have been able to determine, the photo has not appeared anywhere in print other than in *Schools of To-Morrow*, where the photographer's name was not revealed.

Interestingly, close inspection of photos on the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Archives website shows that the “An hour a day spent in the ‘Gym’” photo is included in its digital archive (see Object ID PMG-1419 at <https://fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com>). The description of the photo reads, “Post card photograph of students at the Organic School of Education in Fairhope, Alabama. The students a [*sic.*; J.S.] playing outdoors. From the Paul M. Gaston Collection, Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Archives.”

How this photo ended up in the Paul M. Gaston Collection — that is, a photo that, according to Noah Sobe, may have been taken by John Dewey in December 1913 — is not stated, nor is it stated who the photographer was.

### **A September 2023 Auction of Items from Stock Photo Agency Brown Brothers**

Until here it is a mystery who took the photo and when: Was it John Dewey, in December 1913, or someone else, earlier, or perhaps later, but not later than early 1915, when *Schools of To-Morrow* was being readied for publication? But then, in September 2023, a series of five photos surfaced in the form of *RPPCs* featuring students from the School of Organic Education. These *RPPCs* were auctioned on eBay along with an official envelope from the School of Organic Education sent to the stock photo agency Brown Brothers, 106-108 Fulton Street in New York City in 1913 (see *Note 10*). A letter that may have been sent in the envelope with the *RPPCs* was not part of the auction.

The date the *RPPCs* were sent from Fairhope to Brown Brothers in New York City is obviously interesting. Note that the shipment was sent on November 1, 1913 — almost *two months before* John Dewey and his son Sabino visited Fairhope and the School of Organic Education!

Are there any photos printed on the *RCCPs* in question that may have been previously published and if so, do we know the name of the photographer?

From the batch of five *RPPCs* sent from Fairhope in November 1913 to Brown Brothers in New York City, the photographs on two of these *RPPCs* had already been printed in an article by journalist Edwin Potter, published in the *Oregon Daily Journal* and the *Syracuse Herald* on December 10, 1911 (Potter, 1911ab; see *Note 7*): one shows children napping on and under tables at the School of Organic Education (see *Note 11* and *Figure 5*, bottom left) and the other shows students and their self-built teepees (see *Note 12* and *Figure 5*, top right). The second photo would additionally appear in Helen Christine Bennett's (1912) article in *Pictorial Review* and in Jean Lee Hunt's (1913) article in the *Survey*, December 6, 1913, as well as in an article by Helen F. Case (1914), published in the March 1, 1914, edition of the *Youngstown Vindicator*. It is certain that Frank Stewart took both photos.

One of the other photos in the latter article (Case, 1914) shows a number of the school's students taking an afternoon nap outside, in a kneeling position on the grass. This is exactly the bottom part of another photo on a *RPPC* in the batch of five *RPPCs* sent to Brown Brothers in November 1913 (see *Note 13* and *Figure 5*, bottom right). The name of the photographer is not known.

A photo on one of the two remaining *RPPCs*, showing students from the School of Organic Education sitting at two large tables (see *Note 14* and *Figure 5*, top left), had already appeared in an article by Bessie B. Wallace (1913) on October 5, 1913, in the *Pensacola Journal*. It is certain that Frank Stewart took this photo.

The last *RPPC* (see *Figure 6 - Top*) shows *exactly* the same scene as in the photo “An hour a day spent in the ‘Gym’” which appeared in *Schools of To-Morrow* in May 1915 (see *Figure 2*, top photograph). The *RPPC* was sent to be used as a promotional photo from the School of Organic Education to the New York stock photo agency Brown Brothers, as were the other four *RPPCs* described above in the official School of Organic Education envelope on November 1, 1913 (see *Note 15* and *Figure 6 - Bottom*).



**Figure 5: 4 RPPCs from a purchased lot of 5 RPPCs + envelope from the School of Organic Education, sent to Brown Brothers, New York City, on November 1, 1913 (Jeroen Staring Collection).**

The photo “An hour a day spent in the ‘Gym’” in *Schools of To-Morrow* must therefore have a different origin than John Dewey as an amateur photographer from December 1913! The name of the photographer is unknown.

## Assumptions

Since three photographs on RPPCs in the envelope sent from Fairhope in November 1913 to Brown Brothers in New York City were taken by Frank Stewart, and a fourth was probably also taken by him, it can be assumed that Stewart also took the “An hour a day spent in the ‘Gym’” photo.

From what an unknown buyer and the author of this case study acquired at the September 17, 2023, eBay auction, it can be concluded that Brown Brothers most likely sold copies of the first four of the just mentioned photographs because Brown Brothers’ archives had an ‘archival photo’ with inscription on the back (a brief description of what the photo shows) and a glass negative of the photo (see *Note 16*).

The author of this case study also acquired ‘archival photos’ with inscription on the back (a brief description of what the photo shows) and glass negatives of:

- I). the photograph of Marietta Johnson and nine students sitting in front of the main building of the School of Organic Education that forms the *frontispiece* in *Schools of To-Morrow*, and
- II). the photograph of children “scratching” the wall of a Fairhope gully and sitting on the sandy bottom of the gully that faces page 30 in *Schools of To-Morrow* (see *Note 10*).

Perhaps, given all this, we can tentatively assume that Evelyn and John Dewey purchased all three photos of students at the School of Organic Education in Fairhope from the Brown Brothers stock photo agency in New York City and that it appears that Frank Stewart was most likely the one who took all three photos? In any case, we can say with certainty that John Dewey did not take any of the three photos.

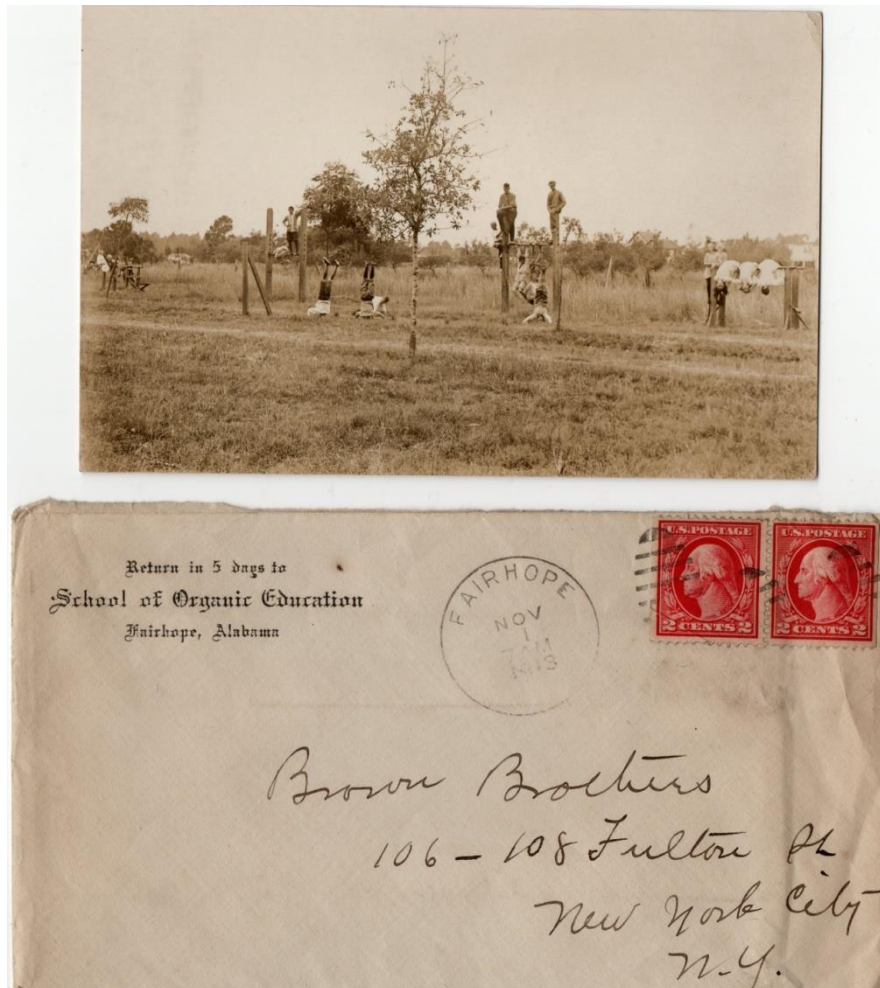
## Postscript

Since the turn of the millennium, new avenues for research have emerged, for example digital research using electronic search engines. This means not only so-called ‘googling,’ but also the inventive, adventurous use



of, for example, genealogy websites to sift through enormous amounts of newspapers and magazines (Staring, 2013a), or searching eBay and other online auction sites to acquire all kinds of things or even hints of interest to research (Staring, 2020b, 2021ab and 2022).

Since the beginning of a correspondence regarding the three photographs of School of Organic Education students in *Schools of To-Morrow* (Sobe 2016), Noah Sobe's and my searches have not yielded a definitive outcome regarding the provenance of the "An hour a day spent in the 'Gym'" photo. Teasing out and unravelling the story so far required a lot of searching in books, newspapers, women's magazines, general magazines, and also many and various websites. The search is not over yet, because it has not yet been definitively established that Frank Stewart was the photographer who took the photo.



**Figure 6 - Top: 5th RPPC from a purchased lot of 5 RPPCs + envelope from the School of Organic Education, sent on November 1, 1913, to Brown Brothers, New York City.**

**This RPPC has the same photo as the top photo facing page 30 in Dewey & Dewey, 1915ab.**

**Figure 6 - Bottom: Envelope, School of Organic Education, Fairhope Alabama, sent to Brown Brothers, New York City, N.Y., on November 1, 1913. (Jeroen Staring Collection).**

And: Noah Sobe's (2019) arguments for viewing the expressiveness of the three photos with a sharp, investigative and instructive, philosophical eye remain (compare Cunningham, 2019; Dussel, 2021).

## Notes

1. Stewart was one of a handful of photographers in and around Fairhope who sold their photos as real photo postcards (RPPCs) (Barrett, 2017). A title of the photo and his signature "Stewart" or "Stewart the Picture Man" were applied to the negative with black opaque; this resulted in the well-known white handwriting on the postcard. However, Stewart did not do this with all photos and RPPCs.

2. Although the official history of education relates that Lydia Comings invited the Johnsons to return to Fairhope, the April 3, 1920, *Evening Post Magazine* mentions an alternative reason. Marietta and Frank planned to raise pecan nuts which were “supposed to be a maker of large fortunes. It was for this reason that [Marietta Johnson’s School of Organic Education] was started in the Sunny South” (Rawson, 1920).
3. Note that social reformer and educationalist Felix Adler introduced the term “Organic Education” during a conference on education in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1894 (*New York Times*, 1894; *School Journal*, 1894). For another introduction of the term “Organic Education” see Scott & Buck, 1897, 1899. Compare also Morice, 2017, pp. 123-124.
4. The *San Francisco Call* article was reprinted in the *Boston Daily Globe* (1912), *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (1912), *Washington Herald* (1912). These articles had photos as illustrations. The *Buffalo Morning Express* (1912) carried the text that had appeared in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* but published no photos. It is very likely that several other newspapers also published the article.
5. Compare, for example: *Boston Evening Transcript*, 1912; *Christian Science Monitor*, 1910, 1911; Christopher, 1910; Comings, 1909ab; Edwards, 1913; Herring, 1910; Johnson, 1910; Lake, 1910; *Pensacola Journal*, 1908ab, 1913; Pope, 1911; Potter, 1911ab, 1912; Prang, 1909; *Public*, 1909; *School Education*, 1910; Smith, 1910; Stevens, 1910; *Twice-A-Week Spokesman Review*, 1910; *University Missourian*, 1910; Wallace, 1913.
6. Numerous newspapers reported on Johnson’s lectures (e.g., *Evening Star*, *New York Sun*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Single Tax Review*, *Trenton Evening True American*, *Washington Herald*, and *Washington Times*). Magazines devoted their columns to the “Fairhope Experiment” (e.g., *American Educational Review*, *Current Literature*, *The Temple Artisan*). See especially Bennett, 1913ab; Case, 1914; Gruenberg, 1914, Hillyard, 1914; Marshall, 1914; *New York Tribune*, 1914; Wallace, 1913; Watson, 1914, Young, 1914. Consult Gaston, 1984; Kurr, 1918; Newman, 1999, 2002; Staring 2013b, 2014, 2016, 2020a, 2021bc.
7. In November of 1911, Boston’s *Christian Science Monitor* (1911) had the ‘national first’ with an article featuring a photo of students putting a roof on a wooden building. It could also be determined that this photo was taken by Frank Stewart (Staring, 2020a).

A month later, on December 10, at least two newspapers, the *Oregon Daily Journal* and the *Syracuse Herald*, published a full-page expose by journalist Edwin S. Potter (1911ab) on Marietta Johnson and her school. A portrait of Johnson plus five photographs depicting scenes from the school in Fairhope illustrated the article. (Interestingly, the December 9 *Syracuse Herald*, in their announcement of articles to appear in the next day’s issue, firmly stated that Potter’s article would be “beautifully” illustrated.) Johnson’s portrait was taken by photographer Marceau, but no information about the photographer(s) was available for the other five photos. However, one of these photos had appeared a month earlier in the *Christian Science Monitor* (1911), see above, and was made by Frank Stewart. Two others are included in Barrett’s recent book on *Stewart The Picture Man*, so can be definitively attributed to Frank Stewart (see Barrett, 2017, pp. 64, 205).

The following year, 1912, Marietta Johnson conducted a summer school camp in Arden, Delaware. The first major newspaper to report this in an (anonymous) article was the West Coast *San Francisco Call* (1912) of August 31. The article was illustrated with three photos of which the photographer(s) also remained uncredited. Two major East Coast newspapers also published the article including the three photographs, without crediting the author and photographer(s): *Washington Herald* (1912) on September 1 and *Boston Daily Globe* (1912) on September 8. Also on September 8, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* ran the article without attribution, printing only one of three photos that had appeared in the other newspapers but added four other photos. No photographer was credited.

Also in September 1912, the article by Helen Christine Bennett already mentioned appeared in the *Pictorial Review*. It is likely that Bennett had attended Johnson’s summer school camp in Arden earlier that summer. Furthermore, it is remarkable that the style of her article in *Pictorial Review* (Bennett, 1912) resembles the style of the article that appeared in the *San Francisco Call*, *Washington Herald*, *Boston Daily Globe* and *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* the end of August and beginning of September without mentioning the author. (Was Bennett perhaps the author?)

Five photographs illustrated Bennett’s *Pictorial Review* article: (a). A photo of students from the School of Organic Education standing in front of two tepees they built. This is the same photo that already appeared in the *Syracuse Herald* and in the *Oregon Daily Journal* of December 10, 1911, mentioned above (Potter, 1911ab). Frank Stewart was its photographer. (b). The photo of School of Organic Education students adding a wooden roof to a wooden building, which had already appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor* of November 29, 1911, and the *Syracuse Herald* and *Oregon Daily Journal* of December 10, 1911 — as mentioned above (Potter, 1911ab). Frank Stewart was also the photographer of this photo. (c). A photo of students from the School of Organic Education playing tennis and on the school playground. This photo also appears in the photo book *Images of America: Fairhope* that contains photos, most of which were taken by Frank Stewart (Donelson, 2005, p. 48). It is therefore very likely that Frank Stewart took this photo (and not Helen Christine Bennett as I previously assumed). (d). A photo of students from the School of Organic Education cleaning a street. It is not certain who took the photo: perhaps Helen Christine Bennett, but more likely Frank Stewart. (e). A photograph of children “scratching” the wall of a Fairhope gully and

sitting on the sandy bottom of the gully. Following Sobe's lead in carefully inspecting each photo, I found that the photo almost perfectly equals the one in *Schools of To-Morrow*, differing merely in the position of the right hand of the boy standing on the far right (see *Addendum i*, above; see also *Figure 2*; compare *Figure 4*; see also Object ID: FSTC-1504 at <https://fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com> ). Yet this means that both almost identical photos were taken during one shoot, most likely not by an amateur photographer, but by a professional photographer — most likely Frank Stewart.

As already mentioned, the Fairhope League was founded on July 31, 1913, during the first Fairhope Summer School in Greenwich, Connecticut. Many newspapers paid attention to the Fairhope League foundation. Earlier, on March 16, 1913, the New York Times ran an article about Marietta Johnson and her school in Fairhope (Edwards, 1913). Many newspapers paid attention to it at the time. Two photos illustrate the article: One photo shows several children, sitting and playing at the bottom of a gully, accompanied by their teacher Marietta Johnson. The other photo shows Marietta Johnson in the company of nine children in front of the Bell Building, the main building on the School of Organic Education campus. This is the photo that was mentioned earlier in this case study as being an *almost* identical photo to the one that serves as the *frontispiece* in *Schools of To-Morrow*. No photographer was mentioned in the article. The photographer of the first photo remains unknown, although it could be Frank Stewart. The name of the photographer of the second photo is Frank Stewart (Staring, 2023)

Several articles about Fairhope appeared in the October 5, 1913, issue of the *Pensacola Journal*. One of these (Wallace, 1913) was about the School of Organic Education and was illustrated with two photos: one of students sitting at two large tables, and one of students and teachers gathered en masse standing in front of the Bell Building. No photographer is mentioned in the article, but the first photo is also in *Images of America: Fairhope* (Donelson, 2005, p. 72) and was most probably taken by Frank Stewart, while the second photo is also in *Stewart The Picture Man* (Barrett, 2017, p. 100) and was therefore definitely made by Frank Stewart.

(For further illustrated articles in newspapers and magazines published between November 1913 and 1916, see Staring, 2021c.

8. See also Object ID: PMG-1504 at <https://fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com> .

9. See also Object ID: BSS.442-449 as well as Object ID: FSTC-0017 at <https://fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com> , and Identifiers D.006177 and D.006.084 at <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/mjmcoll> .

10. On September 17, 2023, there was an auction on eBay of items from the archives of the New York stock photo agency Brown Brothers of 5 *RPPCs* + envelope sent on November 1, 1913, by the School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama to Brown Brothers in New York City. (Purchased by the author of this case study).

The same day there were also auctions on eBay of the following items from the Brown Brothers archives:

a). A photograph showing students from the School of Organic Education sitting at two large tables + glass negative of the photo; a photograph of children “scratching” the wall of a Fairhope gully and sitting on the sandy bottom of the gully (a handwritten text on the backside of this photo states. “School of Organic Education Fairhope Alabama”) + glass negative of the photo. (Purchased by the author of this case study).

b). A photograph of children napping on and under tables at the School of Organic Education + glass negative of the photo; a photograph of children taking an afternoon nap outside, in a kneeling position on the grass + glass negative of the photo. (Purchased by unknown buyer(s)).

c). A photograph of children standing in front of two teepees + glass negative of the photo; a photograph of Marietta Johnson and nine students sitting in front of the main building of the School of Organic Education, the so-called Bell Building (a handwritten text on the backside of this photo states. “Outdoor History Class”) + glass negative of the photo. (Purchased by the author of this case study).

11. A handwritten text on the backside of the *RPPC* states, “Life Class at rest.” Another text, in different handwriting, states, “School of Organic Education Fairhope Ala.”

Photographer was Frank Stewart.

12. A handwritten text on the backside of the *RPPC* states, “2nd Life Class at their teepees, built by themselves.” Another text, in different handwriting, states, “School of Organic Education Fairhope Ala.”

Photographer was Frank Stewart.

See also Object ID: BSS.464-465 at <https://fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com> and Identifiers D.006.099 and MJM-66 at <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/mjmcoll> .

13. A handwritten text on the backside of the *RPPC* states, “Life Class taking a rest out of doors.” Another text, in different handwriting, states, “School of Organic Education Fairhope Ala.”

Photographer unknown. See also Object ID: PMG-1472 at <https://fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com> .

14. A handwritten text on the backside of the *RPPC* states, “Hand work period First Life Class.” Another text, in different handwriting, states, “School of Organic Education Fairhope Ala.” Photographer was Frank Stewart.

See also Object ID: BSS.458-459 at <https://fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com> and Identifier MJM-130 at <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/mjmcoll> .

15. A handwritten text on the backside of the *RPPC* states, “In the ‘gymnasium’.” Another text, in different handwriting, states, “School of Organic Education Fairhope Ala.”

Photographer unknown. See also Object ID: PMG-1419 at <https://fairhopesingletax.pastperfectonline.com> .

16. Brown Brothers likely sold:

a). Copies of the photo showing children napping on and under tables at the School of Organic Education (see *Note 10, Note 11* and *Figure 5*, bottom left).

b). Copies of the photo showing School of Organic Education students and their self-built teepees (see *Note 10, Note 12* and *Figure 5*, top right).

c). Copies of the photo showing a number of the school’s students taking an afternoon nap outside, in a kneeling position on the grass (see *Note 10, Note 13* and *Figure 5*, bottom right).

d). Copies of the photo showing students from the School of Organic Education sitting at two large tables (see *Note 10, Note 14* and *Figure 5*, top left).

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