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Marietta Johnson's School of Organic Education and Evelyn & John Dewey's Schools of Tomorrow Frontispiece Photo

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Abstract:

*This case study discusses photos that illustrate two texts by E. Leslie Gilliams discussing Marietta Johnson's School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama, which appeared in the April 1914 **Physical Culture** magazine and in the November 1915 **New Priscilla** magazine.*

Key Words: Helen Christine Bennett (1881-1969), Evelyn Dewey (1889-1965), Lydia Jane (Newcomb) Comings (1849-1946), Dorothea DeForest (1890-1985), Marietta Louise (Pierce) Johnson (1864-1938), Mary Gordon (Wilbur) DeForest (1854-1944), Ezra DeForest (1851-1921), John Dewey (1859-1952), E. Leslie Gilliams (1885-1951), Frank Stewart (1855-1942). *School of Organic Education.*

Introduction: Photos Related to Fairhope in Dorothea DeForest's Private Photo Album

Mary Gordon (Wilbur) DeForest and her husband, Colonel, businessman, and amateur photographer Ezra DeForest of Brooklyn, New York visited Fairhope, Alabama with their two daughters Helen and Dorothea between March 16 and 20, 1915, because Mary was deeply interested in the local School of Organic Education and the pedagogical work of Principal Marietta Johnson (*Fairhope Courier*, 1915; Staring, 2021b).

During their visit to Fairhope, Dorothea DeForest photographed — just as her father Ezra DeForest, sharing his love of photography. One of her albums featured photos taken in Fairhope (see *Figures 1 and 2*). Some of these photos are typical family shots, for example the DeForests and their daughter Helen on the road to Mobile, Alabama (*Figure 1*, top left); or the DeForests on a country lane where power poles had recently been erected (*Figure 1*, top center); and the photo of “Mr. Croes' Farm” (*Figure 1*, bottom left). The second page of photos from their visit to Fairhope has a photo showing a mare and colt, a farm and windmill in the background (*Figure 2*, left) as well as a photo of a carriage the DeForest family travelled with (*Figure 2*, upper right).

Other photos show historically interesting scenes. The first page of photos from the DeForest family visit to Fairhope features a photo showing a luggage cart and a larger wagon that could be pulled by a mule or horse on a track of the so-called ‘People's Railroad,’ from the Fairhope pier uphill to the center of the town (*Figure 1*, bottom right). In the background the Crawford Building in the center of Fairhope, at Fairhope Avenue and Section Street. A similar photograph was also taken by Frank Stewart in 1915 — a local Fairhope photographer who called himself “The Picture Man” (Barrett, 2017, p. 83).

On July 5, 1916, a hurricane destroyed part of the ‘People's Railroad,’ wrecking bathhouses and the end of the Fairhope pier, among other things (see *Note 1*).



Figure 1: Dorothea DeForest's 1915 private photo album, first page with photos from visit to Fairhope, Alabama. (Jeroen Staring Collection).



Figure 2: Dorothea DeForest's 1915 private photo album, second page with photos from visit to Fairhope, Alabama. (Jeroen Staring Collection).

There is also a photo of Marietta Johnson's School of Organic Education with playground and children playing (Figure 1, top right). Fairhope photographer Stewart also took pictures of Johnson's "Organic School;" see, for example, Figure 3, that is, according to him, a "birds eye view" photograph he took of the school's campus, reportedly in 1914. Stewart created postcards — so-called *RPPCs*: real photo postcards — from his photographs and sold them (compare Barrett, 2017, pp. xvi and 43; see Note 2).

Another photograph related to Marietta Johnson and the School of Organic Education in Dorothea DeForest’s album was taken by her father Ezra DeForest (*Figure 2*, lower right) of his wife Mary (left) and daughters Helen (middle) and Dorothea (right) on the front porch of the house from Marietta Johnson.

Marietta Johnson and The School of Organic Education

Mary DeForest had already been to Fairhope a year and a half earlier, on her own, in February 1914 (*Fairhope Courier*, 1914). The DeForests had a summer home in Upper Montclair, New Jersey, where Mary was a member of the Montclair chapter of the Fairhope League — a society founded in Greenwich, Connecticut on July 31, 1913, to promote progressive education as taught by Marietta Johnson in Fairhope, Alabama (Gaston, 1984; Newcomb Comings, 1915; Newman, 1999, 2002). Mary DeForest strove to introduce Marietta Johnson’s pedagogy to Montclair schools (see *Note 3*)

Marietta Johnson’s school in Fairhope was founded in 1907 by Johnson herself along with her good friend Lydia Jane (Newcomb) Comings, a former gym teacher (Gaston, 1984; Johnson, 1913, 1974, 1996; Newman, 1999, 2002; Staring, 2016).

Since the school existed there was a lot of interest in Johnson’s educational approach and pedagogical ideals, first called “Organic Training,” but later “Organic Education” (Johnson, 1909, 1910abc, 1911; Newcomb Comings, 1907, 1909ab, 1915).



Figure 3: “Birds Eye View” of the campus of Marietta Johnson’s School of Organic Education. Postcard created by Frank Stewart. (Jeroen Staring Collection).

Marietta Johnson and her school received astonishing publicity in the local newspaper *Fairhope Courier* between 1908 and 1916 as well as in large newspapers like *Baltimore Sun*, *Boston Daily Globe*, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Detroit Times*, *Evangelical Herald*, *Evening Post*, *Evening Star*, *New York Times*, *New York Tribune*, *Pensacola Journal*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Pittsburgh Press*, *San Francisco Call*, *Sun*, *Syracuse Herald*, *Washington Herald* and *Washington Times*. Scientific journals like *American Educational Review*, *Journal of Education*, *Normal Instructor* and *Primary Plans*, and *Scientific American* published articles about the school in Fairhope. Periodicals and magazines like *American Magazine*, *Federation Bulletin*, *Hearst’s Magazine*, *Public*, *Survey*, and *Temple Artisan* also paid attention to the remarkable education the children received at the Fairhope School of Organic Education, as did several books, including *Schools of To-Morrow* written by Evelyn Dewey and her father John Dewey. (Staring, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2020ab, 2021ab, Staring & Aldridge, 2014).

This ‘contrasts 180 degrees’ with what educational historian Lawrence Cremin (1961, p. 151) stated in his *The Transformation of the School*. He wrote that despite “all its radical innovation, the Fairhope

experiment remained relatively unsung until 1915, when John Dewey decided to discuss it at length in *Schools of To-Morrow*.” In fact, Marietta Johnson and her school in Fairhope had received much praise (and also a little criticism) in the press.

And then we have not even mentioned the so-called women’s magazines in which (often illustrated) articles about the Fairhope school and its director appeared in those years — magazines like *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *McCall’s Magazine*, *New Priscilla*, and *Pictorial Review*. These were magazines with a huge circulation, read by — in all — millions of women! Articles in women’s magazines (and in so-called women’s pages in newspapers) were enormously influential.

“A School Where Common Sense Rules”

The ‘Literary Review & Comment’ pages in the *Flaming Sword* stated in April 1914 that the *Physical Culture* magazine had “a very instructive as well as interesting account of ‘A School Where Common Sense Rules,’ viz., Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson’s open-air school in Fairhope, Ala., a system which we hope may find imitators” (Critchler, 1914).

It is certainly remarkable that *Physical Culture* published an article about Johnson and her school. At the time, *Physical Culture* not only published articles with tips to get fit or about, for example, home nursing, vegetarianism, massage, ‘deep breathing,’ dancing, or food and dieting, and other health topics, as well as autobiographical pieces by editor and publisher of *Physical Culture* Bernarr MacFadden, but also serialized episodes of new books by Daniel Carson Goodman, Jack London and by Upton Sinclair — who, by the way, would later encourage interested parties to seek information from Marietta Johnson about her school: “Write also to the Organic School at Fairhope, Alabama, and inform yourself about the splendid work which Mrs. Marietta Johnson is doing, to train young people in the realities of life, and to make education a complete and living thing” (Sinclair, 1924, p. 413).

Because *Worldcat.Org* does not list any library that contains the 1914 *Physical Culture* volume, the particular article, written by E. Leslie Gilliams (1914), is quoted in full here to give an idea of the publicity Marietta Johnson and her school received at the time. From the early 1900s, historian and “Urban Explorer” E. Leslie Gilliams wrote journalistic articles in *Architectural Record*, *Illustrated World*, *New York Press*, *Strand Magazine*, and *Wide World Magazine*, among others (see *Note 4*).

A School Where Common Sense Rules

Physical culturists not only like the bread they eat made of whole wheat, but they also, metaphorically speaking have been for some time demanding that the educational bread which is fed to their children be made of the same article. It has been difficult, however, to get the average educators, accustomed for generations to hand out pedagogical white bread, to listen to their demands.

For years PHYSICAL CULTURE has been using that greater and more intelligent attention be given to the physical welfare and bodily development of school children and also of students of mature years.

That children be given more time on the playground and less in the classroom, that the principles of proper diet, bathing, rest, sleep, breathing pure air, and all the features of hygiene be taught to school children in an effectual and simple way.

That the time has arrived for the old method of fitting pupils to the school to be abolished and that the new method of fitting the schools to the pupils be made to replace it. In other words to give the child what he asks for and really needs.

Now in Fairhope, Alabama, there has recently been established, by Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson, a school which takes the above facts very largely into consideration and acts upon them.

The new system of instruction in vogue in this school is called “organic education” and it comes, as will be seen, mighty near to the physical culture idea of what school teaching should be.

It is an out-of-doors school in every sense of the word. There is a schoolhouse of course for use at times, principally in wet weather, but most all the lessons are given in the open, producing out-

of-doors children, a place where children may achieve real health of mind and body and then a place in which this growth may be directed but not forced. Not infrequently children are sent to the school to recover from an illness.

At first, when a child was ill, the doctor would come to the school and say, “Mary is ill. She must stay out of school. She mustn’t study, she mustn’t walk, she mustn’t even sit up.”

“Well, she doesn’t have to, here,” was the answer. “We fit this school to the children, we don’t try to fit the children to the school.”

Then the medico would listen to an exposition of the aims and workings of organic education. Finally he would most likely say, “Humph! I didn’t know you were running a sanitarium for youngsters.”

And next day May would be there in school, enjoying life and getting well.

When the school first opened a picturesque sandy gully was discovered adjacent and shady woods were close by. These were immediately used as schoolrooms on every clear day and furnished examples in miniature for the pupils of oceans, river systems, watersheds for field geography and Nature study.

The Nature study was based upon observation, such as watching a little tree in its development and not taking from it so much as one leaf. The children were encouraged to hunt for new varieties of wild flowers and were taught to distinguish them by their colors quite so much as by their varied appearance. Handwork such as modeling in clay was a popular occupation, the children were allowed to follow their own thoughts with but very little direction by their teachers. Anything like a course of study accompanied by blue prints, specifications and penalties was avoided. When tired of their occupations all kinds of harmless frolics were indulged in which was usually concluded by a swim in the bay.

Stories have been found to be of the very highest value first, fables, folklore and myths, and later, stories of history and literature are taken up—or so much with the idea of teaching literature and history as with the thought of teaching life and health.

Each child has a garden in which he plants what he pleases and as he pleases; he cultivates it or not as he pleases, he does what he pleases with the product. Unless he asks for help, he gets no help. He is not compelled to follow rules by fear of punishment.

Discipline, in the main, consists of keeping the children from interfering with one another; it has been found there is very rarely any call for even that.

The children spend their sixth, seventh and eighth years in what is known as the first life-class, and by the time they have reached nine all can do a little of all the various essential things just mentioned. At nine when there is usually a natural change in the child’s interest the children enter the second life-class which includes pupils of nine, ten and eleven.

Here the youngsters make the same progress by the same general methods. Of course, inasmuch as they have now themselves learned to read, they now read their stories of history, literature and geography, instead of having them read to them.

But they come into the use of books—no books are used in teaching the younger children—through the help of sympathetic teachers, rather than through the way of assigned tasks. They are given no cut-and-dried lessons. They do not sit at desks. They simply form a circle, each reading in turn from say a book about Japan. As they read the teacher helps them, and not only that, but embellishes the information which the book gives with other facts, with maps and so on. Thus it has been found that they not only learn to read well, but they learn about Japan.

When the time comes for them to go home, no task is set for the next day. They do not go home burdened with book bundles, their minds weighted with the consciousness of hard, grinding work which must be done before they come back on the morrow; they go home happy, care-free, growing. And they come back in the morning eager for their lessons.

How to take care of the teeth is looked upon by the instructors of this school as of almost as much importance as how to read or write and instruction of this nature as well as that relating to all

the features of hygiene is given the greatest care and attention and made so interesting that the children remember it.

Regular manual training is also introduced in the second life-class, but here again there is no course that every child must pass through in order to maintain his standing in the school. Gardening is continued, and serving and cooking are introduced, boys and girls taking the same work.



In this unusual school the mind is not cultivated at the expense of the body—the children take part in frolics and games which conserve their health and build up their vitality.

A School Where Common Sense Rules

By E. Leslie
Gilliams

Figure 4: Title and first photo + caption from E. Leslie Gilliams article on Marietta Johnson’s School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama in the April 1914 *Physical Culture*.

In all the classes some time is given daily to work which is called physical accomplishment, which does not necessarily consist of fixed exercises with apparatus, of which children rapidly become tired, but of exercise in play form in which they take a large interest, and which is sure of making for their physical advancement. From day to day these exercises are varied. One day they may consist of a stone throwing contest and the next a game of “ring around a rosy” or just an old-fashioned romp or a foot race or a long walk through the woods or some fixed exercise. As far as possible these exercises are carefully selected and varied in accordance with the particular lines of development most needed by the children and the specific benefits to be derived. The individual physical needs of each student are also carefully considered. Further, the young girls are given as careful consideration in respect to physical development as are the boys.

In certain cases where special corrective exercises are necessary they are carefully, individually given—if for instance some child should show a tendency to spinal curvature.

The tests of everything done in this school is, does it make the body stronger, the mind bigger and the soul sweeter? If it does, it is kept up. If it does not, it is dropped.

Two Photos That Illustrate “A School Where Common Sense Rules”

Gilliams’ text in *Physical Culture* as quoted in its entirety above was illustrated with two photographs. The first photo (see *Figure 4*), printed above the title of Gilliams’ piece in *Physical Culture*, had first appeared almost two years earlier in a 1912 article on Marietta Johnson. That year, Johnson organized a summer school in a tent in the ‘single tax colony’ in Arden, Delaware (Rodman, 1915; Staring, 2013, 2014). Four major newspapers subsequently published an article illustrated with photographs (Staring, 2020a). On August 31, 1912, the article was first printed in the *San Francisco Call* (1912). The next day it appeared in the *Boston Daily Globe* (1912) and the *Washington Herald* (1912). And a week later, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (1912) published the piece.



Figure 5: Excerpt from “A School Where Pupils Stand on Their Heads,” in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 8, 1912.

The *San Francisco Call*, *Boston Daily Globe* and *Washington Herald* printed the same photos, but the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* had only one photo similar, and four other photos. One of these four photos pictures a group of children and an adult woman (on the far left of the photo; Marietta Johnson herself) dancing in a circle and is exactly the same photo printed above the title of the piece in *Physical Culture*. There the caption reads, “In this unusual school the mind is not cultivated at the expense of the body—the children take part in frolics and games which conserve their health and build up their vitality” (see photo + caption in *Figure 4*).

However, in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, published almost two years earlier, the caption read, “A Dance on the Edge of the Forest” (see photo + caption top-right in *Figure 5*).

Note that the four newspapers gave neither the name of the author of the article nor of the photographer(s) who took the photos (see *Note 5*).

The second photo (see *Figure 6*) shows Marietta Johnson in front of the Bell Building, the main building on the school campus, along with nine students of which the boy on the right, reading a book, is allegedly her son. The caption reads, “One of the classes of the school in session—a lesson in history.” This photo has certainly been published before, in an article by journalist Davis Edwards in the March 16, 1913, *New York Times* issue. The caption there reads, “History in the Open” (Edwards, 1913). It is indeed the exact same photograph as in the article in the April 1914 issue of *Physical Culture*, quoted above.

Twin Photos?

It is very interesting to know that there are also press articles about Marietta Johnson, published between 1913 and 1916, which are illustrated with an *almost* identical photograph of Johnson and the same nine children, but in which the boy on the right of the picture is not reading, but like the others listens to Johnson’s explanation (see *Note 6*). Several of those illustrated articles are listed here in chronological order:

In July 1913, the ‘Interesting People’ section of *American Magazine* published an article entitled “Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson,” written by Helen Christine Bennett. The text is illustrated with the photograph showing Marietta Johnson in the company of the nine children listening to her. The caption reads, “Mrs. Marietta L. Johnson. Creator and principal of the Fairhope School of Organic Education. In this

extraordinary school the child is permitted to grow and develop like a plant. That a profound revolution is now taking place in education is increasingly indicated” (Bennett, 1913a).

The *Social-Democratic Herald* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin reprinted Bennett’s full *American Magazine* article on July 19, 1913, including the photo of Johnson and the nine listening children. The caption now reads simply, “From The American Magazine” (Bennett, 1913b). It is quite possible that other newspapers have also reprinted Bennett's article.



Figure 6: Second photo + caption from E. Leslie Gilliams article on Marietta Johnson’s School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama in the April 1914 *Physical Culture*.

The photograph of Marietta Johnson in the company of nine listening children also illustrates an article in the December 6, 1913, *Survey* — written by Jean Lee Hunt, secretary of the Fairhope League, the association formed in the summer of 1913 in Greenwich, Connecticut, to promote Johnson's educational work (see *Note 7*). It was one of six photos illustrating the article. The caption reads, “A Lesson from Books, Not What We Find in Them But What We Get out of Them” (Hunt, 1913).

Journalist Rose Young published “Guilty of Motherhood” in the January 1914 issue of *Good Housekeeping*, an article that merely mentions Marietta Johnson alongside 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’ and is applying it in her ‘do-as-you-please schools’ down on Mobile Bay” (Young, 1914, p. 30). Yet two of the eight photographs in the article show Johnson and her students. One of these two photos does not show the entire original photo, but only the body of the photo in which Johnson can be seen in the company of the nine listening children. The caption reads, “A class in the ‘do-as-you-please’ school founded by Mrs. John Franklin Johnston [*sic.*; J.S.]. Mrs. Johnston’s [*sic.*; J.S.] methods, though they depart radically from most schoolroom procedures, by their cheer success, are winning the approval of great numbers of educators. She takes counsel of the mother in her and teaches other children as she would her own.”

Novelist Marguerite M. Marshall published an article on Johnson — titled “‘American Montessori’ Is a Mother-Teacher Who Developed Method Through Own Son” — in the March 11, 1914, *Evening World*. The article was illustrated with ten cartoons and the photograph showing Johnson and the nine children who listened to her next to the front porch of the Bell Building. The caption reads, “Mrs. Marietta Johnson And Pupils” (Marshall, 1914).

Subsequently, on June 14, 1914, *New York Tribune* (1914) published a one-page illustrated article titled “A School Where The Work Is All Play,” subtitled, “How Happy Past School Days Would Have Been if ‘Keeping Store,’ Throwing Stones, Planting Flowers and Listening to Thrilling Stories Had Been the Day’s Lessons, as They Are at Fairhope.” The newspaper did not name the author. One of the article’s six illustrative photographs shows Marietta Johnson with the nine children listening to her in front of the Bell

Building. The caption reads, “These Absorbed Faces Do Not Resemble the Dull Visage of the Average Student Because They Are Listening to a Fascinating History Story Told By Mrs. Johnson.”



Figure 7: Title (and photo + caption) from E. Leslie Gilliams article on Marietta Johnson’s School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama in the November 1915 *Modern Priscilla*.

Rose Johnston Watson (1914), Principal of Barnard Elementary School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,, compiled a well-illustrated half-page article on Johnson’s ideas that was published in *The Pittsburgh Press*, September 6, 1914. Her article contained four photos, including the photo of Marietta Johnson and the nine listening children. The caption reads, “When children really want to know.”

Lastly, the November 1915 issue of the so-called women’s magazine *Modern Priscilla* contains “A New School System Built on Play,” a second article about Johnson and her Fairhope school from the pen of E. Leslie Gilliams, this time published in a so-called ‘women’s magazine.’ Only one photo illustrated the article. The photo shows Marietta Johnson with the nine listening children in front of the Bell Building. The caption reads, “Most of the Lessons Are Given in the Open, Where the Children May Achieve Real Health of Mind and Body (see *Figure 7*).

The Frontispiece in Evelyn & John Dewey’s *Schools of Tomorrow*

In mid-1913, philosopher and educator John Dewey was invited by the Fairhope League to visit Marietta Johnson’s School of Organic Education at Fairhope and write an account of his findings (Staring & Aldridge, 1914). The invitation was accepted by Dewey.

During the Christmas week of 1913, Dewey and his son Sabino paid their visit to Johnson’s experimental school. Two weeks after the visit, the *Fairhope Courier* published a letter from John Dewey to Jean Lee Hunt of the Fairhope League in New Haven, Connecticut. Hunt then sent (the text of) Dewey’s letter to the *Fairhope Courier* for publication. Dewey (1914) wrote,

My Dear Miss Hunt:

I am safely returned from Fairhope, having had a pleasant and instructive trip. As it will be some days yet before I shall be able to get a formal report in shape I want to say that I was pleased even beyond my expectations with what I saw of the Organic School. In fact, I am so enthusiastic that

I have to stop and ask myself whether I have been self-deceived or allowed my enthusiasm to run away with my judgment. The beauty of it is that the results against odds which would long ago have completely discouraged most persons, are obtained by such simple and natural means, without any tricks of the trade, or even very special methods or devices—just by sticking to a few broad principles of growth. I think if the school can be properly supported for the next few years, that two things can be accomplished: one the gradual spread of the ideals and methods of the school, through the public schools of rural Alabama, the other the training of teachers by their working with Mrs. Johnson in Fairhope, to initiate similar work in the North with the modifications, whatever they may turn out to be, needed to adapt the work to more sophisticated and less crude environments.

I wish to thank the Fairhope League for having made possible for me such an enjoyable and profitable educational experience.

Sincerely yours,

John Dewey.

Subsequently, the February 6, 1914, *Fairhope Courier* (1914b) reported that Dewey’s full report had been delivered to the newspaper and that it was “very appreciative and encouraging.” The *Fairhope Courier* (1914a) of February 27, 1914, would publish the text entitled *Report on the Condition of the School for Organic Education, Fairhope, Ala.*, that is, Dewey’s final report, albeit with a few omissions. Two and a half months later, the *Survey* (1914) of May 16, 1914, discussed the report at length.

A year later, in May 1915, John Dewey and his daughter Evelyn Dewey published *Schools of To-Morrow* about experimental schools they had investigated between 1913 and 1915. Evelyn Dewey had done the visiting of the schools covered in the book, with the exception of Marietta Johnson’s school, which, as mentioned above, had been explored by her father and her brother Sabino. ‘An Experiment in Education as Natural Development,’ the second chapter in *Schools of To-Morrow*, deals in its entirety with the School of Organic Education in Fairhope (see Dewey & Dewey, 1915ab, pp. 17-40; see also *Note 7*).

In addition to the chapter being illustrated with two photographs of students from Johnson’s school (we will not discuss those photographs here; cf. Staring, 2020a, 2021b), it is fascinating to note that the photograph in which Marietta Johnson sits in front of the front porch of the Bell Building with nine children listening is the *frontispiece* in the book. The caption reads, “A test with books open” (see *Figure 8*).

Educator Jennifer Wolfe (2002, p. 201) states in *Learning from the Past* that when Dewey visited the school in late December 1913, he himself took the *frontispiece* photograph in *Schools of Tomorrow*:

John Dewey took this photo in 1913 when he visited the Organic School of Marietta Johnson. Left to right in the photo are: Herbert Foster, unidentified girls on the ground, Esther Gilmore, Marietta Johnson (talking), Eleanor Coutant, Ruth Glenn, Estelle Larson, Ralph Brown, Camilla Roberts, Clifford Earnest Johnson (Marietta Johnson’s son).



A test with books open. (Fairhope, Alabama.) *Frontispiece.*

Figure 8: *Frontispiece* + caption in Dewey & Dewey, 1915ab.

The photograph, first published in the ‘Interesting People’ section of the July 1913 *American Magazine* is *almost* identical to one that illustrated Davis Edwards’ March 16, 1913, *New York Times* article about Johnson and one that illustrated E. Leslie Gilliams’ April 1914 *Physical Culture* article about Johnson (see *Figure 6*, above). Clearly, the same (yet unknown) photographer took both photos — which first appeared in the *New York Times* and *American Magazine* — during the same shoot.

The Final Solution

So far it had not been conclusively and definitively established who took both photos, that is, both the ‘*New York Times* photo’ and the ‘*American Magazine* photo.’ So, in fact, we still don’t know the name of the photographer who took both shots, even though there are vague indications that the photographer must have been Frank Stewart (see *Note 9*).

On the other hand, it is almost certain that Marietta Johnson distributed some kind of press kit to journalists, containing texts about her school and its educational goals, and that a number of photographs of her school, taken by Fairhope photographer Frank Stewart were included as illustration material in the form of handy postcards.

The odds that E. Leslie Gilliams acquired two distinct, but almost identical photographs (supposedly) taken by John Dewey as illustrative material for articles he wrote about Marietta Johnson and her school are virtually negligible.

Then the question remains: “Who took the photos?”

Fortunately, in 2022 a copy of the photograph that first appeared in the July 1913 *American Magazine*, and later in numerous media, including as *frontispiece* in Evelyn and John Dewey’s *Schools of Tomorrow*, has surfaced in the form of a *RPPC*, bearing Stewart’s signature and a title (in white) he often used to include on *RPPCs* he sold (see *Figure 9*).

Logically, this means that the photo that first appeared in the March 16, 1913, *New York Times* and later also in the April 1914 *Physical Culture* must *also* have been taken by Frank Stewart “The Picture Man.”

Mystery solved!



Figure 9: Postcard from photograph taken by Frank Stewart, with white title and white signature. (Jeroen Staring Collection).

Notes

1. Also compare other photos of the ‘People’s Railroad’ in Barrett, 2017: pp. 3, 4, 11, 37, 38, 70, 84, 145, 154, 172, 177, 179, 180, 207, and 216).
2. Even before Frank Stewart settled in Fairhope from nearby Silverhill in 1913, there were postcards for sale in Fairhope depicting local features, special places, buildings, and people (e.g., churches, farm buildings, the local public library, the beach, the post office, Marietta Johnson's school campus, moss draped oak trees, the pier, etc.). Stewart was one of a handful of photographers 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, he did not do this with all photos. The photo in Figure 10 was probably taken by Stewart when he lived near Silverhill but was already travelling the wider area to photograph. He has photographed citrus trees and grapefruit trees more than once and sold them as RPPCs (compare Barrett, 2017, pp. 23 and 51). What is also interesting about the RPPC depicted in Figures 10 and 11 is that Lydia J. Newcomb Comings — Marietta Johnson’s best friend and co-founder of her school — sent the postcard in 1908 as a New Year’s greeting card.

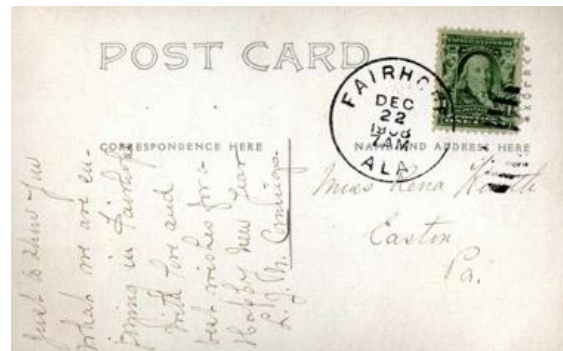


Figure 10: Postcard, most likely created by photographer Frank Stewart, showing a grapefruit tree, sent from Fairhope by Lydia J. Newcomb Comings on December 22, 1908.

Figure 11: Backside of same postcard. (Jeroen Staring Collection).

3. An “Organic School” opened in Montclair on September 12, 1916 (*Evening Telegram*, 1916; *Montclair Times*, 1916, 1920ab, 1921b). Mary DeForest served as chair of the school’s Board of Trustees (*Montclair Times*, 1916, 1917, 1919, 1921b). The first director of the Montclair “Organic School” was Estelle D. Dyke (*Fairhope Courier*, 1917; Kurr, 1918; *Montclair Times*, 1916, 1917, 1918), who had previously directed the School of Organic Education at Fairhope when Marietta Johnson travelled for extended periods through the US to raise money to support the school financially by giving lectures about her pedagogy and the school in Fairhope (Case, 1914; *Youngstown Vindicator*, 1914). Estelle Dyke had also assisted Marietta Johnson in 1914 at the Fairhope Summer School in Greenwich (*Fairhope Courier*, 1914e). The Montclair “Organic School” was later, in 1921, renamed Fairhope School of Montclair (*Fairhope Courier*, 1921; *Montclair Times*, 1921a, 1922ab).
4. Chen (2001, p. 10) lists David Benowitz’s thesis *The Urban Explorer: E. Leslie Gilliams* in his *A Guide to the Department of History Records 1910-1997*.
5. I have previously argued that journalist Helen Christine Bennett may have been the author of the article in the four newspapers, and probably also the photographer of the illustrative photographs in the mentioned August/September 1912 newspapers (Staring, 2021b). The main argument was that Bennett wrote several articles about Johnson’s school, the style of which is very similar to that of the unnamed author of the article in the four papers (see Bennett, 1912, 1913ab, 1914). She stayed in Fairhope for six months around 1911/1912 and lived next door to Johnson at that time. Lydia Newcomb Comings (1915, p. 160) — with whom Marietta Johnson co-founded her school in the fall of 1907 — later stated that Bennett had “spent one winter in Fairhope.” Bennett (1914, p. 13) would say in 1914, “It so happened that I was fortunate in living beside [Marietta Johnson] for six months.”
6. Education historian Noah Sobe at Loyola University Chicago was the first to notice the slight differences between the photograph first published in March 1913 in the *New York Times* (and later in April 1914 in *Physical Culture*) and

the photograph first published in *American Magazine* in July 1913 (and later published numerous times in various media) (consult Sobe, 2018, 2019).

7. Johnson (1974, p. 40) wrote in her autobiography that “Miss Jean L. Hunt, did valiant service for several years, making speaking appointments, arranging for summer schools, and promoting the idea in every possible way.”
8. An interesting anecdote regarding the second chapter in *Schools of Tomorrow* shows that Evelyn Dewey had written the chapter (Dykhuizen, 1973, pp. 369-370; Johnson, 1944, pp. 186-187).
9. In 2021, I supplied the following information regarding the photo of Johnson with nine children listening in online sources: “FSTCA (n.d., Object ID) states the photograph shows “Marietta Johnson and students in Fairhope, Alabama at the Organic School of Education.” FSTCA does not mention the photographer’s name. The photo also appears in MJM (n.d., Identifier MJM-5) where the title is, “Marietta Johnson and the first class of the Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education;” and also in MJM (n.d., Identifier D.006.080), with title “Students of Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education sitting outside with Marietta Johnson.” The photo also appears in HGSoss-AaHRC (n.d.) where the caption states, “Marietta Johnson and students in front of the ‘Bell Building’ on the Organic School Campus. Photograph taken by Frank Stewart in 1912.” Yet, the caption underneath another, similar, photo on the opening page of this site, clearly taken by Stewart because his signature white writing is on it, attributes: “Photograph taken by John Dewey.” This means we have to ask how accurate the HGSoss-AaHRC attribution to Dewey of the photo of Johnson and her students in front of the Bell Building is” (Staring, 2021a, p. 146).

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