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Helen Plummer Goulding, 1870-1959 : a librarian's story

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**HELEN PLUMMER GOULDING
1870-1959
A LIBRARIAN'S STORY**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Library and Information Science

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Library and Information Science

by

Julie A. Stires

December 2003

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ABSTRACT

HELEN PLUMMER GOULDING 1870-1959 A LIBRARIAN'S STORY

by Julie A. Stires

This thesis is the biography of Helen Plummer Goulding (1870-1959), a librarian educated and employed at the turn of the twentieth century. Presented as a social history, it examines her life through the historical and personal factors that led to her librarianship, influenced her library education, and guided her career. Her life is traced from the influences of her Quaker roots in colonial Maryland through her thirty-three year marriage to librarian Philip Sanford Goulding using a collection of newly discovered Plummer family papers as the basis for the research.

The research reveals that Helen Plummer Goulding was a graduate of the Pratt Institute School of Library Training, an assistant librarian at the Pratt Institute Astral Branch library, and a cataloger at the Denver Public Library and the Library of Congress. She was a pioneer librarian taught and influenced by the leading librarians and library educators of the American library movement.

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Without the Helen Plummer Goulding Papers, this thesis would not have been possible. Together, Helen Plummer Goulding and Helen Wig Elgin preserved the Plummer family's papers, the former by bringing them from New Jersey to California in 1920, the latter by donating them to the Pasadena Museum of History in 1997.

I will always be grateful to librarian Tania Rizzo, who contacted San Jose State's School of Library and Information Science looking for a student intern who might be interested in processing the collection. Tania's guidance in researching the family's history and arranging the thousands of documents was an invaluable education. Tania's successor at the Pasadena Museum of History, Dr. Lian Partlow, complemented the continuing work of collection processing and thesis writing with her indispensable knowledge of women's history and historical research methodologies.

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1. DISCOVERING HELEN PLUMMER GOULDING 1

- Introduction 1
- Literature Review 4
 - Traditional Library Literature 5
 - Female Librarian Biography 8
- Research Methodology 20

Chapter 2. FAMILY HERITAGE 27

- Marylanders and Quakers 27
- Richard Plummer 33
- Quaker Women 36
- Elizabeth "Bessie" G. Byrnes Plummer 38
- Elizabeth Hicks Plummer 39
- Elizabeth "Lizzie" B. Plummer Plummer 41

Chapter 3. A LIFE UNFOLDS 56

- Fortune and Misfortune, 1870-1890 57
- Life in California, 1891-1895 68

Chapter 4. A DEFINITE OCCUPATION 80

- The Journey Home 82
- Early Librarian Education 86
- The Pratt Institute and Its Free Library 90
- Entering the Library Profession 94
- The Pratt Institute School of Library Training 96
- Living in Brooklyn 105
- Working in Brooklyn 108
- Family Matters 114

Chapter 5. A BRIEF CAREER 126

- Calamity and Compensation 127
- The Denver Public Library 129
- The Library of Congress 140
- An Albany-Pratt Combination 147

Chapter 6. MRS. PHILIP S. GOULDING 162

1904: The Wedding Trip 162

1904-1906: Washington, D.C. 164

1906-1917: Urbana-Champaign, Illinois 166

1917-1920: New York City 177

1920-1924: San Marino, California 182

1924-1937: Working in Southern California 187

1920-1929: Living in South Pasadena 190

Chapter 7. CONCLUSION 198

Bibliography 204

Chapter 1

DISCOVERING HELEN PLUMMER GOULDING

Introduction

Helen Plummer Goulding was a pioneer, turn-of-the-twentieth-century librarian. She was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1870, and she died in Los Angeles, California, in 1959. For 89 years, between these dates and places, Helen Plummer Goulding lived life searching for her identity, her purpose, and her home; she was a woman who struggled to define her roles as a daughter, a wife, and a professional librarian. This biography, which begins with an account of her family papers, is Helen Plummer Goulding's story.

While they were still folded and tucked into their envelopes, bundled and tied with various bits of ribbon and string, the Helen Plummer Goulding Papers—almost three thousand documents—were packed into four cardboard boxes and placed on the “temporary” special collections shelves in the library at the Pasadena Museum of History in Pasadena, California. It was 1997. Five years later, as processing of the collection began, the papers, unfolded and cleaned, arranged and filed, gradually revealed the story of an American family whose descendent Helen Lancaster Plummer Goulding brought the Plummer family papers to California in 1920.

When Helen Plummer Goulding and her husband Philip Sanford Goulding moved west in 1920, they settled in Southern California. Helen and Philip, already married for sixteen years, had several times set up housekeeping in various locations around the country as they followed Philip's career moves. Since 1917, New York and New Jersey

had been their home while Philip worked as the head cataloger for Henry E. Huntington's New York based private library. In 1920, when Huntington moved his collection to his San Marino estate in California, the library staff moved too. With their move to the West Coast, Helen packed her carefully organized collection of family papers and shipped them to her new home on Spruce Street in South Pasadena.

The collection, gathered and saved by Plummers since the eighteenth century, abruptly ends its chronology about 1920. Helen either stopped saving her papers when she moved to California, or they were lost. Perhaps a new phase of life began for Helen, different and very separate from the old. Either way, little is known about Helen after 1920. It is known that Philip died in 1937, and some years later finances dictated Helen's move to a smaller residence. At that time the papers were put in the safe keeping of Helen's friend, Helen Wig Elgin, who stored them in the garage of her Pasadena home. When Helen Plummer Goulding died, her family papers passed uncontested by family members into the permanent possession of Helen Wig Elgin.¹ The papers remained with Helen Elgin until 1997 when this perceptive woman, sensing the value of this bit of personal family history, arranged for the collection to be preserved in the Research Library and Archives at the Pasadena Historical Museum.* As Helen would have wished, the Plummer family story was soon ready to be extracted from the documents she had so carefully collected, organized, and saved.

The Helen Plummer Goulding Papers broadly chronicle American social history. Their regional expanse extends across the United States from Maryland, Pennsylvania,

* Originally founded in 1924 as the Pasadena Historical Society, the name was later changed to the Pasadena Historical Museum. In 2002, the name was changed to the Pasadena Museum of History.

and Washington, D.C., to the midwestern states of Indiana and Illinois, as well as to the farther reaches of the West in Colorado, California, Hawaii, and Alaska. Their time span advances across the years from the early 1700s to the early 1900s. These letters of family and friends, financial papers and legal documents, postcards, photographs, poetry, and schoolwork establish a comprehensive manuscript collection that reveals an engaging account of one family's American history. It invites telling.

This collection also contains a narrower history, one of early American librarianship. Helen Plummer Goulding, like her husband, was a professionally trained, turn-of-the-twentieth-century librarian. This thesis is the biography of Helen Plummer Goulding. It explores her journey toward librarianship, her education in librarianship, her years working as a librarian, and her later life as the wife of a librarian.

A cursory examination of Helen's family papers revealed several basic facts about her life. Born in Maryland in 1870 to Quaker parents, Helen Plummer enjoyed the middle-class advantages of private and public school education and access to books. Her education for librarianship did not begin until 1896 when at twenty-six years old she entered the Pratt Institute School of Library Training. Her first library job, after graduation in 1897, was at the Astral Branch of the Pratt Institute Library. This work was followed by positions at the Denver Public Library and the Library of Congress. In 1904, Helen Plummer married Philip Sanford Goulding and chose to end her active library career. The initial research did not clarify whether she maintained any continuing professional involvement in libraries or library associations, but since her husband was a

librarian, it seemed likely that she would have participated at least socially in his career affiliations.

Helen Plummer's library story, revealed through her papers and examined within the context of the institutions that educated and employed her, offers a personal perspective that illustrates and illuminates the complex development of librarianship and libraries. Her life as a librarian is nestled within the era of the establishment of professional library education and the development of America's libraries, and her life spans a period of United States cultural and library history that saw significant controversies and changes in society's attitudes toward women. This biography is a social history focusing on the life, library education, and library career of Helen Plummer Goulding.

Literature Review

The preceding sketch of Helen Plummer Goulding's life revealed two areas of historiography that deserved examination: traditional library history and female librarian biography. Traditional library history portrays the professional lives of the prominent male scholars who worked to establish America's libraries and develop early library education. This traditional literature describes the environment of Helen Plummer's library years primarily from a male-dominated, institutional point of view. To fully understand the social, cultural, and professional context of this woman's life, several approaches to female librarian biography were also examined. The compensation/contribution approach recognizes the work of notable women in library

development and education, and evolves to include the lesser known and socially marginalized. The women's culture model of female librarian biography examines the impact of female perspectives on the development of librarianship. Female librarian biography also develops the significant themes of women and professionalization, the feminization of librarianship, and Progressive Era gender issues. To comprehensively inform the context of Helen Plummer Goulding's life and guide the research beyond the manuscript collection, both areas of historiography were examined for the direction and the focus they provided.

Traditional Library Literature

The recorded histories of American libraries and librarianship establish library origins in colonial America and trace a continuing evolution of more than two hundred and fifty years. The historiography of this dynamic and continuing chronology begins as a record of upper-class male activities, particularly in the administration of prominent institutions. Traditional library history is written primarily by men about men, and the histories that relate to nineteenth-century library development are relevant to the years encompassing Helen Plummer's library education and work. The professional lives and library careers of such men as William Frederick Poole (1821-1894), Charles Coffin Jewett (1816-1868), Charles Ammi Cutter (1837-1903), Ainsworth Rand Spofford (1825-1908), and Herbert Putnam (1861-1955) define the establishment and evolution of early library

practice. Their work is comprehensively recorded in their biographies and writings and within the institutional histories of libraries and library schools.

William Landram Williamson's biography of William Frederick Poole is a definitive example of traditional library biography. Williamson begins the Poole biography with a very brief review of his early life and education at Yale College. He thoroughly develops Poole's library career and philosophy of librarianship through detailed accounts of his work at the Cincinnati Public Library, the Chicago Public Library, and the Newberry Library. Chapters covering his work with the American Library Association and the writing of his periodical index elaborate on his relationships with other male librarians of the time as well as with their institutions.² This male, professional, and institutional record is not unusual, and it typifies the tone of traditional library biography.

A similar biographical formula is followed in the *Heritage of Librarianship Series* which uses a three-part format to introduce and assess the leadership roles of prominent librarians: biographical essay, writings, and bibliography. Within this series Michael H. Harris, Francis L. Miksa, and John Y. Cole write the biographies of Charles Coffin Jewett,³ Charles Ammi Cutter,⁴ and Ainsworth Rand Spofford⁵ respectively. These biographies emphasize professional relationships, administrative skills, and practical occupational accomplishments within the context of library institutions. This institutional perspective is well expressed by Cole when he writes, "Herbert Putnam stated in his 1908 annual report, the life of Ainsworth Spofford also was the history of the Library of Congress between 1861 and 1897."⁶ These traditional library biographies fuse the scholarly, professional librarian with his institution.

Specific institutional histories also contain traditional biographies of librarians. For example, various histories of the Library of Congress include traditional accounts of the lives and careers of Librarians of Congress, Ainsworth Rand Spofford and Herbert Putnam.⁷ Again, educational backgrounds and institutional connections form the basis of these biographies.

These traditional biographies and others like them are filled with the names of prominent men whose work informs the cultural status of library institutions and librarianship. These histories discuss early efforts toward professionalization and the establishment of professional education, and they begin to define the organization and management of public libraries. Some also hint at the influx of a predominantly female workforce.

It is important to note that even as librarianship became professionalized and concomitantly feminized its early traditional historiography ignores the contributions of women. In *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In*, Suzanne Hildenbrand observes, “Where nation building was the goal of the patriotic narrative, profession building has been the goal of the traditional library history. Like the patriotic narrative, the library narrative was Whiggish and celebratory and assumed that the good of some—a white male elite—represented the good of all. Accounts at variance with this chronicle of success went unwritten as these did little to advance a uniform view of professional development. Institutional development was stressed and little attention was paid to context or to populations.”⁸ This emphasis on male leadership provides only a partial account of American history in general and library history in particular. To

challenge the status quo, broaden the scope of traditional library history, and include the women, a new generation of historians has expanded its approach to library history.

Female Librarian Biography

Female librarian biography seeks to remedy exclusion by exploring beyond the white/male/elite bias and developing historiographical approaches and interpretative frameworks that disclose women's work in libraries. The contributions approach to female librarian biography addresses women's roles by applying the traditional library history model to the library careers of significant women. Historians eventually broaden their scope within this category and include lesser-known and/or socially marginalized individuals. Another approach is the women's culture model which addresses women's history by studying how elements of traditional female culture are applied to professional work. As compared to traditional library history, female librarian biography also reflects a group of themes, namely women and the professionalization of librarianship, its feminization, and the impact of Progressive Era gender issues. Reviewed together, these approaches and interpretations reveal the scope and depth of the history of female librarianship and inform the motivation and research for this thesis.

Contributions Biography. At its outset, the historiography of female librarianship solidly reflects traditional library history and biography. Suzanne Hildenbrand calls this the

compensatory/contributions[†] approach by which women's history catches up with male history and relates women's significant contributions within traditionally male institutions. In her view, "The earliest phase of *herstory*, the compensatory or contributions stage, emphasizes that women too participated in history. Limited goals prevail, such as seeking to establish or validate the female subject. The compensatory stage is a minimalist, antidiscrimination approach in which there is no real challenge to the discipline or its institution."⁹ Monographs written by Laurel Ann Grotzinger and Frances Clark Sayers provide examples of the contributions approach.

Laurel Grotzinger acknowledges that she wrote *The Power and the Dignity: Librarianship and Katharine Sharp* to salvage an invisible history, but she includes both men and women in her concern.¹⁰ She writes in her 1966 preface, "The primary justification for a biography was found in the study of the history of libraries. It is impossible to obtain any volume which approximates a thorough history of librarianship in the United States. Moreover, the documents for both major and minor studies are scattered and lost in hundreds of libraries and personal collections. It is probable that no definitive history will be produced until numerous 'bits and pieces' of library history are researched and written. Not the least of the missing components of such a history is the knowledge of the men and women who helped to make that history."¹¹ This biography is a straightforward traditional narrative about a librarian who happens to be a woman.

[†] Hildenbrand chooses to treat compensatory and contributions biography together. She writes, "Although many treat the compensation and contribution phases separately, they are considered together here due to the relatively small amount of library women's history." Suzanne Hildenbrand, "Women in Library History: From the Politics of Library History to the History of Library Politics," in *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Co., 1996), 7.

Grotzinger establishes her approach as traditional/institutional, and she indicates her avoidance of personal and social history when she states, "Although the mere finding of certain information such as educational experiences and family history was fascinating, if time-consuming, the major concern of the writer was the assembling of material relating to Miss Sharp's activities at Armour Institute and the University of Illinois."¹²

Grotzinger includes some background information about Sharp's personal life, but she does not stray far from her concentration on Sharp's professional and institutional contributions. Grotzinger also includes Sharp's professional affiliations with other women and female librarians, and she specifically addresses Sharp's work establishing the University of Illinois's Women's Department.¹³ Grotzinger's focus on Sharp's institutional work illustrates the contributions approach to female librarian biography.

Writing just six years after *The Power and the Dignity* was published, Frances Clark Sayers, in her book *Anne Carroll Moore*,¹⁴ brings to life the woman's world of librarianship from the institutional perspective of the contributions approach. Sayers characterizes Moore's professional work at the Pratt Institute Library and the New York Public Library as the challenge of bringing children into the literary fold of public libraries and developing a philosophy of librarianship that would deliver a new and specialized service. "The young women who found themselves assigned to those first rooms for children in their respective libraries soon discovered that nothing in their previous training or experience with books and people had prepared them for this new commitment to children and books."¹⁵ Sayers strays from the contributions formula when she enhances the professional's story with the woman's story and anchors it within

the traditionally feminine purview of children. As such it begins to address elements of the women's culture model.

The contributions approach remains a significant part of female librarian biography, and recently this method has broadened its scope to include members of marginalized social groups. Essays by Kellie D. Clark and John V. Richardson, Jr., and Glendora Johnson-Cooper illustrate this approach by recognizing and studying the contributions of women from more diverse backgrounds.

In "Edith Guerrier: 'A Little (Warrior) Woman of New England' on Behalf of U.S. Public Documents, 1870-1958,"¹⁶ Clark and Richardson tell the story of Edith Guerrier of the Boston Public Library. They recount not only her professional accomplishments, but also include a discussion of her "Boston marriage" which establishes her as a model for the gay and lesbian communities.¹⁷

Glendora Johnson-Cooper writes about a female African-American librarian in "African-American Historical Continuity: Jean Blackwell Hutson and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture."¹⁸ Hutson worked to preserve the record of black heritage in New York City, and her contributions are extensive and significant. The essay expands the contributions approach by acknowledging and discussing the discrimination Hutson faced not only as a woman but also as an African-American.¹⁹

The contributions approach to female librarian biography, which successfully adds women's accomplishments to traditional library history, has been criticized. Suzanne Hildenbrand cautions that contributions biography is simply an expansion of traditional library history that is selectively applied to notable, perhaps privileged, women.²⁰ Within

this traditional approach, male/elite cultural viewpoints predominate and female cultural viewpoints are diminished. Because this literature evaluates female accomplishments according to male criteria and values, and dismisses women's perspectives and behaviors, the women's culture model has been used to challenge the contributions approach to female librarian biography.

Women's Culture Model. The historiography that seeks to include women eventually recognizes that those skills, instincts, and perspectives, which are considered primarily female, may fortify women's unique authority. Suzanne Hildenbrand describes this literature when she writes, "The other major approach to telling *her*story is the women's culture model, where emphasis is almost totally on woman and her so-called separate sphere."²¹ Women's traditional roles include nurturing skills and a social consciousness that sometimes belies the competitive spirit that seeks power and recognition. Historians observe that by applying traditional female skills and knowledge to librarianship, professional women consciously sought to expand library services beyond the scholarly institutions to the general public. They applied their professional expertise and their traditional female values for the benefit of a needy public that included children, the socially disadvantaged, and the physically isolated. Biographies by Anne Lundin, James V. Carmichael, and Joanne E. Passet illustrate the women's culture model.

Anne Lundin in her 1996 biographical essay, "Anne Carroll Moore: 'I Have Spun Out a Long Thread,'"²² explores the feminine context of Moore's librarianship. Lundin presents Anne Carroll Moore's story as a woman's story in which she first characterizes

Moore as a “revealing example of the agency of women as maternal creators and constructors of the profession.”²³ Lundin then clarifies her meaning when she writes, “Anne Carroll Moore’s career subverts ‘common expectations of domesticity’ ... and suggests instead a dynamic image of *powerful* [Lundin’s italics] women working to construct a maternal paradigm of service.”²⁴ Lundin accomplishes her task by describing Moore’s children’s services paradigm as it incorporated women’s cultural spheres of influence. She shows how Moore addressed home, school, and social parity and integrated their unique concerns into the service concept of the public library.

James V. Carmichael, in “Atlanta’s Female Librarians, 1883-1915”²⁵ and “Women in Southern Library Education, 1905-1945,”²⁶ employs the women’s culture model when he explores librarianship within the context of the regional practices, trends, and the biracial cultures of the American South. “The southern female librarians described in this paper had realistic expectations of their careers. For them, the profession of librarianship was not a panacea for society’s ills, nor did it provide a forum for issues of sexual inequality. If males dominated positions of leadership in the library profession, they did so outside the South. Southern communities of the period simply could not garner the kind of financial support necessary to attract many male librarians, especially those from other parts of the country. Even if salaries had not been a stumbling block, however, regional attitudes on race probably would have been.”²⁷ Carmichael’s studies of these regional mores clearly illustrate that a unique Southern female culture, itself the result of a strongly paternalistic and segregated society, strongly influenced libraries and librarianship in the South.

In contrast, Joanne Passet's book, *Cultural Crusaders: Women Librarians in the West, 1900-1917*,²⁸ studies women who applied their female cultural values to a mission of social consciousness. From her research into the lives of over 300 professionally trained librarians, Passet shows how female values were exercised to recognize social and educational needs and envision and carry out solutions. These librarians promoted western settlement and American democracy with their traveling libraries that brought books to isolated settlers. They encouraged reading among young men in an effort to distract them from bars and pool halls. Many of these female librarians were physically isolated or lonely within their communities, and they formed networks and communities amongst themselves for support and companionship. This study of librarianship in the American West illustrates the women's culture model by looking at the successes and failures of women who applied their female values to their professional work.

The women's culture model adds to female librarian biography by looking beyond the contributions approach. The contributions approach tends to follow the competitive male model of professional achievement within institutions. By studying women who express their traditional female roles within their professions, historians are able to examine the effects of the female perspective on the development of librarianship.

Recurring Themes. The historiography of librarianship that evolved from a constricted institutional perspective to a looser and more inclusive biographical approach reveals three themes so inextricably linked their patterns of development emerge only after library historians have tweezed and untangled and finally revealed the threads of

influence. These themes, namely the professionalization of librarianship, the feminization of the profession, and turn-of-the-twentieth-century Progressive Era gender issues, combine to form a tapestry of a uniquely evolved profession. The threads of influence within this triad include the men and women who served; the library schools and libraries; and the American political, economic, and social cultures. Examples of this literature include biographical articles written by Mary Niles Maack, Debra Gold Hansen with Karen F. Gracy and Sheri D. Irvin, and Denise Sallee.

Mary Niles Maack explores women and professionalization in “‘No Philosophy Carries So Much Conviction as the Personal Life:’ Mary Wright Plummer as an Independent Woman.”²⁹ Maack opens her biographical analysis with an examination of Plummer’s personal development, from the influences of her Quaker background to her personal and professional choices that challenged society’s expectations for women. Maack explores Plummer’s career as an internationally known professional librarian, a leader, and an educator/mentor by examining her participation in the professionalization of librarianship, her support of the women within the profession, and her conflicts when facing women’s cultural issues.

Debra Hansen, Karen F. Gracy, and Sheri D. Irvin examine the feminization of librarianship in “At the Pleasure of the Board: Women Librarians and the Los Angeles Public Library, 1880-1905.”³⁰ The careers of Mary Foy, Tessa Kelso, and Mary Jones are examined from within the complex of library and local politics. The eager assumption of autonomy and the career satisfaction experienced by these accomplished women can also be observed as obstructed and sorely tested. Professionalization,

feminization, and Progressive Era gender issues are examined for their impact on three women's careers within one library system, and as such their interconnected stories "illuminate the general process of feminization."³¹

Denise Sallee explores gender issues in her article "Reconceptualizing Women's History: Anne Hadden and the California County Library System."³² As an early librarian in the California County Library System, Hadden's work was pioneering. She was often challenged by primitive conditions, and her sixteen years in Monterey County are truly inspirational. Sallee characterizes Hadden as "one of many career-oriented ... strong, autonomous, and influential women who viewed their work as fundamental to the cultural and educational development of the state. They exemplified the educated and Progressive-minded 'New Women' who came of age at the turn of the century."³³ Sallee describes this biography as a "feminist reconstruction of library history."³⁴

The historiographical approaches that historians have applied to female librarian biography—contributions biography, the women's culture model, and the themes of professionalization, feminization and Progressive Era gender issues—are well represented in the literature. When compared to traditional library history, their evolving, more inclusive perspectives demonstrate a greater scope and depth of librarianship. These approaches to female librarian biography, however, are not without criticism.

Suzanne Hildenbrand, in "Women in Library History: From the Politics of Library History to the History of Library Politics," evaluates traditional library history as negligent. "It has forestalled the development of a realistic library history ... and fails to show the centrality of women to library development."³⁵ Yet as the historiography

begins to include the women, Hildenbrand finds that compensatory and contributions biography simply imitates the traditional literature and is just as exclusive. She observes that “the achievements of any individual life are vulnerable to challenges that the subject came from a privileged background, enjoyed male sponsorship, or doesn’t represent women’s typical experience.”³⁶ Hildenbrand also criticizes female librarian biography because it tends to isolate women’s roles from the overall history of libraries.³⁷

The women’s culture model, which seeks to establish women’s history within the expression of their traditional roles as applied to their professions, is criticized as projecting an idealized subservient subculture or conversely a morally superior subculture.³⁸ However, there is one aspect of this approach that Hildenbrand appreciates when she observes, “This work, more than many of the compensatory or contributions biographies, reveals personal motivation and satisfaction and helps clarify the origins and growth of the profession.”³⁹ Ultimately, Hildenbrand suggests a synthesizing approach that embraces both men and women in a gendered history of librarianship.

Indeed, when the women and children are painted into the picture, when racial and ethnic groups weave their tales into the story, and when the men retain their place, any story that deserves telling becomes rich and alive and thus a little more complete—that is until a new perspective is observed and added to the continuing saga of an evolving historiography.

Helen Plummer’s biography encompasses an era of United States library history that flourished with significant developments. A review of traditional library history

illuminates the institutional and philosophical backgrounds against which her individual story can be developed. An examination of female librarian biography, within the context of the shifting historiography of women's library history, illustrates expanded theoretical approaches to library biography. This innovation encourages a liberal exploration of Helen's story.

Helen Plummer Goulding's biography is not to be found amongst the histories of libraries and librarians, yet Helen Plummer Goulding's name is not entirely absent from published record. The 1944 edition of *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography* includes an entry for Helen's husband, Philip Sanford Goulding. In this brief biographical sketch, Helen is mentioned twice. "In 1924-25, with the aid of his wife, he compiled an 'Index of American Book-prices Current, 1916-22,' a work of 1397 pages....He was married in Baltimore, Md., Sept. 7, 1904, to Helen Lancaster, daughter of Francis Wallace Plummer, an accountant of that city." Helen Plummer Goulding's name is obscure in the annals of library history, and her story thus far has not contributed in any significant way to that history.

Yet Helen served, and her work, as it was for so many others behind the scenes, was fundamental to the early development of public libraries. As Suzanne Hildenbrand traces library historiography through its various stages, she suggests that library narrative, influenced by the American tradition of the patriotic narrative with its emphasis on the white/male/elite, fails to represent the complete story of the library profession. She then points out that the "new social history," which attempts to represent the little-known worker through quantitative analysis of the collective archival record, might be modified

for the study of library history. "Failure to adapt methods that permit access to the anonymous, humbler folk of another age limits library historians to studies of privileged individuals who left significant written records."⁴⁰ Helen Plummer Goulding's story fits neatly within the challenge to recognize the little-known worker. The added advantage here is the chance to look at the anonymous, not as part of a quantitative assessment, but as an individual librarian.

Helen Plummer Goulding's anonymity might yet be dispelled. Her story, set during America's pioneering days of librarianship, gains significance against the backdrop of the times in which she lived; through the cultural and personal difficulties she faced as she discovered, studied, and embraced librarianship; and through the Helen Plummer Goulding Papers that offer a unique opportunity to examine the perspective of the "ordinary" librarian. Her story is also enhanced by exploring the histories and the records of the institutions that educated and employed her.

Helen Plummer Goulding's life spanned an era of United States cultural and library history that saw significant controversies and changes in society's attitudes towards women. Her biography has been established and examined within the context of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century's dichotomy of traditional mores and social change and within the developmental history of America's libraries. The following questions were considered: What were the social and personal influences and challenges of Helen Plummer's younger years as she discovered, studied, and embraced librarianship? How did the Victorian and Progressive eras influence her life choices and opportunities? How did the professionalization and feminization of librarianship influence her career choices?

Did Helen Plummer Goulding's marriage to a librarian assist or deter her continued participation in library culture? This biography is a social history. This study of Helen Plummer Goulding seeks to further the understanding of life as a female librarian in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.

Research Methodology

The Helen Plummer Goulding Papers (hereafter referred to as the Plummer Goulding Papers) established the direction of the research and laid the foundation for the research methods that were used. The Plummer Goulding Papers were the main source of the biographical information that reconstructed Helen Plummer Goulding's life.

Helen Plummer Goulding's genealogy was assembled from information found in her family papers. Vital records, cemetery records, and published genealogies were used to confirm relationships and ascertain connections to her seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ancestors.

The tenor and philosophy of her Quaker upbringing was determined through the letters of her parents and grandparents, which were often imbued with overt religious commentary. These letters were also useful in determining the yearly and monthly meetings to which her ancestors belonged. Once the meeting names were identified, correspondence with the secretary and the archivist of the Stony Run Friends Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, provided further background information about the history of Quakers in Baltimore and the Plummer family's meeting affiliations.

The papers in the collection that relate directly to Helen are entirely personal in nature. Basic information and an outline of her life—her education, employment and marriage—were gathered and reconstructed from these letters. Papers relating to her father, Francis W. Plummer Sr., some of which are business and legal documents, also provided factual information about her childhood and her early education. Helen's early family life spanned the years 1870-1890. Her early childhood and young adult relationships with family and friends were evaluated through the letters in the Plummer Goulding Papers and interpreted within the context of the historical era.

Several of Helen's young adult years, from 1891 to 1895, were spent in Oakland, California, and again the letters she wrote and received during this time period were read for facts, perceptions, family circumstances, and the cultural conditions that influenced her life and her decisions.

Helen's attendance at the Pratt Institute School of Library Training, her subsequent work at Pratt Institute Library's Astral Branch, and her Brooklyn residence in the Astral Apartments of the Greenpoint Settlement were researched from several sources. Monographs and journal articles relating to early library education and the Pratt Institute School of Library Training were consulted to inform the context of early library school development. The Pratt Institute Archives contain rich sources of information about the Pratt Institute, the Pratt Institute School of Library Training, Brooklyn's Greenpoint Settlement, the Astral Apartments, and the Astral Branch library. Sources included the *Pratt Institute Monthly*, the *Pratt Institute Catalogue*, the *Pratt Institute School of Library Science: Circulars of Information—1897-1917*, annual reports, clippings from local

newspapers, and alumni association papers. Letters from the Plummer Goulding Papers provided Helen's and her classmates' personal impressions of the Pratt library school.

The circumstances surrounding Helen's move to Denver, Colorado, were explored through the Plummer Goulding Papers. Communication with Denver Public Library's Special Collection Librarian revealed that records pertaining to Helen's employment could not be found and probably do not exist. To provide the context for her work, the history of the Denver Public Library was explored through published and unpublished histories and a reminiscence written by Helen F. Ingersoll, a Denver Public Library librarian from the era.

Helen's decision to work at the Library of Congress was examined through her correspondence and evaluated within the context of the history of the Library of Congress. Contact with the Library of Congress was discouraging as far as early employee information was concerned. As with the Denver Public Library, the history of the Library of Congress was explored through published histories and the reminiscence of Harriet Wheeler Pierson, one of Helen's friends and a Library of Congress colleague.

Helen's decision to marry and leave library work was examined through her correspondence with her family, friends, and her fiancé Philip Sanford Goulding. Helen Plummer and Philip Sanford Goulding's married life spanned the years 1904 to 1937, when Philip died. This period of thirty-three years placed Philip as a cataloger at several important libraries: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1906-1917); New York Library of Henry E. Huntington (1917-1920); Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California (1920-1924); University of California, Southern Branch and University of

California at Los Angeles (1924-1937). Philip's work served as a unique and informative backdrop to Helen's life as his wife. Personal correspondence during their various moves and domestic situations provided an opportunity to examine the life and thoughts of a female librarian who by choice and/or social necessity left librarianship yet remained closely allied to it through her marriage. While Helen's professional connection to librarianship may have been incidental through her husband, she maintained an independent connection to librarianship through former classmates and colleagues. These relationships were explored through her letters.

It was never determined whether Helen was employed outside her home after she married, but several domestic and community activities between 1904 and 1924 were discovered in her papers and explored within their historical context.

The Helen Plummer Goulding Papers were the primary resource that opened the way to discovering the life and librarianship of Helen Plummer Goulding. Her collection of family papers provided the framework and the historical dimensions needed to reconstruct her story. The documents were read and evaluated within the context of the historical eras during which she and her ancestors lived, the religion they practiced, and the culture they embraced.

Helen Plummer Goulding was a librarian who worked as a cataloger during the early development of the library profession. Her story is new, and it is significant to the social history of turn-of-the-twentieth-century librarianship.

Notes

¹ Helen Wig Elgin, interview by author, Altadena, Calif., 7 June 2002.

² William Landram Williamson, *William Frederick Poole and the Modern Library Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

³ Michael H. Harris, ed., *The Age of Jewett: Charles Coffin Jewett and American Librarianship, 1841-1868* (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1975).

⁴ Francis L. Miksa, ed., *Charles Ammi Cutter: Library Systematizer* (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1977).

⁵ John Y. Cole, ed., *Ainsworth Rand Spofford: Bookman and Librarian* (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1975).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷ Herbert Small, comp., *Handbook of the Library of Congress* (Boston: Curtis & Cameron, 1897); James Conway, *America's Library: The Story of the Library of Congress, 1800 – 2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁸ Suzanne Hildenbrand, "Women in Library History: From the Politics of Library History to the History of Library Politics," in *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Co., 1996), 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰ Laurel Grotzinger, *The Power and the Dignity: Librarianship and Katharine Sharp*, (New York: The Scarecrow Press, 1966).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, v-vi.

¹² *Ibid.*, xi.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 181-82.

¹⁴ Frances Clark Sayers, *Anne Carroll Moore* (New York: Atheneum, 1972).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, ix-x.

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- ¹⁶ Kellie D. Clark and John V. Richardson, Jr., "Edith Guerrier: 'A Little (Warrior) Woman of New England' on Behalf of U.S. Public Documents, 1870-1958," *Journal of Government Information* 28 (May/June 2001): 267-83.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 270.
- ¹⁸ Glendora Johnson-Cooper, "African-American Historical Continuity: Jean Blackwell Huston and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture," in *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Co., 1996): 27-51.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Hildenbrand, "Women in Library History," 8.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Anne Lundin, "Anne Carroll Moore (1871-1961): 'I Have Spun Out a Long Thread,'" in *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Co., 1996), 187-204.
- ²³ Ibid., 188.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ James V. Carmichael, "Atlanta's Female Librarians, 1883-1915," *Journal of Library History, Philosophy, and Comparative Librarianship* 21 (Spring 1986): 376-99.
- ²⁶ James V. Carmichael, "Women in Southern Library Education, 1905-1945," *Library Quarterly* 62 (April 1992): 169-216.
- ²⁷ Carmichael, "Atlanta's Female Librarians, 1883-1915," 396.
- ²⁸ Joanne E. Passet, *Cultural Crusaders: Women Librarians in the American West, 1900-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).
- ²⁹ Mary Niles Maack, "'No Philosophy Carries So Much Conviction as the Personal Life:' Mary Wright Plummer as an Independent Woman," *Library Quarterly* 70 (January 2000): 1-46.
- ³⁰ Debra Gold Hansen, Karen F. Gracy, and Sheri D. Irvin, "At the Pleasure of the Board: Women Librarians and the Los Angeles Public Library, 1880-1905," *Libraries and Culture* 34 (Fall 1999): 311-46. Presented at the 1997 California Library Association Conference.

³¹ Ibid., 338.

³² Denise Saltee, "Reconceptualizing Women's History: Anne Hadden and the California County Library System," *Libraries and Culture* 27 (Fall 1992): 351-77.

³³ Ibid., 351.

³⁴ Ibid., 352.

³⁵ Hildenbrand, "Women in Library History," 5.

³⁶ Ibid., 8.

³⁷ Ibid., 16.

³⁸ Ibid., 8.

³⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

Chapter 2

FAMILY HERITAGE

Helen Plummer's story begins not with her birth, but with the history of her ancestors who were Quakers and Marylanders in colonial America. Sometimes divergent, sometimes entwined, the rich religious tradition and cultural heritage of these two groups shaped the events and trends that affected the lives of Plummer family members. The appropriate beginning for Helen Plummer's story is the founding of Maryland and the establishment of Maryland's Quaker meetings. Rooted in this fertile New World history, Helen's genealogy is reconstructed from branch to leaf and blossom. Her family's religious and social cultures are examined. Their religious beliefs are identified. Their socioeconomic status is determined. Plummer family words are explored for their perspectives on the education of women, their opinions about marriage, and their expectations concerning women's domestic and community roles. Reaching into this distant past reveals the evolving environment that created the world that welcomed Helen Plummer's life.

Marylanders and Quakers

Anne Arundel County, Maryland, was the North American cradle of Helen Plummer's Quaker heritage. Today the county hugs the northwestern shore of the Chesapeake Bay and arches its western boundary from north to south along the borders of Baltimore, Howard, Prince Georges, and Calvert counties. When Helen Plummer was born in 1870,

her family had lived in Anne Arundel County continuously since the last decades of the seventeenth century, a time when the Lord Proprietor of Maryland, Charles Calvert, governed a variously estimated population of 13,000 to 20,000 souls.

The original proprietary province of Maryland was created by English charter in 1632, and like the other American colonies it struggled to increase and stabilize its population. Unlike the other colonies, Maryland was founded on a general policy of religious toleration for all Christians. Specifically, this created a refuge where Catholics could discreetly practice their faith. Ironically, the prospect of religious toleration attracted a number of Protestant groups that quickly exercised economic and political power over the smaller population of Catholics. Among these groups were the Quakers, who had suffered severe persecution both in Europe, since the founding of the Society of Friends, and in America, since the establishment of colonial Quaker meetings. During the 1650s and 1660s some Quakers fled their oppressors and immigrated to Maryland from England, Virginia, and Massachusetts, and by the late 1670s there were fifteen well-established Quaker meetings in Anne Arundel, Talbot, and Somerset counties.¹ By the next decade, Helen Plummer's first-known Anne Arundel County Quaker ancestor was born.

Tracing a family's genealogy back through the successive generations of their pedigree can become tedious with names and dates, but a brief review of Helen's maternal lineage sets her family roots close to the founding of the Society of Friends in Maryland and aligns her family history with the history of the Friends in America. Helen's maternal line can be traced back through six generations to seventeenth-century

Maryland when Gerrard Hopkins was born in Anne Arundel County about 1680. Gerrard and his wife Margaret Johns were married about 1700, and she gave birth to their son Gerrard Hopkins in 1709. The younger Gerrard married Mary Hall in 1730, and their son Richard Hopkins was born in Anne Arundel County about 1747/48. The marriage of Richard Hopkins, son of Gerrard, and Anne Snowden, daughter of Samuel, is recorded by the West River Monthly Meeting as 23 December 1774.² The fact of this marriage is reflected in a document from Helen's family papers that records a glimpse into the personal lives of her ancestors at the turn of the nineteenth century.

This document is the will of Richard Hopkins, son of Gerard, dated "this third day of the third month in the year of our Lord one thousand and eight hundred." Richard named his wife, Ann Hopkins, as well as their three sons and six daughters, heirs to his estate. Ann was granted the use of one third of Richard's property and possessions until her own death. Richard's daughters, Elizabeth Plummer nee Hopkins, Mary, Henrietta, Ann, Sarah, and Margaret, were given the "bonds, notes, money due on book accounts and cash in the house at the time of my demise," and "all my stock of cattle of all kinds, and equal share of my household furniture." Amongst his sons Richard Hopkins divided his lands and to each son he named a special gift. Gerard was given his silver tankard, Richard his clock, and Samuel Snowden his watch.³

In 1796, the Elizabeth Plummer nee Hopkins named in the above will married Jerome Plummer, also a native of Anne Arundel County. Elizabeth and Jerome are Helen Plummer's great-grandparents and their son Richard Plummer is Helen's maternal grandfather. The Plummer Goulding correspondence suggests that Richard Plummer had

at least one sister and that their mother Elizabeth died sometime before 1807 when Jerome married Elizabeth's sister Henrietta Hopkins.⁴ Like his father, Richard Plummer married twice. Richard's first marriage to Elizabeth G. Byrnes bore two children: Elizabeth Byrnes Plummer (Helen's mother, Lizzie) and Frances Plummer (Helen's Aunt Fanny).

The essential nature of Helen Plummer's nineteenth-century Quaker heritage⁵ is best disclosed and assessed by reviewing her ancestors' papers within the context of the history of the Society of Friends. Property records and business transactions document the family's social and economic status, and Richard Plummer's correspondence, particularly with his wives Elizabeth G. Byrnes and Elizabeth Hicks, reveals early family personalities and religious beliefs. It is significant, especially when determining the family's religious bias, that most of the documents were created during a period of Quakerism which culminated in two significant nineteenth-century schisms; many of the letters convey a strong religious angst that may reflect personal reactions to this turmoil. The schisms, profound in their effects, were rooted in the founding of the Society of Friends, and a review of the Society's origins and development establishes the essential groundwork for understanding how this period of conflict may have affected Helen Plummer's grandparents and parents. This brief review also illustrates the complexity of Quaker ideology and explains the origins of the various Friends' meetings.*

* Meetings provide the geographical and administrative structure for a congregation's worship and business. Preparative, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, and yearly meetings represent groups that gather from single congregations (preparative) to large regional areas (yearly). Significant to Plummer history is the fact that the meetings also reflect the congregation's philosophy of worship and practice.

Friends date the beginning of the Quaker movement from 1652 when George Fox stood atop Pendle Hill in England and saw what he described as “a vision of ‘a great people to be gathered.’”⁶ Fox had started his spiritual journey and commenced his worldly wanderings in 1643 at the age of nineteen. He came to believe that his purpose was to gather people from the various religions of the world into a “pure religion” that would work selflessly to serve mankind.⁷ The hallmark of Fox’s budding philosophy was his belief that his revelations came directly from God, a concept which he complemented with the extraordinary conclusion that every man and every woman also had personal access to this special type of mystical experience. The phenomenon became known as the Inward or Inner Light, and the concept challenged the teachings of the established Christian religions of the time, which depended on clerical intermediaries, dogma, ritual, and sacraments, for revelation, scriptural interpretation, spiritual guidance, and salvation. Fox’s very dramatic teaching about the individual’s direct, independent, and valid access to God, not only broke the new religion away from its Puritan underpinnings, but also led the way to the paradoxes that express Quakerism’s ideological and social struggles.

According to Quaker historian, Frederick B. Tolles, conflict and paradox abound in the Quaker religion. Tolles describes four basic Quaker testimonies: simplicity, equality, peace, and community, which may come into conflict with modern culture, “sometimes modifying it, sometimes being modified by it,” and he states that this was true for the early Quakers as well.⁸ Tolles also observes that early Friends, through their silent communal worship, nurtured both an “anarchic individualism” and a “strong and abiding sense of community.”⁹ Despite the apparent paradox, Tolles emphasizes that “the

Friends found both the highest experience of individual selfhood and the fullest experience of solidarity and shared life.”¹⁰ Grappling with cultural conflict and trying to reconcile a fundamental ideological paradox resulted in Quakerism’s internal conflicts and the two major nineteenth-century schisms.

The first, the separation of 1827-1828, had profound, widespread, and long-lasting effects on individuals, families, and meetings. The leader of the separation, Elias Hicks, was a Quaker Quietist who professed an abiding faith in the sole authority of the Inner Light. He saw scripture and the life of Jesus as subjects for study, but not as sources of absolute authority. Hicks emphasized individual revelation over group acceptance of rigid doctrinal belief. He preached withdrawal from worldliness, and he challenged the Society’s growing endorsement of Protestant orthodoxy. He believed Protestant orthodoxy permitted Friends undue involvement in secular activities and justified the excessive accumulation and outward expression of material wealth. Factions formed, and the conflict ultimately divided the Society into what became known as Hicksite and Orthodox branches of Quakerism.¹¹

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Wilburite-Gurneyite conflict split the Orthodox membership again. Joseph John Gurney encouraged Quaker teachings that further subordinated the significance of the Inner Light and advanced the orthodox concepts of dependence on doctrine and the authority of Biblical scripture. John Wilbur vigorously opposed Gurney’s teachings and reaffirmed the fundamental work of the Inner Light. He also denounced and challenged orthodoxy’s growing trend toward evangelicalism.¹² This division, like the Hicksite separation, had widespread and long-lasting effects.

Quaker historian Rufus Jones contends that “the twenty years from 1835 to 1855 were the darkest and saddest in the history of Quakerism.”¹³ Letters written by Helen Plummer’s early nineteenth-century ancestors hint at social and personal conflicts that may have resulted from the Quaker schisms. It was during this period of conflict that her grandparents and parents wrote the core of the letters that are distinctly Quaker in tone and subject. Their words articulate carefully considered thoughts and observations that reveal education and social status, and they intone powerful male and female personalities that convey strong-willed opinions about their religion. Their words define a family of Marylanders and Quakers whose work and beliefs shaped the environment into which Helen Plummer was born.

Richard Plummer

Richard Plummer (ca. 1804/1805-1870), Helen’s maternal grandfather, was a wealthy and educated Maryland merchant. In 1830s Baltimore he made his fortune selling hardware at the corner of Baltimore and Eutaw Streets. In 1840, his name appeared on the roster of the Baltimore patrons of John James Audubon’s first octavo edition of *Birds of America*, thus revealing a cultured interest in books.¹⁴ This interest eventually extended to religious treatises, and by 1845 Richard Plummer was selling theological books from a separate location at the corner of Baltimore and Liberty Streets.¹⁵

That Richard Plummer was a prominent and influential Baltimore Quaker is evidenced in his extensive correspondence with many Friends. Writing in his hand of thick bold

letters, he conveyed a formidable male presence as he alluded to disputes, expressed opinions, and railed against perceived personal injustices. His thoughts and opinions were preserved because he drafted and maintained copies of his own letters alongside the letters of his correspondents. Richard Plummer wrote and received this correspondence as a member of Baltimore's Lombard Street Meeting, the Baltimore Yearly Meeting, and as a visitor to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Yet, even with this knowledge of his various meeting affiliations, it has been difficult to place Richard Plummer within the traditionally defined groupings of the Orthodox/Hicksite separation. His meeting memberships present a paradox.

As a member of Baltimore's Lombard Street Meeting, Richard Plummer was almost certainly a Hicksite Friend.¹⁶ The Lombard Street Meeting was identified with Hicksite beliefs, and as such, it most likely spurned worldliness and endorsed the fundamental importance of the Inner Light. Richard Plummer was an urban propertied businessman whose socioeconomic status was usually aligned with Quaker orthodoxy. Yet, his expressed religious and social values embraced the Inner Light, shunned worldliness, and rejected dogmatic institutionalized religion. It would appear; therefore, that he held conflicting values.

Richard Plummer's conflict between his worldly wealth and his Hicksite affiliation may be the reason his letters express serious spiritual confusion and discontent with his meeting memberships. In October 1844 Richard penned his resignation from the Baltimore Monthly Meeting. He then penciled a note on the back that says "but not sent in." In this letter he protested the actions of a committee, "whereby, my feelings, & the

feelings of some near and dear to me in Church fellowship, were trampled to the earth.”¹⁷

His protest is vague, and the actions of the committee are never clarified. Earlier the same year, Richard drafted a letter to John Comly,^{*} about his “agony of soul” over the state of the Society.¹⁸ In November 1848 Richard Plummer threatened to leave the Society, but he reassured his concerned spiritual counselor, Hicksite minister Edward Hicks.[†] “I have not fled the cross for on it hangs my salvation forever.”¹⁹ Yet, his anxieties about the Society continued, and in December 1848, he wrote to Hicks again. “I fully agree with thee that there is much, may I not say more spurious ministry now in our society than there is genuine....I think I see an evidence that some of the younger members of the society see this thing and Oh saith my soul that they may take the thing seriously to heart and assist in tearing down these altars to Baal as did Gideon of old that have been erected among us on every green hill.”²⁰ Tearing down altars to Baal suggests his adherence to a Hicksite rejection of worldliness. For a rich man this may have become a burdensome conflict.

A thorough examination of Richard Plummer’s correspondence might explain how he resolved the paradox of being both rich and Hicksite. Perhaps he simply opposed orthodoxy, but his 1870 obituary in the *Newtown Enterprise* suggests something else. It reads, “His manly independence, industry and perseverance ... brought him success in his worldly business [and] he was concerned to make a right use of that success. His hand was ever extended for the help of his fellow creatures ... viewing himself as a mere

^{*} It has not been determined if this John Comly of Darby is the same man noted for his active participation in the 1827-28 Hicksite separation.

[†] Edward Hicks’s residence and the date of his death, as recorded in the Plummer Goulding Papers, confirm that he is the American primitive artist known for his “Peaceable Kingdom” paintings.

steward of what he possessed, depending upon Divine direction for the ability to do good. 'Thank not me but thank the Father of mercies, who animates the human heart with love and sympathy,' was ever the purport of his faith in regard to these things."²¹ This suggests a social awareness that befits Hicksite teachings and would explain his close association with Edward Hicks.

When Edward Hicks died in the summer of 1849, Richard wrote his condolences to Edward's daughter Elizabeth who was also a Hicksite minister. Richard told her that Edward had been like a father to him, and he related how Edward had counseled him. "I loved him & as my knowledge of him grew, so did my feelings of attachment, in so much that my spirit was knit to his, as a son to his father; for there was no individual on earth from whom I have had more excellent counsel in my trials which have not been few nor of small account during my short pilgrimage in the Church of Christ."²² This letter from Richard Plummer to Elizabeth Hicks was the beginning of a relationship that would lead to their marriage. Elizabeth would be Richard's second wife and the stepmother of his daughters Lizzie and Fanny. These Plummer women, Friends who preceded and influenced Helen Plummer's life, were themselves preceded by the unique history of Quaker women.

Quaker Women

Within the evolution of the Quaker religion, with its paradoxical beliefs and its ideological conflicts and separations, is the history of the status of women. Quaker

women, from the founding of the Society, benefited from a belief in the spiritual equality of all people. Between 1655 and 1662 sixty Quakers, both men and women, crossed the Atlantic from England to bring the teachings of George Fox to the New World,²³ and the first of these ministers were women.²⁴ Attaining true gender equality, however, remained a continuing struggle. In 1648, George Fox, the recognized founder of the Society of Friends, first argued for the rights of women to speak in the churches when he shocked an English congregation with his outspoken defense of a woman who asked the presiding priest a question. The priest admonished the woman “that he did not permit women to speak in the church.” Fox openly challenged the priest and asserted to the congregation “that a church was ‘a spiritual household,’ not ‘an old house made of lime, stones, and wood,’ and that in the true church, of which Christ was the head, a woman might prophesy and speak. ‘It broke them into pieces and confused them, and they all turned against me into jangling.’”²⁵ Later in 1652, when Fox founded the Society of Friends, he continued to defend the rights of women to take part in religious ministries and establish separate women’s meetings. Despite controversy and continued resistance by some of the Friends to women’s full participation, women Friends in the American colonies persisted in following their personal guidance from the Inner Light, and they independently contributed to the work of the Society.²⁶

It was a woman, Elizabeth Harris, a traveling minister from England, who introduced the Society of Friends to Marylanders in 1656.²⁷ In 1677 the first colonial women’s yearly meeting was organized in Maryland “to raise a stock of money to meet the needs of poor Friends,” and this meeting “soon received reports from representatives from the

constituent meetings and dealt with the care of the poor and matters of discipline usually reserved for men.”²⁸ By the next decade, Helen Plummer’s Quaker ancestors were residing in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, and by the nineteenth century they were writing the letters that now offer a glimpse into the lives of three generations of Quaker women.

Elizabeth “Bessie” G. Byrnes Plummer

Elizabeth G. Byrnes Plummer, Helen Plummer’s grandmother, was Richard Plummer’s first wife. She was known as Bessie, and she may have been a teacher before her marriage in 1834. In a letter addressed to Miss Elizabeth Byrnes, a young girl wrote, “You will please accept this small trifle, as a mark of the respect, and sincere affection of the donor; who shall ever remember with the warmest feelings of gratitude, the unaffected kindness, and devoted attentions which have been so liberally bestowed upon her, while under your care....And whether prosperity shall gild, or adversity darken, her prospects in after life, she firmly trusts that those early lessons of piety, and virtue so agreeably [*sic*] taught by the precept, and illustrated by the example of her amiable instructions, will never be forgotten by her—Affectionate pupil—Ann R. Finley.”²⁹ This letter reflects the formal, pious tones of the collection’s correspondence from this period, and it also suggests Bessie’s respect for education.

If indeed Bessie was a teacher, she had only a few years to apply her skills in educating her children. Her death, foreshadowed by years of correspondence alluding to

recurring fevers, chronic fatigue, chest discomfort, and a persistent cough, was most likely from tuberculosis. She died in 1842 when her daughter Fanny was only six years old and Lizzie, Helen's mother, was about five. The care of the girls after their mother's death is uncertain. Bessie's sister Sarah had already died in 1840. In 1837 both Bessie and Sarah had written letters disowning their brother Caleb who was a sea captain in the cotton trade, a "vagabond," and by the time of Bessie's death, a lawyer residing in Texas. Correspondence with another brother, Thomas, sounds distant and aloof. Bessie's sister Ruthy may have mothered the children for a time, but in 1850 she also died, just as the girls were entering their young womanhood. In 1852, Richard Plummer married Elizabeth Hicks, and it was she who enthusiastically embraced the role of mother to the budding Fanny and Lizzie Plummer.

Elizabeth Hicks Plummer

Sometime after their initial communication in 1849, Richard Plummer and Elizabeth Hicks met at the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. They found such pleasure in each other's company that they began a lively and enduring correspondence that sometimes bordered on religious debate. Their deep discussions eventually emerged as a courtship, and by 1852 they declared their love for each other and were married. The union, however, endured great psychological hardship.

The circumstances are not clear, nor is the exact date known, but in 1854 Elizabeth was disciplined by the Lombard Street Meeting, a situation to which Richard Plummer

took particular offense. Declaring himself “her natural protector,” he dispatched, in his powerful handwriting, his angry reaction to the responsible elders.³⁰ He temporarily removed his family from the Lombard Street Meeting, and for a while they attended the Old Town Meeting.

A direct connection cannot be made, but shortly after the Lombard Street discipline, Elizabeth suffered a “derangement of her mind,” and she was referred by three doctors to an “institution for the insane; as early as practicable.”³¹ It is not known how long Elizabeth remained at the Blockley Asylum in Pennsylvania, but letters indicate that she was a patient there for at least five years.³² The nature of her “derangement” is not clear, but Elizabeth Hicks at least once referred to her despondency. She also seemed to believe that reading and education had contributed to her mental illness. She clearly articulated her suspicions that intellectual development was harmful to women, when she advised her stepdaughter Lizzie Plummer about books she should not read and whether it was wise for a woman to pursue advanced education.

[I] pray for thee that thee may not walk in my footsteps to deep intellectual enjoyment to the loss of true and solid peace—and Lizzie avoid the works of [illegible] as thee would a rattlesnake, for they are as poisonous to a mind like thine.³³

I have thought much with thee my dear daughter, with ardent desires for thy direction into the path thy creator designs for thee, and the reasons thee advanced for thy decision to return to school has been comforting and encouraging to my feelings, for however doubtful I may be as to the acquisition of much more book learning, being any real benefit to woman, I know for a certainty that the lessons of self denial learned well in early youth are a lasting blessing—a blessing she will prize more and more, as life and its real duties and value are opened to her view—and as I have been lead, I trust, by the Author of All Good, to feel a mother’s affection, and a mother’s concern for thee and thy beloved sister, I have been

instructed to desire your introduction into this school, and your being enabled to learn those lessons well.³⁴

It is clear that, to some extent, Elizabeth blamed her mental disquiet on intellectual pursuits and pleasures, and she cautiously approved Lizzie's enrollment in boarding school.

Richard Plummer's and Elizabeth Hicks Plummer's struggles during the period that Rufus Jones calls "the darkest and saddest in the history of Quakerism"—1835-1855—offer a somber yet complementary counterpoint to the concerns of the next generation of young Quakers who seemed to encounter education and the secular world with more enthusiasm and less anxiety.

Elizabeth "Lizzie" B. Plummer Plummer

Richard Plummer's daughters, Elizabeth and Frances—lovingly addressed as Lizzie and Fanny in their correspondence—entered young womanhood with a wider vision. In spite of the fact that Bessie was not alive to influence her daughters with her personal convictions about life and education, and contrary to Elizabeth Hicks's cautions about life and "book learning," Lizzie Plummer developed a passion for books and learning, and Fanny developed a passion for life in general. Fanny was described by her father "as wild as ever" and "a perfect hoyden."³⁵ Fanny's energy never faded, and still leaps from the pages of the many letters she wrote to Lizzie throughout their lives. Together, as young women, the sisters embraced a world vastly different from the world of their distant ancestors and their parent's aging generation. In 1827, as Hicksite Quakers

argued against worldliness, the Maryland State Legislature incorporated the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad insuring trade with the West, the urbanization of Baltimore, and greater and faster communication with other urban centers. By 1835 Baltimore was just two hours away from Washington and nine and one half hours away from Philadelphia. Between 1837 and 1860 the population of Baltimore doubled, and between 1848 and 1852 the city's building and industrial boom peaked.³⁶

Lizzie Plummer lived from 1837-1872. By the 1850s, the world of the younger generation, as depicted in Lizzie's correspondence, had grown vibrant. Gone are the long, dour religious discussions with their dreadful biblical allusions and agonizing spiritual introspection. Lizzie grew up in an increasingly secular world, and her concerns reflected a changing America. A comprehensive account of Lizzie's life extracted from this large portion of the collection would broadly inform the mid-nineteenth-century southern culture of young upper-middle-class female Quakers, but a selection of topics and quotes taken from Lizzie's papers will illustrate the following issues that were relevant for Lizzie and, later, for her daughter Helen Plummer: education, domestic duty, social consciousness, and marriage.

From its inception, the Society of Friends recognized the importance of education, but it was forced to reconcile the secularism that an education presumed with a Quaker philosophy of quietism and retreat from worldliness. Enlightenment by the Inner Light was carefully distinguished from the deep intellectual life, but Quakers reasoned that "since man is endowed by God with natural reason in addition to the Inward Light ... it behooves him to utilize it to God's glory and his own benefit."³⁷ The apparent conflict

was resolved by adopting a bias toward experimental science because it was industrious and promoted useful knowledge that might benefit humanity.³⁸

Between 1838 and 1855 the Baltimore public schools were emerging as white Anglo-Saxon Protestant institutions, whose rising enrollment, mainly from the middle classes, served about two-thirds of the children who were in schools. Charitable, parochial, and other private institutions served the rest.³⁹ Quakers had been establishing schools since the seventeenth century, and in the nineteenth century the various yearly meetings continued the practice. Some of these schools were coeducational and most emphasized concrete subjects over the liberal arts.⁴⁰ It has not been determined if it was a Quaker school, but report cards from N. H. Morison's Academy for Young Ladies* dated 1849 and 1850 indicate that Elizabeth Plummer was an exceptional student. A "perfect recitation" scored an "8" and Lizzie earned almost perfect "8s." Her school composition and lesson books include neatly drafted solutions to geometry and trigonometry problems, long lists of books, and essays and imaginative stories written in her round and delicate script. Despite her stepmother's warning, Lizzie continued her education and attended the Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Fair Hill Boarding School† from 1853 to 1854. Some of the subjects studied at Fair Hill were spelling, reading, writing, geography, chemistry, philosophy, grammar, and arithmetic.⁴¹ But life at Fair Hill was not all serious work, and Lizzie wrote at least one letter describing her "boarding school frolics."⁴²

* Robert J. Brugger writes that Nathaniel Holmes Morrison became the head of the Peabody Institute in 1867. Prior to that date he had been, for twenty-five years, a prominent Baltimore schoolmaster. Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 370.

† Fair Hill Boarding School was founded at Sandy Spring, Maryland, in 1819. Rufus Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921), 707.

Once Lizzie finally returned home from Fair Hill, she assumed the domestic responsibilities of her position within her family. According to Suzanne Lebsack, nineteenth-century housewives “performed immense quantities of essential labor,...[and] work in the home ... was still overtly productive.”⁴³ Lebsack extends her observation to include both urban and plantation mistresses in the South. Lizzie was a well-educated, single southern woman. She was the daughter of an upper-middle-class Hicksite Quaker. Her home was in Baltimore with her father or in the country at Millersville, Maryland, with her Uncle Richard Hopkins. Her mother had died and her stepmother had been institutionalized, so Lizzie and her sister Fanny assumed the role of housekeeper for their father, their Uncle Richard Hopkins, their bedridden Aunt Joanna, and a young child named Richard.

For a time, while Lizzie and Fanny shared the domestic responsibilities of their father’s and uncle’s homes, they managed to achieve a balance between work and leisure, which included trips to Pennsylvania, New York, and Indiana. Correspondence with friends and relatives reveals an upper-middle-class culture of foreign language lessons; parties, picnics, and boating; travel by train and carriage; concerts and operas; book recommendations and discussions; and visits to libraries, lyceums, and literary societies. These privileged and cultured women, who sometimes wrote on gilt-edged stationary, also documented their daily domestic lives. They delighted in family events, shared cake recipes, and sent each other the fruits of the seasons. They ticked off household tasks, complained about piles of sewing, shared their woes of illness and death, and offered each other the latest health remedies. Many of these letters were written by still

unmarried young women, and marriage, while usually anticipated with enthusiasm, often changed the tone of the correspondence as the women became burdened by the worry and exhaustion of keeping their own homes, raising children, nursing their sick, and trying to respond to the needs of the older generation.

Within a decade of Lizzie's return from boarding school, the women and men of Maryland were confronted by the Civil War. Maryland became a state of divided loyalties. As a slave state, her landed gentry of slave owners supported secession. As one of the original states of the Union, Maryland was also the home of many Union supporters. Washington, D.C.'s location on the Potomac River across from Virginia was an immediate strategic concern, and early in the war the Union army secured the capitol and Maryland for the Union. Nevertheless, many Marylanders sided with the Confederacy, and there were those who remained neutral.

For Maryland's Quakers, war and the problem of slavery intensified an ideological struggle that was rooted in their peace ethic juxtaposed with their belief in the equality of all men and women. This was not a new problem for Quakers. From the seventeenth century through the American Civil War, arguments surrounding the abolition of slavery had forced Quakers to make moral choices. As early as 1688, Pennsylvania Quaker, Daniel Pastorius, spoke out against slavery, yet Quakers continued to own slaves through 1784.⁴⁴ John Woolman (1720-1774) is credited with finally awakening "the Friends in America to the need to clear themselves of slave-owning."⁴⁵ He opened himself to the Inner Light, developed his testimony against slavery, and actively brought his ministry before his fellow Quakers.⁴⁶ After the American Revolution, however, conservative

Quaker factions promoted withdrawal from public affairs, including withdrawal from the slavery issue.⁴⁷ “Friends were advised to ‘stay in the quiet’ and not to mix in worldly affairs,”⁴⁸ but it was suspected by opposing liberal groups that the conservative and wealthy Quaker merchants were cautious about abolition only because they had a “financial stake in the stability of the South.”⁴⁹ The issue remained unresolved, and when the conflict between the North and the South became inevitable, Quakers were drawn into a paradox in which both war and slavery were abhorrent. Frederick B. Tolles observes that “the most critical test of any Quaker’s devotion to his traditional religious testimonies comes in wartime.”⁵⁰ During the Civil War, Quakers were forced to choose between taking up arms for a cause they advocated, providing peripheral support for the war, or standing firm as pacifists.

Ordinary life seemed to continue for the Plummer women, but political voices and societal concerns were also recorded in their letters from the Civil War years. They continued to talk about dressmaking, but they also marked troop movements; disputed slavery; argued conscription, deferment and conscience; and defended or denounced the Union and secession. Trivially, Fanny Plummer Lancaster remarked on the dress Mary Lincoln wore for a White House reception, “Israel said it scared him,”⁵¹ and soberly Amanda Russell wrote, “We could hear the firing at Gettysburg, and of course we were anxious, knowing a battle was in progress and still could not know the result.”⁵² On 18 May 1861 Lizzie’s friend, Alice Paschall wrote, “I believe there was never an occasion where I could uphold my Quaker principle so fully and easily as this—‘they who live by the sword shall die by the sword’—and I could not conscientiously lend a helping hand to

assist in any way—unless it was to comfort the sick and wounded—and common humanity would prompt me there.”⁵³ Mary B. Longstreth wrote from Germantown on 19 July 1863, “Oh! Lizzie the dreadful accounts I hear from the battlefield at Gettysburg makes me heartsick[.] How much I want to be there to wait on those poor men; it is the only time I ever felt as if I had something to do but I am not going. I would be thought too young.” Later in this same letter she wrote, “I don’t know whether you admire Lucretia Mott* or not, but she preached a beautiful sermon in meeting this morning, it seemed as if she was inspired by Divine Power. I like to listen to such sermons. She is in very poor health and I am sorry[;] she is doing much good in the world and I don’t think it would do to loose [*sic*] so earnest a worker in the cause that she seems so fitted to work in.”⁵⁴ Elizabeth’s friends and family, women and men alike, eagerly discussed the issues and forthrightly expressed their concerns and opinions.

Several ephemeral items in the Plummer Goulding Papers highlight the variety of Lizzie’s activities during the war years and illustrate not only a balance between work and leisure, but also a young generation of Friends who readily engaged the world. One side of a Union Assemblies dance card lists the music program for a January evening in 1864 while the back of the card lists the past assemblies. Lizzie’s library cards from 1861 through 1864 show that she regularly subscribed as an Honorary Member to the Mercantile Library Association of Baltimore with the privilege of using the reading room and borrowing books. An 1862 leaflet printed for the West End Ladies Aid Association

* Lucretia Mott was a woman’s rights activist, suffragist, and abolitionist. She organized the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society and was a member of the 1848 Seneca Falls, New York, convention that started the woman suffrage movement in the United States. As an outspoken Hicksite minister, she met strong opposition to her stands on abolition and woman’s rights. In 1866, at the organizing meeting, she was elected president of the American Equal Rights Association.

of Baltimore addressed Miss D. L. Dix* and provided an account of their good work at the Steuart Mansion Hospital. Even during the war, life sought a balance, and these middle-class Quaker women continued their cultural and intellectual pursuits while not neglecting their social and family responsibilities.

Nor did they neglect their dreams for their future happiness. Young Quaker women estimated the virtues of their young male acquaintances; they yearned for love and pondered marriage from different perspectives. Choosing a mate did not focus on economic opportunity. A “helpmeet” was sought, and serious considerations included love, companionship, religious compatibility, and mutual personal development.

Alice Paschall wrote on 6 April 1862:

I believe, as my mother has taught me—that marriage is not necessary to the full development of a woman’s best feelings—that is, all women; — some there are—who need the requirements etc. of a family to break up their selfishness and narrow views, but there are single women as self-denying and as noble as any man’s wife—is not thy Aunt J. an instance? When I look into the past dear Lizzie in regard to the fields which might have been opened to me (‘might have been’ are not sad words here) I think of the escapes I have made & can rejoice that I have been prevented from taking so fearful a step. The longer I live the more solemn and almost awful seems the contrast between husband and wife—I am not fit to marry—and now it comes before me—perhaps not fit to live—and, oh it may be—not fit to die! Life and Death! “Tis not the whole of life to live—nor all of death to die.”⁵⁵

Fanny Plummer Lancaster wrote to her sister Lizzie on 27 April 1862:

I am sorry mother is not so well, poor thing poor thing I pity her from the bottom of my heart; but it would not be natural if I did not wish she had never seen any of our family, it is the greatest trouble I have to think of her being there at home, & knowing what a terrible strain it is on the whole system, mental more than physical. I know it seems useless, but for

* Possibly this leaflet addressed Dorothea L. Dix, prison reformer and advocate for the mentally ill. She was also Superintendent of Women Nurses for the Union during the Civil War.

the sake of Mr. Right if not for my sake keep away from her & out of doors as much as possible, & try & not let it drag thee down too much my dear child. I know thee thinks all I say on such subjects gas, but if thee knew how it went to my heart, & makes the tears come when I think about it, thee would not say 'idle words, & easy enough for thee to talk.' I have not a shadow of a doubt that thee will see some one, one day or other (perhaps not very soon, but certain) that thee can love, & I want thee to keep well in mind & body, so as to be the comfort to him I know thee could be, if not worn out, causing him as much anxiety as happiness for fear of loosing [*sic*] thee. I hope thee will go see Alice, the change must be good for thee.⁵⁶

Besides the inference that Lizzie was worried about finding someone to love, this letter reconfirms the long term psychological struggle of their stepmother Elizabeth Hicks and its overwhelming effect on the family. This letter may also reflect a conflict between Lizzie's parents' Hicksite principles and her own tendencies toward independence and perhaps greater worldliness. This conflict may have intensified her urgent desire for spousal love. Lizzie's correspondence with her future husband, Francis W. Plummer, suggests her desire to have a home of her own away from the constraining influence of relatives. Plummer supported Lizzie's domestic desires, but encouraged her in less than proper ways. He, too, was a Quaker, but he leaned toward orthodox Protestantism. He tempted her with worldly activities and finally convinced her to pressure her father into allowing her to attend Episcopalian church sermons. His courtship was successful.

By the close of 1864, Lizzie and Frank were celebrating their marriage. Elizabeth Byrnes Plummer married Francis Wallace Plummer in October of 1864, six months before the end of the Civil War. "Cousin" Lizzie, on 9 October 1864, wrote to Lizzie Plummer, "What a good girl thee was to write me 'on the eve of thy marriage.' I will keep that letter dear til we are old. Maggie Janney added to her letter after the wedding

that 'the die was cast—sister Elizabeth Plummer was a spinster no longer' & she said too she had never seen thee looking better."⁵⁷

By spring of 1865 the country celebrated the end of the Civil War. Just three days after Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, Lizzie's friend wrote, "This is the fourth anniversary of the attack on Fort Sumpter [*sic*], the beginning of the war, and now it does really look as though the war were near its close. We have had a week and more of great excitement, not such as we experienced four years ago, but excitement of a joyful kind."⁵⁸ Two days later Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in Washington, D.C., and his funeral train would pass northward through the city of Baltimore.

Looking at Helen Plummer's ancestors through their correspondence elicits several questions. Did Helen read the letters? If so, at what age did she read them? What were her thoughts about the letters? And finally, how did they influence her opinions about womanhood, education, and marriage? On the back of one letter dated 1813 is an anonymous penciled notation. "Reading over these old letters makes one feel quite melancholy when we reflect how many changes have taken place since they were written how many marriages, removals and deaths have separated friends when this was written. I had a mother although too young to estimate the blessing but providence in his wisdom removed her before he thought it right to take her children which left them alone in this dreary world without a friend but Him who never forsakes the fatherless."⁵⁹

Early death had particular significance for the men and women represented in the Plummer Goulding Papers. Helen's great-grandmother, Elizabeth Hopkins Plummer; her grandmother, Elizabeth G. Byrnes Plummer; and her mother, Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer died leaving their young children motherless. There is no way to know who wrote the penciled notation, and it is not dated, but someone was moved by the letters. As for Helen's part, we know only that she saved them, and that at least means they were important to her.

This review of Quaker and Maryland history has established the religious, economic, and cultural environment of Helen Plummer's early ancestors. Documents from the Plummer Goulding Papers were used to introduce the observations and opinions of Helen's grandparents, parents, aunts and acquaintances in regard to education, marriage, and the social and domestic roles of women. Particularly relevant to Helen Plummer's life is the fact that the lives of her female ancestors were defined by a paradox. Quaker tradition offered these women liberal and equitable access to education and intellectual activities. After schooling, however, and before as well as after marriage, their lives were constrained by social customs and religious principles that expected women to fulfill the domestic responsibilities of spousal companionship, keeping house, raising children, nursing the sick, and providing domestic comfort for visitors. The consequences of this paradox—liberal education juxtaposed with rigid expectations of domesticity in women's roles—prompted debate and disquiet. This paradox carried over to Helen Plummer's generation and created social conflict and personal mental confusion about economic dependency and women's roles. Helen like her ancestors struggled with her religious

beliefs. She attended both Quaker meetings and Episcopalian services. She faced conflicting needs and demands while trying to meet her financial obligations and filial responsibilities. She struggled with conflict and paradox trying to define her roles as a woman in an increasingly secularized, materialistic world.

Notes

¹ Aubrey C. Land, *Colonial Maryland: A History* (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO Press, 1981), 3-67; Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperment, 1834-1980* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 3-40.

² Walter Lee Hopkins, *Hopkins of Virginia and Related Families* (Harrisburg, Va.: C. J. Carrier Co., 1980), 232; Robert Barnes, *Colonial Families of Anne Arundel County, Maryland* (Westminster, Md.: Willow Bend Books, 2000), 144-48; Robert Barnes, comp., *Maryland Marriages, 1634-1777* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1975), 90.

³ Richard Hopkins, will dated 3 March 1800, Helen Plummer Goulding Papers, Research Library and Archives, Pasadena Museum of History, Pasadena, Calif. (hereafter cited as Plummer Goulding Papers).

⁴ Elise Greenup Jourdan, *Early Families of Southern Maryland*, vol. 2 (Westminster, Md.: Family Lines Publications, 1993), 18.

⁵ All biographical information pertaining to the Plummer family, unless otherwise cited, has been taken from the Plummer Goulding Papers. Only direct quotes taken from papers will be individually cited.

⁶ Jessamyn West, ed., *The Quaker Reader* (New York: Viking Press, 1962), x.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸ Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960), 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰ Ibid., 22.

¹¹ Robert W. Doherty, *The Hicksite Separation: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Schism in Early Nineteenth Century America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1967), 16-32.

¹² Rufus Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921), 377-540; Margaret H. Bacon, *The Quiet Rebels: The Story of the Quakers in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 86-93.

¹³ Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, vol. 2, 488.

¹⁴ Robinson C. Watters, "Audubon and His Baltimore Patrons," *The Maryland Historical Magazine* 34, no. 2 (June 1939), 138-43.

¹⁵ Richard Plummer, "Catalogue of Books," Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁶ Ronald Mattson, Secretary, Stony Run Friends Meeting, Baltimore, Md., email to author, 9 February 2003.

¹⁷ Richard Plummer to Baltimore Monthly Meeting, draft of letter, October 1844, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁸ Richard Plummer to John Comly, draft of letter, 23 May 1844, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁹ Richard Plummer to Edward Hicks, draft of letter, 3 November 1848, Plummer Goulding Papers.

²⁰ Richard Plummer to Edward Hicks, draft of letter, 13 December 1848, Plummer Goulding Papers.

²¹ "Died," *Friends' Intelligencer* (Philadelphia, Pa.), 17 September 1870, in *Friends' Intelligencer*, vol. 27 (Philadelphia, Pa.), 456.

²² Richard Plummer to Elizabeth Hicks Plummer, 25 August 1849, Plummer Goulding Papers.

²³ Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 9.

²⁴ Margaret Hope Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 24.

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- ²⁵ Ibid., 11.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 7-17.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 28.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 49.
- ²⁹ Ann R. Finley to Elizabeth G. Byrnes Plummer, n.d., Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁰ Richard Plummer to Lombard Street Meeting Elders, 1854, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³¹ William Riley to Richard Plummer, 29 October 1855, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³² Joseph P. Plummer to Richard Plummer, 14 January 1861, Plummer Goulding Papers; J. Humphry [illegible] to Richard Plummer, 18 August 1861, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³³ Elizabeth Hicks Plummer to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, second day eve, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁴ Elizabeth Hicks Plummer to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, second day morning 9th, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁵ Richard Plummer to Elizabeth G. Byrnes Plummer, 23 January 1838, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁶ Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of a City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 73, 77, 102-103.
- ³⁷ Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 71.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 67-72.
- ³⁹ Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of a City*, 128-29.
- ⁴⁰ Bacon, *The Quiet Rebels*, 151-59; Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, vol. 2, 666-712.
- ⁴¹ Emily Hopkins to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, 21 October 1855, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴² Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer to Frances Plummer Lancaster, n.d., Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁴³ Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 148.

⁴⁴ Bacon, *The Quiet Rebels*, 94-95.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 96-101.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 48.

⁵¹ Frances Plummer Lancaster to Richard Plummer, 18 December 1861, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵² Amanda Russell to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, 21 July 1863, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵³ Alice Paschall to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, 18 May 1861, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁴ Mary B. Longstreth to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, 19 July 1863, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁵ Alice Paschall to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, 6 April 1862, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁶ Frances P. Lancaster to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, 27 April 1862, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁷ Lizzie #2 to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, 9 October 1864, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁸ Amanda Russell to Elizabeth B. Plummer Plummer, 12 April 1865, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁹ H. B. to My Dear Child, 21 July 1813, in Elizabeth G. Byrnes Plummer correspondence, Plummer Goulding Papers.

Chapter 3

A LIFE UNFOLDS

Baltimore in the 1870s and 1880s was emerging as a major American city. Its people were building a physical infrastructure of residences, businesses, utilities, local transit, and interstate transportation corridors that took advantage of the technological advances of the industrialized era. As a result, Baltimore was the home of a wealthy upper class that resided in the hilly aspects of the city. It was the home of low lying areas of abject poverty. And it gave birth to its share of the nation's emerging middle class. This burgeoning population created social and environmental pressures that forced its citizens to define education, health, and labor as vital public issues. As national and local economic cycles impacted all the levels of its society, the wealth that was generated and the needs that ensued gave rise to Baltimore's civic institutions, its great philanthropic reputation, and its rich cultural heritage.¹ Baltimore was the city of Helen Plummer's birth.

Helen's life as a girl and a young woman, from 1870 to 1895, is examined from a variety of perspectives. It is introduced through a series of family fortunes and misfortunes that influenced her basic care, the atmosphere of her upbringing, her education, and her life choices.² Because Helen and her family lived mostly in Baltimore over this twenty-five-year period, Baltimore's cultural heritage and the city's economic cycles are presented as they affected the Plummer family. As a girl, Helen Plummer also lived in the Maryland countryside. As a young woman she lived four years in Oakland,

California. City and country, East Coast and West Coast offered contrasting experiences, as fortune and misfortune wove their fateful way into Helen's life and her difficult journey finding her way to librarianship.

Fortune and Misfortune, 1870-1890

The 1870s brought significant changes to the Plummer family, changes that forced their privileged circumstances toward domestic instability and financial uncertainty. Frank and Lizzie and their son Frank Jr. had recently moved into their own home on Mosher Street in Baltimore City when they joyfully welcomed the birth of Helen Lancaster Plummer on 7 July 1870. Sad days were not far ahead, however, when that same summer Richard Plummer became gravely ill and died on August 31st. His death marked the beginning of the passing of a generation of Plummers who had been steeped in early nineteenth-century Quakerism. It also marked the beginning of the family's serious financial problems. Richard Plummer's estate settlement, as administered by Frank Plummer; Israel Lancaster, Fanny Plummer Lancaster's husband; and Thomas Russell, plagued the family with accusations, threats, and lawsuits. About the same time, Lancaster family ties and a business opportunity prompted Israel and Fanny to move from Baltimore to Richmond, Indiana, thus imposing a hardship of distance between Fanny and Lizzie, as each labored under her personal responsibility of caring for her own small children and their joint responsibility of tending the older generation. The decade

had just begun, and, while the family suffered separation and discord, the city of Baltimore pressed its distinct culture and economy into Plummer family life.

For Helen's middle-class relatives, Baltimore's cultural institutions were a pleasant and positive aspect of city life. The philanthropy of such men as Johns Hopkins, George Peabody, Moses Sheppard, and Enoch Pratt made possible the sustained existence of Baltimore's subscription and public libraries. Between 1846 and 1848 the contributions of these men built Baltimore's Athenaeum, a building constructed to house the collections of the Maryland Historical Society, the Library Company of Baltimore, and the Mercantile Library Association—the library that Lizzie Plummer patronized. The Peabody Institute initially funded by George Peabody and established in 1857, opened its library in 1866.

The Peabody was founded as a cultural center for Baltimoreans, offering public lectures, a small art gallery, and a music conservatory. After the Lancaster family moved to Indiana, one family member wrote, "We have missed Peabody very much this winter, although my French has taken up a good deal of my time, and has given me a great deal of pleasure."³ Books, libraries, lectures, and study were an integral part of Lancaster and Plummer life, and even though Fanny's family moved far away from Baltimore's cultural pleasures, Fanny, in the tradition of upper-middle-class Victorian homes, made sure that the plans for her Richmond home included a well appointed library.

Back in Baltimore, Lizzie and Frank were facing the negative aspects of the city's life. Frank, who had been working at the Baltimore & Cuba Mining Company since 1867, was suddenly dismissed in 1871 from his bookkeeping position because "works stopped."

This may have been the result of the copper smelting industry changing its supply source of copper ore from Cuba and Chile to the American West. Frank quickly found a new bookkeeping position with W.C. Robinson & Son, but stayed only one year. For almost seven years Baltimore had been in the midst of a prosperous economic expansion, and so in March 1872, Frank momentarily enjoyed the opportunity of starting his own business, F. W. Plummer Furniture, at 49 Hanover Street in Baltimore, Maryland. Economic and domestic comforts in Baltimore, however, were perpetually threatened by seasonal diseases, and it was a sobering fact that epidemics of cholera, typhoid, and smallpox plagued the city. In the summer of 1872, an urgent telegram sent for Fanny Lancaster in Richmond, Indiana. It read, "Lizzie considered very ill. Frank thinks differently. Come on immediately."⁴ Helen's mother died on 1 July 1872 of an unnamed illness. Shortly after the funeral, Fanny returned to Indiana with a dysentery type of illness that would cause concern for several months, but from which she would recover. One month later Uncle Richard Hopkins died, leaving yet another estate to fuel the family's discord.

The early 1870's promise of happiness and prosperity was thwarted not only by the death of Helen's mother and the complex estate settlements, but also by the unfortunate timing of Frank's business venture. In 1873, Baltimore's economy, victim of a national depression, slid into a seven-year decline. Throughout the following years Frank's furniture business steadily failed alongside other Baltimore businesses, and by 1878 he filed for bankruptcy. The indignity to the family name provoked Harriet Plummer's disapproval and initiated Frank's long term alienation from his mother. Years later,

appealing to Harriet for understanding and defending himself against her criticism, he reasoned, "I 'struck the cyclone' 70s under which many went down."⁵

Perhaps the greater indignity that Harriet perceived was Frank's marriage to Flora (her maiden name is unknown) in 1874. Flora's background and reputation were suspect, and even Fanny, far away in Indiana, alluded to the family's adamant objection to the marriage when she sympathized, "I hear of all the world turned against you. [It] is indeed a sorrowful beginning."⁶ Sadly, Frank would lose Fanny's support as well and his family relationships would become ever more strained. Helen, too, would suffer from her father's losses. Her grandmother Harriet Plummer would deny her a home, and when her Aunt Fanny, her mother's only sibling died, her relationship with her Uncle Israel and his sons Morris and Herbert Lancaster would languish for many years.

The year 1876 sustained the troubling sequence of events that damaged the stability of Helen's family and her financial security. Fanny Plummer Lancaster suffered an uncontrolled hemorrhage, either from an early spontaneous abortion or during childbirth, and neither she nor the child survived. As usual, the death of a family member precipitated a financial feud. Frank and Israel engaged in heated correspondence over their wives' estates, estates that had swelled with the Richard Plummer and Richard Hopkins settlements. The discord finally split the two families apart. Details of the troubles could probably be sorted out by a careful analysis of the financial documentation and the furious letter writing, but relevant to Frank's money problems and their ultimate impact on Helen is the statement he made in his 1895 will. "In view of the fact that more than my 'life's estate' of their mother's estate as well as several thousands of dollars of

their own money was lost by me in business and has never been paid to them by me, my children Frank and Helen, are entitled to what I have bequeathed to them.”⁷ Frank’s will also bore witness to the long story of his marital woes and alluded to its unsettling effect upon his children’s lives. He reviewed his failed second marriage to Flora and discussed his efforts to raise her child, his adopted daughter Nellie. He revealed his third marriage to an estranged woman named Florence, exploring in detail Florence’s desire for an abortion and the questionable paternity of an unnamed son. Frank’s money and marriage problems permanently destabilized Helen’s young life.

Specifics about Helen Plummer’s childhood are scanty but enticing in their impression and mystery. Family letters suggest that between 1873 and 1874, soon after their mother’s death, Helen and her brother Frank Jr. went to live in the Maryland countryside with their grandmother Harriet Plummer at the family’s “Esperanza” farm at Eldridge in Howard County. Helen’s father continued to live in Baltimore where he managed his furniture business, and during this time Helen probably enjoyed his frequent visits while he oversaw the rebuilding of the Esperanza house. Country living with her grandmother during Helen’s formative years remains a mystery, and it was fleeting. In 1874 when Frank married Flora, he moved his family, including his adopted daughter Nellie, back to Baltimore. In Baltimore Helen began her formal education.

Two receipts for tuition provide the only direct evidence for Helen’s early education. The first dated 5 September 1877 paid tuition for two terms through 30 January 1878 at the Friends’ Elementary and High School, headed by Quaker educator Eli M. Lamb. Originally established by the Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 1784, it was located at

Lombard Street about 1840, most likely its location when Helen attended. In February 1878, Frank paid for her tuition through June to the Misses M. & B. Reinhardt of the English & German School for Young Ladies at 30 N. Green Street in Baltimore.

Payment included drawing supplies, stationery, one German reader, one spelling book, and "copy & blank." On the back of the bill Frank wrote, "Helen left school Apl 1."⁸

This was the year, 1878, of Frank Plummer's bankruptcy, the year he moved his family, Flora, Nellie, Frank Jr. and Helen, to the Laurel region of Prince Georges' County and took up farming.

Originally Laurel was part of a seventeenth-century land grant belonging to Richard Snowden, a Quaker Friend from Wales.⁹ Further research might establish an ancestral connection to Helen, since the Plummer's farm probably passed to Helen and her brother Frank Jr., through their mother's uncle, Richard Hopkins, a Snowden descendent.

Incorporated in 1870, Laurel was "an early commuter town for people working in Baltimore and Washington ... [and it] had Prince Georges County's first public school, its first national bank and first public library."¹⁰ Laurel's high school principal confirmed that, "F.W. Plummer [Junior] was a student in Laurel Graded School, High School studies, during 1881."¹¹ No similar evidence was found for Helen's school days in

Laurel, and the record of her life there is limited to a few later references. Once, while vacationing with friends, she mentioned seeing Mary Phillips, "who went to school with me in Laurel."¹² One other time, during a visit to the Laurel farm, she fondly remembered her years there, "I hate the idea of leaving Laurel, it seems so much like home, but I begin to pine for a sight of Baltimore faces."¹³ Helen's childhood in her

Laurel home lasted a brief three years, but she would always love country life. And even though she would thrive on her city-life relationships, she would seek refuge in rural areas during periods of ill-health and loneliness.

The decade of the 1880s brought separation and more disappointment to Helen's family. Frank Sr., Frank Jr., Flora, Nellie, and Helen returned to Baltimore in 1881 when Frank secured an accounting position with the Merchants & Miners Transportation Company. By the next year, family letters suggest that Frank's marriage to Flora was failing. Tempers flared, and Flora left for Chicago, taking Nellie with her. Frank appealed to Flora. "Helen ... was really distressed—you are the only mother she has ever known and I think she feels affection for you."¹⁴ Flora did return, for a time. In 1886 Frank Sr. seemed to blame Flora's discontent on his own children. "Frank has never made much account of his home and Helen has been so lazy. It has all come too hard on Flora"¹⁵ In connection with the domestic upheaval, Helen, at twelve years old, may have been enduring some emotional pain that she shared with her Sunday school teacher, Jennie Bakee. Bakee discerned the problem as Helen's lack of faith in God's forgiveness, so she encouraged her to learn confidence in God and provided her with lists of Bible readings.

Helen was subject to loneliness and a niggling discontent throughout her life. Her struggles with her family would last for years, and family as an anchor in her life seemed always to dangle just out of reach. But, amidst the almost constant turmoil, Helen's father painted one scene of domestic tranquility. "Today the 2^d Snow Storm of the season is gently covering the ground there being no wind as when the last one fell. Flora has

been playing old Scotch & other melodies & hymn tunes on the organ. Nellie & I singing off & on. Helen is sitting by the kitchen fire with a book.”¹⁶ This is the earliest mention of Helen and her books. Over the years books and libraries would burrow their way into Helen’s life. Perhaps during her turbulent childhood they offered some comfort.

Earlier in January 1886, Frank Sr. asked his mother Harriet Plummer, his brother Jesse, and his sisters to allow Helen to once more live with them at Elkridge. They refused. Jesse conveyed their sentiment in a terse one-sentence letter that said, “I do not think the arrangement you spoke of in regard to Helen can be made under present circumstances.”¹⁷ In later years, Harriet Plummer would express to Frank her bitter disappointment with his life. “When I think of what you & your children are, and what you & they ought to have been, it does almost craze me.”¹⁸ On 8 January 1886 Frank appealed to Jesse to reconsider, for if it was only a matter of money for Helen’s board and clothing, “and no other reasons were involved I would like to know what would be sufficient for board.”¹⁹ It is not known what was decided, but by 23 December 1887, H. Taylor of Baltimore wrote to Frank Plummer that he might “have to ask Helen to take a smaller room temporarily.”²⁰

For several years, Helen lived in a Baltimore boarding house and attended the nearby Western Female High School. Founded in 1844, this was a well-respected public institution, and Helen Plummer was an accomplished student. Her commencement exercises took place on 28 June 1888 at Ford’s Grand Opera House at 8 p.m. The program, which included scripture readings, hymns, and prayers, lists Miss Helen L. Plummer as “Receiving Tickets to Lectures at Peabody Institute.” Like her mother Lizzie

Plummer, Helen would soon face the life of a woman who, having completed her formal education, was expected to fulfill a woman's responsibilities to society and her family.

Unlike her mother, Helen would have more options.

As businesses evolved into large corporate structures during the 1880s, their complex bureaucracies needed more office workers. It was not long before office work supplemented housekeeping, teaching, and sick nursing as a respectable middle-class female occupation. Religious principles and family structures continued to define the ideals of female employment, and for Helen, conservative Quaker principles were imposed as well. In an effort to strengthen tenuous family connections, Helen turned to her step-grandmother Elizabeth Hicks Plummer for solace and advice after her high school graduation.

Elizabeth seems to have changed little over the years, and she offered Helen, as she had offered Helen's mother, her cautious perspective. Elizabeth was anxious about Helen's situation, and she steered her toward her father's protection. She also lamented Helen's strained relationship with her father's family and recalled the old Christian ways.

The intelligence of thy situation ... has stirred up—in my mind—anxious feelings for thy preservation—it does not seem a right thing for thy mothers daughter, to be in the position thee describes, whilst thee has a father spared to thee, who, I trust, is desirous to protect thee from all unnecessary exposure—when I recall to memory, the gentleness and delicacy of thy mothers feelings, and the protecting care thy dear grandfather had for those he loved, I am made solicitous for thee, that thou should know the shield of a loving father's care, and not feel thyself obliged to fill a position, that is incompatible with thy health and happiness—I know thee is favored with a good share of good sense—my dear Helen, and therefore feel a freedom to give thee some of my thoughts, trusting to thy just appreciation of them. It has been truly painful to my best feelings to discover the place [of] thy own grandmothers—thy farther's [sic] mother, and sisters—thy grandfather's

family....Educated as I have been in the old-fashioned Christian School of "Honor the parental tie" I am ever pained, to have to see, a loss of reverence for it—a want of confidence in it—being very much cut off from the inner affairs of the family.²¹

Elizabeth's words "obliged to fill a position" suggest that Helen was pursuing some kind of business employment. Helen's friend Annie Pope Newbold supported this inference with her childlike words. "I wish I could join you as 'cash girl' or something. I'm nearly wild to go to work at something, and Uncle Isaac is so silly he wont [*sic*] let me."²²

Helen's father was a powerful influence in her life, and he imposed occupational restrictions throughout her young adulthood. "Don't worry yourself at all about earning money & such—It was because I feared you could not stand much that I discouraged you from business. Build up your health, and I guess I will be able to earn enough to spare you as much as will make up what your income lacks of being enough. I think I have a right to my child—don't you? and to support her all my days if I choose."²³ Nineteenth-century attitudes toward middle-class women, their susceptibility to delicate health, and their need for appropriate financial support, were among the arguments used to discourage women from seeking gainful employment. Add family duties and money problems to the equation and some women may have felt trapped and frustrated. The general tone of so much of Helen's young adulthood correspondence was confusion over duty, money, where she should live, and how she should occupy her time. Her life was troubled, but advice was frequent and varied.

Throughout her young life, Helen maintained a voluminous correspondence with friends. Without the guidance of a supportive mother, grandmother, or aunt, it is possible that these communications were her best chance for seeing women's lives from different

perspectives. From 1888 through 1889 Helen received letters from her friend Lillie White describing the events and joys of her Swarthmore College days. Other friends wrote about their experiences in marriage, motherhood, and housekeeping. One wonders how Helen counted and evaluated her own options when she read these letters.

Helen's choices during the late 1880s and early 1890s were circumscribed by her family's finances and their personal needs. While Frank Sr. tried to manage money, marriage, and work, Frank Jr. explored life in California, and Helen considered moving west to join her brother. Again Helen turned to her step-grandmother for advice, and again Elizabeth Hicks Plummer wrote her winding words of caution.

I have the strongest confidence, in the blessing a conscientious Christian Sister can be to her father and to her brother, and feeling a sympathy with thy position, in this respect, I feel to encourage thee, to seek for Divine direction in the fulfillment of thy duties, and he who has promised ... will condescend to thy needs, and sustain thee, in the performance of every duty required, and every disappointment and trial thee may have to pass through, will be sanctified to thy enlargement, and establishment in the "Truth." ... I trust it is this enduring Love, that has introduced thee unto the Profession of the Christian Religion as professed by the Society thee is joined to, I hope it may be a vital principle to assist thee in the journey through this world, I have been drawn into much concern, in regard to thy prospect of going to California, feeling it to be very important, to thy preservation in comfort of mind and body, that thee should have confidence, in its being the right thing for thee, and for thy dear brother, that thee should take such a journey—Weigh it well, my dear child, in the even Balance of desiring to do the right, and I trust, what is best for you both, may be performed.²⁴

Family duty loomed large for Helen Plummer, and ironically domestic discord determined her decision. Frank Sr.'s third wife Florence not only caused Frank to lose his bookkeeping position with the Merchant & Miner's Company, but her behavior prompted Frank to justify his actions toward Helen. "My anxiety for you urged me to let

you leave my house, when I found Florence was not going to profit by your companionship, but on the contrary imagine you an enemy.”²⁵ In 1891 Helen chose to go to California with her brother and his bride Mabel, and on 17 September 1891 the three young people were on a train moving west.

Life in California, 1891-1895

Helen saw California for the first time with the fresh vision of an easterner. “The air here is heavenly, feels now like one of our finest spring days last. I have not seen much of Oakland yet, we are rather far out but the cottages are all surrounded by yards, some small, some very large and beautiful; and oh! the flowers. In this yard we have lovely roses, Marechal Neil and La France, (in Balt. \$3 a doz.) fuchsias high as the yard fence and geraniums, heliotrope in abundance. I shall make the most of them while I have them.”²⁶ Her father was grateful for her long attentive letter. “I was delighted at receipt of your thoroughly painstaking letter descriptive of your city and Park—Frank’s house included. Not many daughters would devote more time and energy to giving such a father so satisfactory an account of one week in a new place.”²⁷

Helen had sought refuge in her brother’s home, but her duty was to alleviate Mabel’s loneliness while Frank Jr. worked long hours as an accountant for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Together the women set up housekeeping at 1264 24th Avenue in Oakland. Frank Jr. joined The Home Supply Company, a society that offered wholesale and discounted furnishings to members, and the ladies made daily treks into San Francisco to

select carpets, a "real oak" bookcase, a buffet, a dining table, bedroom furniture, and a stove. Money was a concern, and so was Frank Jr.'s judgment and financial history. Helen assured her father, "I have no fear of Frank running expenses ahead of his income; am glad to see that he realizes the error of it."²⁸ His debts for once were being paid.

Lectures, parties, picnics, and church "entertainments" occupied Helen's free time. She resumed her interest in music. "I have been making up for lost time with my music lately, as we got the piano this week. A rented one."²⁹ And she read. "I hope to improve my mind this winter more than heretofore. Have begun Goldsmith's England. Think most of it will come back to me again."³⁰ "I bought a nicely bound book of poems 'Owen Meredith's, for 55cts....Mabel and I have been reading 'Lucile.' "³¹

Helen worried constantly about the books she had left in Maryland.

3 October 1891:

I am very sorry you have not moved those books but—I suppose it cannot be helped. I have been worried about them for F. did not get them nailed up and "there are those in the house who are apt to peer into things" that is why I wanted to move all my things before I left. I hope Miss M will see that they are not disturbed.³²

30 October 1891:

Wish I had brought more of my books with me.³³

31 October 1891:

Are my books still at Miss Marion's. I have been worried about them.³⁴

14 November 1891:

Are my books and things still there? They have been on my mind considerably as I fear something may happen to them being all open; would have felt safer had they been at Mrs. H.'s. I did not want to leave

them so but had no time. There are some things in the bookcase also that I wanted to keep.³⁵

21 November 1891:

I did not know we took any of your books, did not mean to I am sure. The Zoonomia must be in one of my boxes. I did not know we took any except what were mother's and grandfather's. I did not want to deprive you of any, but thought I had better pack mine while at it as you were not there and as they are about the only possessions I have, wanted to take good care of them after so nearly losing them all. Will you take good care of the things in the lower bookcase?³⁶

Helen was not happy in Oakland. She missed her Baltimore friends. "I do hope you will get a good position for I do not want to stay here always. The letters make me so homesick."³⁷ Frank Sr. sent Helen the Baltimore newspapers to keep her apprised of her friend's activities. Marriages of friends and family members not only reminded her of missed society, but also elicited concern that, slowly but surely, one by one, her friends were marrying and moving on in life. Other news offered a snippet of a hint about a prior occupation. "I was shocked to hear of Beulah Lambdin's death; cannot realize it. Did not think my class would be so soon broken into. It made me wonder if my efforts to teach were of any avail. I can only hope I may have sowed one little seed at least."³⁸ This is the only evidence discovered that Helen was at one time a teacher.

When family economics and unsettled living situations are considered, one might wonder why Helen did not pursue teaching or office work. She had a small income from land rents in Baltimore—\$180-\$250 per annum—paid to her by Mr. Brundidge the appointed trustee of her inheritance. Rent from the Mosher Street house netted almost no income because of maintenance costs, and income from the Muirkirk farm near Laurel was not enough to provide a comfortable income for all the family. Helen needed to

supplement her income, but her health was considered delicate. Helen's father held the opinion that work would further compromise her well-being, and he adamantly disapproved of her working.

As a result, Helen was left feeling useless and concerned about her constitution.

Often wonder just what you are doing, and wish myself there, but no doubt it is just as well I am here now for were I home I would be another burden. It often seems to me I am of little use although Frank and Mabel have both told me I have been a help in many ways. I think sometimes I would give anything to feel as I did four or five years ago. I have at last gone to see a Doctor recommended by Mrs. Randol. Frank urged me to do so and at last I thought I had better. Am in hopes he may get to the root of the trouble whatever it is, for I feared to become utterly useless, seem to have no strength except by the greatest will power and much exertion hurts me. I am taking such nasty medicine; it certainly ought to cure; have felt worse since taking it but hope it is having the desired effect and that I will regain my old hardihood.³⁹

Helen took up the "wheel" for exercise as well as fun, and her father encouraged and advised her. "I know from experience that healthy excitement & moderate exercise are good for activity of the liver, and I will be encouraged if the 'wheel' helps you."⁴⁰ Also, "The sooner you follow May's example in dress reform the better will be your opportunity for good health and good temper."⁴¹ May Randol was a young working woman employed in an office. Most likely she had adopted the dress style of the day that was considered appropriate for office work—the shirtwaist and skirt.

May Randol became Helen Plummer's close California friend. In the following observation, Helen perhaps offered her father her opinion about young middle-class women working to supplement the family income in times of need. When Mr. Randol died he had left Mrs. Randol, May, and her two younger brothers with an expensive house and a small income. "They have a lovely home about the center (or near it) of

town, a \$9000 house, two story with every convenience, so well arranged, and showing the fact of refinement and culture. They have lived rather too high I presume and are now economizing, as May and Alan, the oldest boy, are both employed.”⁴² Perhaps Helen was hinting that she too needed to consider employment.

In the meantime, Helen helped Mabel with the housekeeping, and even though she worried about her brother, her father, money, and her lack of a useful occupation, she was becoming pleasantly acclimated to her life in California. She regularly attended St. John’s Episcopal Church and discussed various religions with her father—Methodism, Episcopalianism, and Unitarianism. She enjoyed performing in her first “entertainment.” “It gave me a very queer feeling to sit so prominently before a sea of faces.”⁴³ She traveled to Stockton by train and stage to visit the ranch where Frank Jr. had worked in 1888—“how awful it was”—and spent the Fourth of July at a cottage at Swanton House in Pescadero with the Randol family. From Pescadero she wrote on 28 June 1892, “The weather has been fine lately, cool, and I am beginning to enjoy life here, for how long I know not.”⁴⁴

Trouble was brewing. In Oakland, Frank Jr. was missing long periods of work “due to illness,” and it was later revealed that he was an alcoholic. Mabel was unhappy. In Baltimore, Frank Sr. could not support Nellie and his third wife, financially or emotionally. The depression of the 1890s was having its impact on employment opportunities, and he could not find work. Helen wrote to her father on 8 May 1892, “I was speaking to Frank about it; we have both about concluded to hold on to the farm as a

possible refuge; and he seemed to think it might be a good thing for you to try the farm a while if you do not get a good office place.”⁴⁵ Helen was worried.

Helen was suffering from the conflicting responsibilities she felt toward her father, brother, sister-in-law, step-sister, and second step-mother. Mrs. Hardie, a family friend, suggested that Helen carefully assess her situation. “I would be very glad to see you back here but cannot under the circumstances advise you to come. You have a pleasant home with your brother—and are making friends there—and may in time like it better while coming to Baltimore may be disappointing to you. I believe in one doing their duty regardless of pleasure—but it is better to try to be sure of the duty.”⁴⁶ By February 1893, however, Frank and Mabel were on a ship returning east, leaving Helen behind. By April, Frank Sr. and Frank Jr. were back on the Laurel farm logging the woods and growing hay for additional income. Helen remained in Oakland with the Randol family where they would form a close and lasting bond. She would not return to Baltimore for two more years.

During the time that Helen remained in Oakland, living with her “adopted” California family, her Maryland family started its final disintegration. Frank Sr. left his third wife Florence who seemed to disappear leaving behind “the child.” Nellie began her stage career and took a “paramour.” Mabel left Frank Jr., joining Nellie on the stage, and Frank Jr. tried unsuccessfully to control his intemperance. On 28 April 1895, Helen told her father, “I do wish you could find better work than gardening; I shall have to turn to myself before long.”⁴⁷ This unstable family was probably not what Helen wanted to return to; yet, after May Randol’s marriage in June 1895, Helen returned to Baltimore.

Helen Plummer was born into an upper-middle-class family whose money and privilege drained away. Illness and death bequeathed money and land, but also inflicted irreplaceable filial loss. Feuding, mismanagement, business cycles, and poor judgment squandered relationships and an inheritance, but created opportunities for learning about independence.

Independence, however, was a concept that Helen would have to struggle toward, and her father was a major hindrance. Instead of encouraging liberal ideas about women's initiative and self-sufficiency, Helen's father confined her within his paternal care. Perhaps he was afraid of losing her, but his words written while still a young man seem to have carried their bias throughout his life. "Man is generally considered superior to woman in the intellectual powers."⁴⁸ "Woman was made to love, not to think."⁴⁹ Perhaps these words also shed light on his troubled marriages. Frank Sr.'s opinions about women seem to conflict with his Quaker upbringing, yet as late as 1894 he still subscribed to Quaker tenets. Criticizing Protestant orthodoxy, he wrote, "It is a great society of ordinary people. I do not feel at home there anymore. Quaker inheritance & associations and free and fair thinking and discussion unfit one to submit to the definition of faith of the orthodox churches. 'For the love of God is wider than the measure of man's mind. All religious Beliefs are more or less Evolutional, and all Personal religion is also.'"⁵⁰ Frank Sr. and Helen often wrote to each other about the Protestant church services they attended and the ministers who preached; Frank Sr. vacillated between the Society of Friends and other Protestant denominations, and it is difficult to pin down his beliefs and their influence on his motives. Nevertheless, it is clear that liberal influences

deriving from Helen's Quaker heritage, influences that might have encouraged an independent lifestyle, were lost when her mother and Aunt Fanny died.

Frank Sr.'s estrangement from his mother and siblings may have distanced Helen even further from the benefits of liberal Quakerism. Harriet Plummer was a strong-willed Quaker woman; and, while her beliefs are not known, she might have encouraged Helen to self-reliance.

Helen did seek Quaker advice from Elizabeth Hicks Plummer. Perhaps this was a sad mistake. Defeated by mental illness and too cautious in her approach to life, Elizabeth was finally called "from works to rewards" in 1892.⁵¹ As a model for independence, Elizabeth was far from inspirational.

Helen's family relationships, especially with the women of her family, dwindled. Compounding the problem, Frank Sr.'s stormy relationships with his two wives deprived Helen of her step-mothers. As evidenced in her letters, Helen was left feeling rejected, lonely, and lost.

One area in which Helen did benefit from her Quaker heritage was its strong and equitable tradition of education. She developed an interest in languages, nature, and books. Through her father's influence, she learned to enjoy music and religious debate. In fact, Helen seemed to embrace and enjoy all that the world had to offer. She regularly went to lectures and studied to advance her education. She considered her religious beliefs carefully and was active in the meetings and churches she attended.

Whether it was a natural gift or an acquired trait, Helen demonstrated a resilient perseverance. Her extensive correspondence reflects a tenacious desire to define and

solve her problems. In their letters, friends and distant relatives sympathized with Helen's "troubles," and they tried to help her with advice and companionship. Helen had many friends. She was not afraid to reach out to them, and perhaps they aided her as role models.

Through fortune and misfortune, Helen Plummer arrived at the turn of the century with the advantages and disadvantages that had been passed on to her by her immediate and extended family: Marylanders, Baltimoreans, and Quakers. Influences from Helen's personal background have been thoroughly explored, but her story is part of the larger landscape. Helen Plummer was a product of her times, and much of her young life also reflects the influences of the Victorian Era. Nineteenth-century society was expanding its cultural awareness into a wider world, a world that was beckoning Helen with choices not readily available to her mother, her grandmothers, and her aunts. Helen's challenge was to free herself from oppressive family influences, confront society's limitations, recognize her opportunities, and discover herself. In any period of history, for women and men alike, this is no small task. Helen Plummer persevered and pushed ever forward throughout her life.

In the summer of 1895, her arms laden with packages, gift baskets, and bouquets from well-wishers, Helen took her first step toward an independent life. All alone she climbed the stairs of a Central Pacific railway car and took her seat amongst a lively society of travelers moving east.

Notes

¹ Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

² This chapter reconstructs Helen Plummer's life from 1870 to 1895. All Plummer family biographical information has been taken from the Helen Plummer Goulding Papers, Research Library and Archives, Pasadena Museum of History, Pasadena, California (hereafter cited as Plummer Goulding Papers). Only direct quotes from the papers will be individually cited.

³ Hassie Lancaster to Francis W. Plummer Sr. (hereafter cited as FWP Sr.), 4 February 1873, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁴ Henry Taylor to Frances Plummer Lancaster, 28 June 1872, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵ FWP Sr. to Harriet Plummer, draft of letter, ca. 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶ Frances Plummer Lancaster to FWP Sr., 26 December 1874, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷ FWP Sr., draft of will dated 23 February 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁸ FWP Sr., Baltimore receipts, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁹ Gertrude L. Poe, ed., *History of Laurel in Prince George's County, Maryland: Souvenir Historical Booklet, Centennial 1870-1970* (Laurel, Md.: News Leader, 1970), 13.

¹⁰ Laurel Historical Society, "Laurel History," <http://www.laurelhistory.org/history.html> (accessed 1 March 2003).

¹¹ James R. Phillips to Francis W. Plummer Jr., 12 November 1882, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹² Helen Plummer Goulding (hereafter cited as HPG) to FWP Sr., 31 August 1888, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹³ HPG to FWP Sr., 12 August 1888, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁴ FWP Sr. to Flora Plummer, draft of letter, 6 January 1883, Plummer Goulding Papers.

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- ¹⁵ FWP Sr. to Edward Plummer, 24 January 1886, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Jesse Plummer to FWP Sr., 6 January 1886, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ¹⁸ Harriet Plummer to FWP Sr., 28 September 1894, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ¹⁹ FWP Sr. to Jesse Plummer, draft of letter, 8 January 1886, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁰ H. Taylor to FWP Sr., 23 December 1887, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²¹ Elizabeth Hicks Plummer to HPG, 13 December 1889, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²² Annie Pope Newbold to HPG, 11 February 1890, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²³ FWP Sr. to HPG, 22 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁴ Elizabeth Hicks Plummer to HPG, 27 October 1890, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁵ FWP Sr. to HPG, 22 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁶ HPG to FWP Sr., 24 September 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁷ FWP Sr. to HPG, 11 October 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁸ HPG to FWP Sr., 21 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁹ HPG to FWP Sr., 6 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁰ HPG to FWP Sr., 30 October 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³¹ HPG to FWP Sr., 6 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³² HPG to FWP Sr., 3 October 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³³ HPG to FWP Sr., 30 October 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁴ HPG to FWP Sr., 31 October 1891 as part of letter dated 30 October 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁵ HPG to FWP Sr., 14 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.

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- ³⁶ HPG to FWP Sr., 21 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁷ HPG to FWP Sr., 14 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁸ HPG to FWP Sr., 25 October 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁹ HPG to FWP Sr., 28 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴⁰ FWP Sr. to HPG, 28 February 1892, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² HPG to FWP Sr., 28 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴³ HPG to FWP Sr., 1 June 1892, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴⁴ HPG to FWP Sr., 28 June 1892, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴⁵ HPG to FWP Sr., 8 May 1892, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴⁶ Mrs. Hardie to HPG, 16 November 1892, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴⁷ HPG to FWP Sr., 28 April 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴⁸ FWP Sr. to James, 7 February 1859, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴⁹ FWP Sr. to James, 31 January 1859, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁵⁰ FWP Sr. to HPG, 15 January 1894, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁵¹ Taylor to HPG, 22 March 1892, Plummer Goulding Papers.

Chapter 4

A DEFINITE OCCUPATION

Helen Plummer's youth embraced many elements that historians associate with the Victorian middle class. As an unmarried female without a family she could depend on for a home, she lived with friends or in boarding houses. Helen mentioned a few domestic occupations like sewing, mending her clothes, and crafting gifts, but her social activities, always more interesting to include in a letter, were recorded at length for family and friends. She strolled in urban parks, enjoyed picnic outings, and vacationed by the sea. She played croquet and tennis and rode a wheel. She went to lectures, plays, concerts, and operas. She played the piano, read novels, studied to improve herself, and took an active interest in the natural world. She attended Sunday school and participated in church activities and entertainments. But, as we have seen, her proper Victorian life was teetering atop an unstable family, and it would be necessary for Helen Plummer to learn to depend on herself for a home and a steady income. As family and friends moved away from Oakland, married, or found full-time employment, California offered fewer associations that could sustain an idle lifestyle, and Helen drifted back to her roots in Maryland.

This chapter explores Helen Plummer's motives as she wandered home through Colorado, Kentucky, and the Midwest discovering long-lost cousins and visiting old friends. It examines her reactions as she observed and explored and found the places and the people that became her future. Still connected to her past, Helen, like her Quaker ancestors, was looking for a way to satisfy two conflicting needs—quiet retreat from the

world and participation in a changing social and economic culture. In Colorado she found a haven for restoring her mind and body. In Kentucky she renewed her friendship with Annie Pope Newbold, a childhood companion and a Quaker, who one day would encourage her library studies. Of special importance was her visit with the Hibbard family in Indiana. While the record of this visit says nothing about an encounter with Mary Wright Plummer, correspondence from later years indicates that the Hibbard family was probably Helen's connection to this distant maternal cousin and Hicksite Quaker. Mary Wright Plummer, the woman who would change Helen Plummer's life, was the librarian of the Pratt Institute Free Library in Brooklyn, New York, and the developer and director of the institute's library school.

Because Helen chose to attend this early library school, this chapter reviews the early development of library education and its impact on the professionalization and feminization of librarianship. It establishes the founding of the Pratt Institute, its library, and library school. The Pratt Institute School of Library Training is described through one year's attendance as experienced by Helen Plummer's library class from 1896 to 1897.

Helen's Brooklyn experience extended beyond the library school and included the full force of the Pratt Institute's broader agenda. Her years living in Pratt-sponsored housing and working at the institute's branch library are reviewed to illustrate her participation in the social mission of the Pratt Institute and its public library.

Yet, in 1895, Helen Plummer was still a woman without direction, and it was Mary Wright Plummer, cousin, friend, and mentor, who unstintingly guided her toward

librarianship and independent living. Helen's appreciative remark in later years, that Cousin Mary "has already done far more for me than I can ever return,"¹ is a bit of evidence that Mary Wright Plummer helped Helen with more than just her library school studies and library career. Theirs was a personal as well as a professional relationship, and their correspondence continued through the years until the months just before Mary's death in 1916. It is too early in Helen's story to draw a comparison between these two women, yet it can be said that Mary clearly understood one significant aspect of Helen's life. Separated in age by only fourteen years, both women faced the nineteenth-century challenge of the educated, single, and unemployed young female trying to utilize her time. "Reflecting back on opportunities for girls growing up in the 1860s, she [Mary Wright Plummer] described this period as 'a time when all girls in all ranks in life,—not only the rich or the titled girl,—were born into the world to *drift* instead of to sail, or row or steam to some given port.'"² In 1895, Helen Plummer was surely a young woman adrift, but, even though she was unsettled and unaware of her future prospects, she was soon steaming toward her port and a definite occupation.

The Journey Home

In May 1895, as Helen Plummer helped her California friend May Randol prepare for her wedding, she pondered her own future and turned to her father for guidance.

I suppose I had better give up all idea of a seatrip as it will be more expensive & I will need all the money I can scape [*sic*] together until I know what is to become of me. I feel dreadfully unsettled. From what you say I feel as though Mrs. Hardie did not particularly care to have me now.... Could I have a room at Marion's & how about board? I don't

know just what to do or where to go & it is time I did....I wish you would find out for me or tell me just where I had better go, for awhile anyway. I will have to try & find something to do as soon as possible for I have a horror of running into debt & my income at present would not support myself alone. I do so wish you could find some occupation. It seems strange that among all your men acquaintances there is nothing to be had. I am not at all satisfied about farm matters & shall want things straitened [*sic*] out there as soon as possible.³

Within a month Helen was certain that either Mrs. Hardie or Marion would welcome her with room and board, and her main concern became where she should ship and store her box of books, her wheel, and the "trap" she had accumulated in addition to her two trunks. Her intention was to stop in Colorado for two weeks before continuing home.

Helen adrift so craved relatives and family life that she decided to take advantage of her slow and solitary journey eastward and reconnect with her Aunt Fanny's estranged family. She planned her first stop at the Lancaster's Colorado ranch. "Had a letter from Morris this week; he was quite surprised & pleased to think I intended paying him a visit....Says he hopes I can stand roughing it....You know Uncle Israel is on the ranch & has been for several years. Herbert is there also at present. I hope to see my unknown cousin at last."⁴ Helen had never met Fanny and Israel Lancaster's younger son Herbert, but she fondly remembered his brother Morris and their childhood days together.

Life in the country held a childhood appeal for Helen, and the first part of her journey became a Rocky Mountain respite, a restorative preparation before trying to find "something to do." Crossing the desert, slowly chugging toward the Rockies, she settled back in her railway car and enjoyed her solitary train ride through the West. "We have just left S. L. City a little while ago & are steaming along through a wide plain with snow streaked hills on either side. It is pleasant to see some vegetation after yesterdays long

hot ride of all day through Nevada....Monday, July 1—9AM. Here I am safe & sound waiting to take the stage.”⁵ “When last I wrote was just before starting into the mountains. I had a very long ride....It was up, up all the way until we reached Yampa which is about 8,000 ft.”⁶

Colorado scenes fascinated Helen, and she soon immersed herself in the landscape and her busy life on the ranch.

The provisions etc. were put on pack horses & everyone rode a horse...It was a great trip....I never saw such a place for fish in my life—everyone fished and we had fish every meal. I went fishing one morning and with a little dip net in the falls I caught twenty two mountain trout in about an hour ... Next week I think M. will take me to Steamboat Springs about twenty-five miles north of here. They want me to stay two months....Everyone tells me that six months or a year here would cure my cough & make me like a different person. The air is so dry.⁷

The days pass very quickly somehow or other....The air here is certainly fine....I have felt very good and have not had that difficulty in breathing I used to have; but I cannot run or climb without getting short of breath, not being quite used to the thin air....I wish I could stay another month while here and see something of the state...Yesterday I rode away up in the woods with Morris to haul fence poles. Had a fine view of the country—this park is certainly a very pretty one.⁸

We had such a pleasant trip. We were a day longer returning as we had such a load and considerable rain which made the road very muddy and three times they had to double with the first wagon and then go back for the second. The night before reaching home we were caught in a dreadful hail and rainstorm when we were only five miles from Gates, that lovely stopping place. We had to turn off the road and just camp there.... You say you do not see what I have to do here, well, I hardly know myself and yet I am always doing something. I look after these bachelor quarters and have wrought a change in them & Mrs. B. & I do what we can in the culinary department....They have been cutting hay for some time past and I have been taking dinner down to the field to save them time. We begin to get it about ten AM, so as to cook it, get it packed and get there by noon or shortly after, for they go to work early and are hungry by noon. It is quite a walk, and over a mesa; I rest down there awhile and get back in the middle of the afternoon pretty tired.⁹

Helen's health and vigor improved. She was engaged in satisfying physical activities, and her words to her father convey her contentment. She extended her train ticket to September 15th. Her two weeks became two months, and all the while her eastern family persisted in its monotonous tug for her attention.

Helen's father worried, and he subtly nagged for her return. "I had begun to be anxious for fear some accident had befallen you, in your rides or rambles. For I cannot avoid imagining that there is more danger in that wilderness, altho doubtless on the average there is not. Kidnapping, Holding up, Assault, Storms & even Earthquakes..."¹⁰ He burdened her sense of filial duty with his constant repetition of difficulties at home. Although their father-daughter relationship seemed to be tender and loving, his subtle demands appear contrived to manipulate Helen's conflict between finding work and pleasing her father. Helen wanted to stay in Yampa where she felt useful and healthy and welcome. When she told her father that she had to leave the ranch, the only reason she gave was that her "ticket would not permit a longer stay." "Morris said he knew that I would wish myself back inside of twenty-four hours and he was just right."¹¹ In spite of the opposing pull from Baltimore, Helen was experimenting with self-determination and nurturing a budding self-reliance. "Have met with such hospitable people all along my way, and have lost much of my timidity about traveling alone."¹² She was depending on herself, choosing her route, and thoughtfully establishing some important relationships.

Helen's California, Colorado, Kentucky, and Indiana people formed an intricate network of relatives, friends, and acquaintances—many of them Quakers. Some had known Helen's mother, and they were anxious for Helen to visit the Hibbard family in

Indiana. In spite of her father's urging to return quickly to Baltimore to nurse Mrs. Hardie who had become ill with "typhoid symptoms," Helen was determined to see Dr. Hibbard, "a man of considerable knowledge." "I want to see if he cannot tell me some way to get rid of the trouble I have without living in another climate....Those two months in Colorado did a great deal for me."¹³ She asserted her needs and reminded her father that "I have got to find some occupation soon."¹⁴ She even considered living in Louisville, Kentucky, where she might "get some influence ... among all Annie's male relatives & would have a pleasant home."¹⁵ But Helen's opportunity was waiting in Indiana where "Cousin Lizzie [Hibbard] has certainly been most kind to me and has taken some trouble to have me meet all the friends who knew mother's family at all. Yesterday I talked with a lady who knew Grandfather before he was married & much admired him....There is one lady ... she told cousin L. she visited mother after I was born."¹⁶ As noted before, it remains a mystery just how the event occurred, but on her journey home, Helen also became acquainted with Mary Wright Plummer and the Pratt Institute School of Library Training.

Early Librarian Education

In the late nineteenth century, American library schools were laboring through their formative years, endeavoring to create curricula of effective, recognized study. The emerging philosophies of these schools not only reflect the history of their development, but also point the way to their future. Librarian education was developing; it was being

studied, discussed, argued, and defined. Librarians were posing relevant questions.

What was the purpose of library education? What courses should library schools teach?

What was the basis of course development? What, if any, was the prerequisite education for admission to the various library schools? As library schools answered these questions, their curricula developed both individually and collectively. For each, their response reflected an American culture that was formulating the concept of the professional, while it was also allowing women a more active role in public life.

Librarianship and library school education were profoundly influenced by these two sometimes conflicting developments. The trend to define professionalism in terms of college degrees, employment status, and monetary compensation was often countervailed by the fact that, while women were gaining more social freedom, they did not have educational, political, or economic equity with men. The mission to professionalize librarianship became especially complicated by the direction some library leaders took, Melvil Dewey* in particular, that effectively feminized the profession. Gender bias had generated some interesting questions. Were women especially suited to public librarianship because of the social mission ascribed to the public library? Were men more capable as administrators and scholars because of their social status and college degrees? Should the library school have a scholarly base in the male-dominated

* Melvil Dewey (1851-1931) was the founder of the first American library school in 1887 at Columbia College. In 1876 he published his Dewey Decimal classification system and helped found the American Library Association and *American Library Journal*. In 1885 he founded the New York Library Club. In 1888 he was appointed New York State Librarian at which time he moved his School of Library Economy from Columbia to Albany. He founded the Lake Placid Club, a laissez-faire resort in the New York Adirondacks, where his liberal approach to women and his restrictive approach to certain ethnic groups forced his resignation as State Librarian in 1905.

university or within the increasingly feminized libraries and technical library training programs?

At the time Helen Plummer attended library school, her choices of educational institutions were few. In existence at the time were the New York State Library School at Albany (which originally opened at Columbia College in 1887), the Pratt Institute School of Library Training (1890), the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia (1892), and the Armour Intitute in Chicago (1893). Among other library programs in the country were the Amherst Summer School (1891) and the Los Angeles Public Library Training Class (1891).¹⁷

These first library schools had an effect on the professionalization and feminization of librarianship partly because of their curricular emphasis and admission standards. After the first school was founded by Melvil Dewey at Columbia College, subsequent schools were associated, not with colleges and universities, but with government-sponsored training programs and private technical institutes. Instead of conferring degrees, these new schools granted diplomas or certificates. Practical work was stressed and scholarly work de-emphasized; curricula became less academic and more clerical and managerial. Educational entrance requirements were adjusted. Women were freely admitted. While this system gave women a better chance to enter the technical library schools, the profession itself would operate on two tiers, defined and divided by gender and education. Men, educated in universities and apprenticed to library administrators, would hold higher positions and enjoy higher pay at every level, and this gender bias, experienced by women in the early library movement, would continue. Nevertheless,

librarianship was a unique opportunity and a field that attracted women; it became rapidly and permanently feminized, bringing its professional status under scrutiny.

Central to the discussion of the professionalization and feminization of librarianship is Helen's cousin Mary Wright Plummer,* a pioneer leader of the late nineteenth-century American library movement. Plummer started her career in librarianship when she answered an advertisement for Melvil Dewey's School of Library Economy at Columbia College. As the name of the school suggests, the program emphasized library processes as opposed to theory, a direction that would frustrate the professionalization of the field. Also, Dewey actively recruited female students. Mary Wright Plummer was one of seventeen women and three men who attended this first class of the first library school. She graduated in 1888, and her subsequent work in the field influenced the very heart of the development of the public library and public librarian education. Plummer's intelligence, fortitude, and social ideals helped to shape the profession with insight, innovation, and foundational standards. Her positive energy and personal conduct endeared her to students and colleagues. She was an inspirational teacher and leader, and her activism found expression in the woman's movement as well as the library movement. Her philosophy promoted librarianship not only as a profession, but also as

* Mary Wright Plummer (1856-1916) grew up in Richmond, Indiana and was educated in Quaker schools before attending Wellesley College from 1881 to 1882. She was a member of Melvil Dewey's first library school class at Columbia College in 1887. An internationally renowned librarian, she was fluent in several languages and widely traveled. The biography of her library career is extensive and illustrates her professional influence. She was president of the New York Library Club (1896-1897, 1913-1914), the Long Island Library Club, and the New York State Library Association (1906-1907). She was the director of the Pratt Institute Library (1895-1911) and founded and directed two library schools, the Pratt Institute School of Library Training and the library school of the New York Public Library. She was the second woman president of the American Library Association (1916). She was extensively published in the professional literature and was an accomplished poet. Her children's books illustrate her interest in children's literature. She established the first dedicated children's room at the Pratt Library and helped develop the concept of specialized education for children's librarianship.

an opportunity for women to achieve social and economic independence. Her career spanned thirty years and included the development of two library schools, the library school at the New York Public Library, and earlier, the library school at the Pratt Institute.

The Pratt Institute itself, before the establishment of its library training program, had developed from a liberal foundation of addressing social needs. The school admitted all people regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or educational credentials, and worked to meet the industrial sector's growing need for technical, scientific, and liberal arts education. After the institute's public library was established, the Pratt Institute School of Library Training was born out of the library's need for a trained staff. This was a practical consideration. As a consequence, the Pratt school initially emphasized classroom training in its own library methods and practical experience in its own library work. Later, under the direction of Mary Wright Plummer, the library school evolved to include liberal studies and extensive exposure to the prominent libraries and the leading librarians of the day. Helen Plummer, under the generous counsel of Mary Wright Plummer, would attend the Pratt Institute School of Library Training in 1896.

The Pratt Institute and Its Free Library

The Pratt Institute was founded by Charles Pratt, prosperous owner of Astral Oil and Brooklyn philanthropist. Pratt's limited educational opportunities in his youth made him keenly aware of the advantages conferred by a formal education. Later, as a successful businessman, he saw the usefulness of developing a program of practical education for

industrial workers and so founded his school. As a philanthropist he envisioned his school based on wide ranging accessibility and decided to open admissions to all persons regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or educational background. Pratt's approach was flexible, and he allowed the programs and curricula to develop in response to needs. The school started quite small, opening in 1887 with a drawing class of only twelve students. Within a decade the institute had expanded to include a high school along with departments of fine arts, domestic arts, domestic science, science and technology, museums, kindergartens, and libraries. When Charles Pratt died just four years after the school opened, the administration of the institute passed on to two of his sons, Frederic B. and Charles M., and his remaining four sons were appointed trustees. The philosophy of education that evolved out of Charles Pratt's vision is well expressed in the *Pratt Institute Catalogue, 1896-97*. "Pratt Institute was established after many years of investigation on the part of its founder, Mr. Charles Pratt, of Brooklyn. Its object is to promote manual and industrial education, as well as cultivation in literature, science, and art; to inculcate habits of industry and thrift; and to foster all that makes for right living and good citizenship."¹⁸ It was within this liberal educational environment that the Pratt Institute Free Library and the Pratt Institute School of Library Training developed.

As soon as the Pratt Institute opened in 1887, it was immediately clear that the school and its students needed a library. Responding to needs as they arose, the library's establishment and development became "an instance of evolution, rather than the outcome of a carefully considered plan brought to perfection at once."¹⁹ The reading room opened on 4 January 1888 offering a selection of 150 periodicals and a "railed off"

section for reference materials. Initially Brooklyn residency and an admission or reader's ticket were required. An age limit of fourteen years was also imposed, but each of these practices was eventually discontinued. The circulating department opened in February 1888, and as the collection grew and circulation increased, the librarians worked to serve not only the students of the Pratt Institute, but also the people of Brooklyn. The Pratt Institute Free Library developed a close association with the Brooklyn community and opened a branch facility on 4 March 1890 in the basement of the Astral Apartments, located just three miles away from the campus, in the Greenpoint area of northern Brooklyn. By 1896 Mary Wright Plummer was able to record a brief but informative history of the library's growth and expansion into the community.

The history of the administration of the Library has been one of growth and increasing liberality,—the authorities sometimes anticipating or trying to create a desirable demand, and sometimes waiting for an actual need to make itself known, adapting their policy to circumstances in each case.

The latest developments of the work, such as would properly come into the record of the past year, are the purchase and reorganization as a branch, of the Long Island Free Library at 571 Atlantic Avenue, a collection of some 6000-7000 volumes; the work with the philanthropic clubs and with the public schools; the addition of Mondays to the list of evenings for circulation; and the formation and growth of the Home Libraries under the care of the Library Chapter of the Pratt Institute Neighborhood Association. The circulation of books at the Long Island Branch has come very nearly equalling [*sic*] that of the Astral Branch, and is more than double what it was before it became a branch of our Library. Like all our libraries hitherto, it suffers from too small quarters, and could do much more and better work if it were not hampered in this way.²⁰

Mary Wright Plummer's intimate knowledge of the institute's and the library's history and evolution was due to the fact that she served as librarian from 1890 to 1904 and as director of the library school from 1895 to 1911.

The main library and later the library school were originally quartered in the Pratt Institute Main Building. On 1 January 1888 the *New York Daily Tribune* announced, "Charles Pratt's Gift, A New Year's Present to Brooklyn, A Free Reading Room and Circulating Library to be Opened this Week." The article placed the library and reading room on an entire floor of the Ryerson Street building, "the library lying to the right and the reading-room to the left of the entrance."²¹ The library quickly outgrew the space. The collection was developing, the needs of the students and the community were evolving, and the librarians of the day were discerning and describing the objectives of the American public library. Mary Wright Plummer wrote, "Regarded in the light of an educational force, the public library has a responsibility second to none. It should encourage a taste for good reading in children, thoroughness of investigation in students of all classes, and discrimination in reading for entertainment on the part of general readers. It should inspire its own working force with the desire to be of service, and should keep out of professional ruts."²² Pratt's evolving public library needed to accommodate its growth so that it could meet its objectives. A separate library building, which still stands on the Pratt Institute's Brooklyn campus, was conceived, designed, and built.

On 26 May 1896 guests at the ceremonial opening of the new library building heard addresses by Charles M. Pratt and Melvil Dewey, then the New York State Librarian. The *Pratt Institute Monthly* reported on the event, analyzing the building's architectural style, describing in detail the floor plan and individual room layouts, and proudly proclaiming that "the entire decoration of the building is by Tiffany Glass and Decorating

Company, and the tints of walls and ceilings in soft yellows, creams, buffs, terra-cottas, and yellow-greens, are a perpetual delight to the eye.”²³ This was the brand new Pratt Institute Free Library where Helen Plummer would, in just four short months, attend library school classes.

Entering the Library Profession

Family correspondence is scant, and letters that Helen received from friends during the fall of 1895 and the winter of 1896 are curiously lacking in references to the events, conversations, and motivations that helped Helen finally decide to attend library school. Perhaps Helen had simply been guarded, not revealing her hopes, protecting herself from disappointment. Or perhaps friends or relatives made no comment because they did not know what it meant to become or to be a librarian. This was after all a new field. Not until May was Helen’s plan revealed, as evidenced by Annie Pope Newbold’s sincere encouragement for Helen and her new, somewhat puzzling endeavor. “I am so glad you are going to take up some definite work, it will be a great comfort to you and keep you from thinking too much of all your troubles and changes. I imagine that a librarian’s work would be rather pleasant too, although of course confining. Am glad you will have some acquaintances there waiting for you so you will not be all alone.”²⁴ Two months later Helen cautiously told her father, “Heard a little news that pleased me, though you need not say anything about it. Cousin Mary told someone I know that my paper & one other were the best papers given in at the library school.”²⁵ When Helen finally learned of her acceptance, she sincerely appreciated her accomplishment. “Oh yes! tell Mrs. H.

or whoever wants to know the reason I was so long knowing about my acceptance is because the class is limited to 20. There were 100 examined, and the best selected. Quite a number of the 80 remaining passed but were not accepted; for those I sympathize very much.”²⁶ Pratt’s formal entrance examination for the library school was a screening device used to limit enrollment to the number of students that could efficiently be accommodated for practical experience in Pratt’s library.²⁷

The Pratt Institute’s library school introduced its competitive entrance examination about 1892.²⁸ It was given both in June and September for the fall class, the June examination being offered to students who lived “at a considerable distance.” Applicants who took the test in their own city or town were responsible for obtaining the consent of the local library director who conducted the sitting. It is not known where Helen arranged to take the June 17th examination. If she had wanted to prepare for the test, guidelines were limited to the vague statement she would read in the *Circular of Information*. It said simply, “These examinations are not technical in character, but are designed to test the general information of the applicant, especially his knowledge of literature, history, and current events.”²⁹ Applicants for the test that Helen took were not provided with sample questions, but Pratt’s 1902-1903 *Circular of Information* did include a comprehensive selection of “specimen” questions. Even though these “specimens” included translations of German and French passages, the newer circular probably reflects the general type of history and literature questions that were asked in the earlier examinations. Two examples are as follows: “Give the history of England in the 15th, the 16th, or the 17th century, mentioning the reigns and the important events that

occurred during the period. Describe the social order. Show what were the dominant political and religious ideas of the time. What foreign countries exercised the greatest influence upon England during the period described?" "Mention twenty-five authors whom you would choose first if you were asked to select a library of the world's best literature."³⁰ Helen's broad educational pursuits and her family's tradition of education, books, reading, and libraries prepared her with the writing skills and knowledge required to compete in such a comprehensive examination. Her success and her admission to Pratt Institute illustrate how a woman at the turn of the twentieth-century, educated in private and public schools, might take advantage of the growing prospects for women in the developing and increasingly feminized library profession. Pratt Institute and its library training school supported those opportunities.

The Pratt Institute School of Library Training

Margaret Healy, Pratt's library director until 1895, organized Pratt's first cataloguing class in June 1890. The library at the time was in need of skilled library workers, so Healy instituted a class that would fulfill an initial policy of training assistants exclusively in Pratt's library methods.³¹ It is, however, Mary Wright Plummer's subsequent work that credits Plummer with the development of the country's second full-time library school, the Pratt Institute School of Library Training. Mary Wright Plummer was a member of the first class of the School of Library Economy at Columbia College where she graduated in 1888. She came to the Pratt Institute Library after working as a cataloger at the St. Louis Public Library, and in 1890 she assumed the positions of

assistant librarian and head of the new library training class. The training program that Mary Wright Plummer developed would give her young cousin Helen Plummer the opportunity to finally achieve economic independence.

Helen Plummer's library courses of study commenced on 28 September 1896. Tuition was fifteen dollars per term. The cost of materials for the entire course was estimated between twenty and twenty-five dollars.³² On 30 September 1896 Helen wrote, "Work began today in earnest; we had an hour in Bibliography, two in cataloguing & one in German and a great part of the time had to take notes which I do not like at all....After lunch I spent until 4:30 hunting references & preparing work. Yesterday we had library handwriting & English composition all morning—from 3 to 5 PM typewriting, and I was quite glad to get home....The Library publishes a monthly & I shall try to send one or two home so some of my friends can get an idea of library work especially those who see 'nothing to study' about it. If they could but see our first two books—the letters, figures, signs etc. are as so much Greek as yet."³³ To complete the program Helen would need to concentrate on her studies for the three terms of the "First-year Course."

Helen's courses were designed to prepare her for work in a public library. Advanced courses, that prepared students for work in "any library," were reserved for those students who qualified for the "Second-year Course." Initially, Pratt Institute distinguished its library school from the Library School at Albany, explaining in an early information circular that Pratt's purpose was "to prepare young men and women for the charge of small libraries, or to fit them for competent assistants in large ones."³⁴ The 1896 circular, however, drew no such comparison with the Albany school. It touted the public library

as an educational force and charged Pratt graduates with the responsibility of increasing the value of the public library in the community.³⁵ The 1896-97 First-year Courses of Study were outlined in the circular under the headings of Cataloguing, Literature, and Library Economy. A separate Cataloguing Course which included cataloguing with several lessons in accession-work, shelf-listing, classification, typewriting, and German could be taken for certification in that one part of the curriculum. The Literature Course assigned reading lists of books that were available in the reference department, and this course was "arranged as to give a concise yet clear, helpful, and attractive outline of the literatures discussed." The two-term course in Library Economy included the following list of classes as it appeared in the 1896 circular:

Library Handwriting.	Binding and Rebinding.
Registration of Borrowers.	Statistics; and Care of Supplies.
Order-department Work.	Accounts.
Accession Work.	Typewriting.
Classification.	Reference Work.
Finding-list Rules.	Bibliography.
Alphabeting.	English composition; with special
Shelf-listing.	attention to business correspon-
Mechanical Preparation of	dence, preparation of MSS. for
Books for the Shelves.	the press, and proofreading.
Stock-taking.	English and American Literature.
Practical Charging-system	Current Topics.
Work.	German.

During the third term, students were given practical experience in the Pratt Library. Field trips were also planned, and these included visits to "libraries, publishing-houses, binderies, second-hand book-shops, and other places of interest to library-workers."³⁶ Helen's classes were thorough, demanding, and time consuming. Perhaps that is why,

after her initial letter home, there is no correspondence in the Plummer Goulding Papers from her first two terms at the library school.

If Helen ever had the chance to write and mail home issues of the *Pratt Institute Monthly*, her friends in Baltimore would have been able to “get an idea of library work especially those who see ‘nothing to study’ about it.”³⁷ The November issue included the full text of Mary Wright Plummer’s address to the incoming class. She began, “There are probably only a few of you here who have a clear idea of what sort of work you are entering upon. Library-work as seen from the outside seems to mean handing books over a counter from some mysterious source of supply, or finding information by some clue not visible to those who come seeking it, or regulating the temperature and window-blinds of reading-rooms.” The new students heard that library work included an unimaginable amount of clerical work—“the coiled end of the red tape”—but Plummer soon revealed the “many sides to library-science.” She spoke of economics—meaning methods—and explained that library administration included such duties as funding, and instituting regulations for the staff and the public. She conveyed to her audience of attentive young women and men (there were three men in Helen’s class) the librarian’s societal responsibilities to education, school support, and the public’s taste in reading. She connected the growing number of women in librarianship with the profession’s increased emphasis on the social impact of libraries and “the enlargement and appreciation of ... opportunities for assisting in the elevation of the people.” While certain courses were reserved for the second-year students (there were three women in this group), she spoke at length of the importance of learning about books and developing

book collections for scholarly work. For first-year students, she encouraged local opportunities for enrichment that included the meetings of the New York Library Club at which Pratt students were welcome. She recommended they read the professional literature available in the reading room—*The Library Journal*, *Public Libraries Monthly*, *Library Notes*, and *The Library*, an English periodical. As a concrete conclusion to her address, Plummer warned the students about their third term of practical experience in the Pratt Library. They were to remember that the library existed for the public as well as the students. They were to be thoughtful in their appeals to the staff. They were to be careful not to be in the way “when there is a rush,” and they needed to be aware that their behavior when interacting with the public reflected on the staff. “Remembering this, you will probably be *more* careful to be prompt, courteous, and attentive than if your *own* reputation were at stake.”³⁸

Nothing is known specifically about Helen during her year in library school. It is known that Helen completed the prescribed course of studies and graduated. Her name is on the roster of the 1897 graduating class, and she sits, her eyes cast demurely to the side, in the exact center of her class photograph.

Besides classroom studies and work in the library, the students of the class of 1897 participated in several activities that were reported in the *Pratt Institute Monthly*. On 14 January 1897, the Brooklyn Library Association hosted a full day of joint meetings with the New York Library Club and the New York Library Association. Pratt library students were welcome to attend.³⁹ The 10 a.m. morning session included the keynote address, “Reading” by Mr. Richard Jones, State Inspector of Literature, who “made a

strong plea ... for the reading of the world's great masterpieces of literature." This was followed by a discussion of "What Librarians Should Read." The afternoon meeting was a question and answer session devoted to the best books of 1896. The State Library had selected 489 of the "leading books of the year," which were discussed by category. Of the discussions on subjects that were matters of "fact," Caroline Hewins* of the Hartford Public Library spoke on children's literature and Charles Ammi Cutter† of the Forbes Library spoke on the fine arts. On subjects of "taste"—travel, literature, and fiction—discussions were led by Mary Wright Plummer and Mary L. Davis‡ of Pratt, Helen Haines§ of the *Library Journal*, and Mary S. Cutler** of the Albany Library School. Afterwards, an evening meeting was held at the Academy of Music to "advance the interests of the Brooklyn Public Library" which "took the form of a citizens' reception to

* Caroline M. Hewins (1846-1926) was the first librarian of the Hartford Public Library from 1875-1926 and a founder of the Connecticut Library Association. Known for her advocacy in children's literature and children's library services, she helped found the Children's Section of the American Library Association. Well published in the field, she wrote the first bibliography of children's literature *Books for the Young, a Guide for Parents and Children*. She was the first woman to speak at an ALA conference and was the friend and mentor of Anne Carroll Moore, children's librarian at the Pratt Institute and the New York Public Library. Today, the Hartford Public Library's online catalog is named Caroline in her honor.

† Charles Ammi Cutter (1837-1903) was librarian of the Boston Athenaeum from 1868-1893 and librarian of Forbes Library, Northampton's Public Library in Massachusetts, from 1893 until his death. He developed a classification system that served as a basis for the Library of Congress classification system. His decimal table for organizing author names alphabetically served as a model for the development of the "cutter numbers" now used in various classification systems.

‡ Mary L. Davis, 1892 graduate of the New York State Library School, was the head of Pratt's cataloguing department.

§ Helen Haines (1872-1961), educated privately by her mother and tutors, was assisted by Mary Wright Plummer to secure a position with R. R. Bowker in 1892. By 1896 Haines was the managing editor of *Library Journal*. She left librarianship temporarily because of ill health, but renewed her library activities while living in Pasadena, California. Writing, teaching, and speaking, she promoted the literary aspects of librarianship and advocated for intellectual freedom. She died in Altadena, California in 1961. Since Helen Plummer Goulding lived periodically in Altadena and Pasadena between 1920 and 1959, it is enticing to speculate whether they initiated or maintained any contact.

** Mary S. Cutler (1855-1921), a graduate of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, was hired by Melvil Dewey as a cataloger at Columbia College and later as a cataloging instructor in his new library school. After the school was moved to Albany, Cutler served until 1905 as vice-director of the school, which was reorganized as the New York State Library School. From 1889-1905 she also served as librarian of the New York State Library School for the Blind.

Mr. Andrew Carnegie.” Speakers included Frederic B. Pratt,^{*} Melvil Dewey, and Andrew Carnegie.[†] “The dominant thought of the meeting was the importance of good reading, and hence of libraries, to the welfare of the community.”⁴⁰ Perhaps Helen attended all or part of this conference.

Most certainly Helen participated in a reference project that was assigned to the first year library class—a compilation of a “List of Works on American History.” This assignment was made when a “new library,” which is not named, asked for “a recommendation of two hundred dollars’ worth of American history.” By taking the size of the library and its limited funding into account, the students omitted strictly juvenile works as well as very expensive books. Their completed list consisted of eight categories including general works, several historic periods, the Constitution, local histories, and supplemental “very desirable works.” There were eighty-two titles, mainly from the mid to late nineteenth-century, that were written by about sixty authors.⁴¹ Lectures by librarians from other institutions were a standard part of the curriculum, and speakers for the year that Helen attended, included Willis K. Stetson,[‡] librarian of the New Haven Free Public Library, Caroline M. Hewins, librarian of the Hartford Public Library, and Silas H. Berry,[§] librarian of the Brooklyn Y.M.C.A.⁴²

^{*} One of the sons of Pratt Institute founder Charles Pratt, Frederic B. Pratt was Secretary and Treasurer of the Pratt Board of Trustees and Faculty Chairman. He was an institute administrator until his retirement in 1937.

[†] Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) steel industrialist and philanthropist provided the funds to construct thousands of public library buildings in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.

[‡] Willis K. Stetson was New Haven’s first City Librarian from the opening of the public library in 1881 until 1929. This library had one of the first children’s rooms. New Haven Free Public Library, “Library History and Architecture,” <http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/library/libhist.htm> (accessed 16 June 2003).

[§] Silas H. Berry graduated from the Pratt Institute School of Library Training in 1891. *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (February 1897): 186.

The promise of field trips during the third term was amply fulfilled. The library school announced its plans for the annual student trip, and in March and April 1897 this traditional event was led by Mary Wright Plummer. Their impressively full itinerary consisted of six days touring a diverse selection of libraries in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. Welcomed by sunshine and enthusiastic Washingtonians, the class began their tour on the evening of March 29th at the Free Circulating Library, "a small new library doing a great deal of good work." The newly constructed Congressional Library was next on the agenda, with the reporting student delighting in the discovery of "every appliance that could bring joy to the librarian's heart." Ainsworth Rand Spofford* personally guided the class through the old Congressional Library, and during the evening, the librarian of the Naval Observatory "not only exhibited what is probably one of the best astronomical libraries in the world, but also procured for us the privilege of a view through the 26-inch telescope, the third largest in the country." The list of the other libraries they visited is impressively long: the libraries of the Agriculture Department, the Smithsonian Institution, the Surgeon-General's office, the Superintendent of Documents, the War, Navy and State Departments, and the Riggs Memorial Library of Georgetown University. In Baltimore they visited Johns Hopkins University, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and the Peabody Institute. Incredibly they had time for a reception given by the Washington Library Association and a day of "rest and refreshment" at Mt. Vernon. The student wrote about the end of their trip, "We reached New York that afternoon feeling

* Ainsworth Rand Spofford (1825-1908) was appointed Librarian of Congress by Abraham Lincoln on the last day of 1864. Spofford stepped down and was replaced by John Russell Young in June 1897. Young then appointed Spofford as Chief Assistant Librarian of Congress, a position he held until his death.

that, with all the sights seen and trips taken in our spare moments added to the pre-arranged programme, we had crowded a great deal of pleasure into one short week.”⁴³ Indeed! Touring continued throughout the remainder of the term. In May they visited the Library of Columbia University, the New York Mercantile Library, Charles Scribner’s Sons, the Library of the Bar Association, and the New York Free Circulating Library. In June they visited the Lenox Library, the Newark Public Library, and the Jersey City Free Library.⁴⁴ Their completed library school year had been filled with coursework, lectures, and tours.

Commencement exercises took place on Friday, 18 June 1897, and the new librarians were ready to take their skills, their education, and their enthusiasm to their various venues of employment.⁴⁵

For a while, just before graduation, Helen’s future seemed uncertain. Family problems still pursued her, but her Pratt education was giving her the tools and the opportunity for independence, and she would not falter. It might be construed from a letter that Helen wrote to her father on 12 April 1897 that correspondence about family finances and Frank Jr.’s troubles had continued throughout the school year. Helen was concerned about paying the taxes on the farm. “You speak of me selling some bank stock or such to pay the tax bill. You know all that I have invested is in ground rents which bring me just \$196 a year. If I get through here all right that is what I have to go on until I get to work which may not be right away.” Before “sinking” the last of her money into a failing enterprise just to avoid “the disgrace of seeing the place go,” Helen decided that she would rather face “the evil day” and sell the farm. “I don’t suppose my

family will agree with me but I can only do what seems to me best.”⁴⁶ Fortunately, Helen would find steady work at the Pratt Library, and her home for the next two years would be in Brooklyn, New York.

Living in Brooklyn

When Helen first arrived in Brooklyn in September 1896, she stayed for about a week with Mary Wright Plummer and Josephine Rathbone* at 80 St. James Place, very close to the Pratt campus. One evening, while Miss Rathbone was out and Cousin Mary was in another room taking her Italian lesson, Helen wrote to her father. “I sit here writing in this little alcove off the parlor; it is my bedroom at present. These are beautiful flats, brownstone front, built like a big double house, very nicely planned but I don’t like the stair climbing. She has a charming home, everything quite au fait, is herself very attractive. This is in the stylish part of town. The dining room at the back looks over beautiful yards & into the next street. It is quite a contrast to Greenpoint where I shall hereafter abide.”⁴⁷ One gets the impression that this occasion may have been Helen’s first face-to-face meeting with her cousin Mary. By the following Saturday, Helen would move into a flat with two other women. “The ... flat I shall share will be in the 6th story, the front windows overlook the East River, the ferry to 23rd St. N.Y. is quite near so I

* Josephine Rathbone (1864-1941), who received her Bachelor of Library Science degree from the New York State Library School in 1893, became an assistant cataloger at the Pratt library that same year. As library assistant and library school instructor, she eventually became the school’s vice-director under Mary Wright Plummer. When Plummer resigned in 1911, Rathbone’s expectations were high for her appointment to the directorship of the school. She was passed over in favor of Pratt graduate and Applied Science Librarian, Edward Stevens, but was in practice the virtual library school director until her retirement in 1938.

shall be more convenient to the shopping region than we are here.”⁴⁸ Helen’s flat in the Greenpoint neighborhood of Brooklyn was most likely in the Astral Apartments on Franklin Street between India and Java Streets.

The Astral Apartments conceived of and built by Charles Pratt between 1885 and 1886 were originally designed to offer affordable housing for Astral Oil’s refinery workers and their families. The development had been inspired by the Peabody Flats, a London project that tried to address the increasing economic and social deprivations of England’s growing population of industrial workers. The Astral, a large six-story structure of brownstone, brick, and terra cotta, provided 116 flats of two, three or four rooms with bedrooms, sitting rooms, kitchens, sculleries, and basement bathing facilities. All the rooms had at least one window, and an open courtyard provided a large area for children to play and women to hang the family laundry. A large lecture room with the free use of books and newspapers was located in the basement, and cooperative stores were located at the corners of the building.⁴⁹ According to an article attributed to the *Brooklyn Eagle*, “The general conclusion formed from a careful examination of the building, its location and accessibility, its lighting, ventilating, plumbing and sanitary arrangements, together with a study of the plans, which show a multitude of thoughtful details, is that the Astral Apartments is the most perfect type of an apartment-house in the world.”⁵⁰

At about the same time that Charles Pratt was planning the Astral Apartments in the United States, the Universities’ Settlement Association was being formed in England. With the opening of Toynbee Hall in London in 1884, university students began to “settle” in houses in poor communities with the intention of living with, working with,

and educating the working poor. This event was the birth of the settlement movement in England, and it inspired the development of such settlements in the United States. Starting in New York City in 1886 with Stanton Coit's Neighborhood Guild, at least sixty-three settlement houses were established in the United States during the next decade.⁵¹ The Astral Apartments would house one of these settlements.

During the time that Helen lived in Brooklyn, an effective residential, educational, and social alliance was formed amongst the working class citizens of Greenpoint, the Pratt Institute, the Astral Apartments, and Greenpoint's Neighborhood Association. What came to be called the Greenpoint Settlement was established in 1895 as the Neighborhood Association under the leadership of Mary White Ovington,* former Harvard Annex (later Radcliffe College) student, Pratt registrar, and social reformer.⁵² The settlement, situated in the Astral Apartment building, offered classes, clubs, home libraries, and an art students' movement.⁵³ In June 1896, Mary White Ovington wrote an article for the *Pratt Institute Monthly* asking students to make their home at the Astral Apartments. The Pratt Institute trustees had offered to fully furnish the "quietist" apartments along Java St., which had "a southern exposure ... bright and pleasant." These student quarters offered room and board not to "exceed five dollars for all expenses" plus the opportunity to "gain practical experience in settlement work."⁵⁴ In later years one of Helen's colleagues remembered "how hard it was to h[ave] to climb up & down all those flights of stairs—cold cement ones at that & to have to endure the odors of those hall ways. Will you ever

*Mary White Ovington (1865-1951) was the head worker of the Greenpoint Settlement from 1896-1903. In 1903 she took a position at Greenwich House another New York settlement. Her studies of segregation and discrimination of African Americans led her to help organize the "Conference on the Status of the Negro in the United States." This 1909 conference established a committee that evolved into the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

forget them? The one redeeming feature—yes might say two—are the reduced rent & the view.”⁵⁵ Since the flats were just three miles from the Pratt Institute, economical and secure, the settlement offered Helen practical living accommodations. Brooklyn city directories fail to list Helen Plummer, but from her descriptions of her flat, references to her roommate Eliza Witham, and several references to Miss Ovington, it is reasonable to place Helen in residence from September 1896 until May 1899 at the settlement* in the Astral Apartments.⁵⁶

Working in Brooklyn

After Helen received her library school certificate in 1897, she secured a summer substitute position at the Pratt Institute Free Library.⁵⁷ When her summer job ended, her plans were again uncertain. “If I get regular work and pay some debts I owe[,] I can go on with a clear conscience and be independent.” She hoped to know about her “prospects” in two weeks.⁵⁸ Helen did remain at Pratt, but her position and title are not revealed until her name appears in the *Pratt Institute Catalogue, 1898-99*. Under the Department of Libraries, Helen L. Plummer and Eliza Witham are listed as the two Astral Branch assistants under Grace Hanford.⁵⁹

The Astral Branch of the Pratt Institute Free Library opened in 1890 in the basement of the Astral Apartments, and moved in 1893 to the building’s ground floor at the corner

* The settlement may have relocated at a later time. The suggestion to “move the work and the Settlement to some convenient house near the Astral” was made in the *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (May 1897): 302. One historian places the Greenpoint Settlement on 23rd Street in New York City, but a date for this location is not given. Domenica M. Barbuto, *American Settlement Houses and Progressive Social Reform: An Encyclopedia of the American Settlement Movement* (Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx Press, 1999), s.v. Ovington, Mary White.

of Franklin and Java Streets. Its position in the Greenpoint community was unique; it was distinct from, yet cooperative with, the Pratt Institute Neighborhood Association—the settlement. The library served as a “convenient meeting-ground for those interested in the Settlement” and provided the community with information about settlement classes and clubs. The library instituted a “Flower Mission” whereby a child could request a bouquet for a sick parent. This practice often alerted the librarians, who notified the settlement workers, to unidentified medical needs. Settlement workers in their turn referred their public to the Astral Branch librarians for particular reading needs. The settlement also provided and maintained its own home libraries, a project that was separate from the branch library. Helen’s library training class was introduced to these libraries by the settlement’s Library Chapter.* At the time there were eight home libraries with twenty books each. “Visitors”† took the libraries out into the community, and the books were so popular many of them were “sadly in need of rebinding.”⁶⁰ Perhaps in their spirit of cooperation the branch library helped the settlement manage and repair these books. Eliza Witham, Helen’s co-worker at the Astral Branch, wrote, “Indeed, a spirit of cooperation, together with a lively sense of the fact that we are all striving toward a common end, have conduced to a oneness of feeling which could hardly

* This was the first in a series of meetings that the library class would have with the various chapters of the settlement. Settlement chapters represented the various Pratt Institute departments which included libraries, fine arts, domestic arts, domestic science, science and technology, and kindergartens. *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (February 1897): 198; *Pratt Institute Catalog, 1897-1898*, 19.

† The settlement workers referred to as “Visitors” are not defined and it is not known if they were Pratt librarians. In 1896, the home libraries were described as consisting of “twenty well-selected juvenile books, including some bound magazines.” The visitor exchanged the books each week, read the books to the children “who have the use of the books,” told them stories, and played games with them. Mary Wright Plummer, “The Evolution of the Pratt Institute Free Library, January, 1888-June, 1896,” *Pratt Institute Monthly* 4 (June 1896): 290.

be intensified if the two enterprises were one.”⁶¹ The Astral Branch was a small library, but it was a vital part of the Greenpoint community.

The Astral Branch collection included over 4000 volumes, 32 periodicals, and “numerous works of reference,” all supplemented by daily deliveries from the main library.⁶² This branch was heavily utilized by the community, but during the 1897-1898 year it suffered a decline in use. Registration increased by only 620, adding minimally to the prior 4,685 registrants, and circulation was down from 36,679 to 32,866. The Pratt Institute Library’s annual report for the year ending 30 June 1898 had noted a general “falling-off” due, it was believed, to good winter weather and decreased unemployment. The falling-off at the Astral Branch, however, was not ascribed to these causes. The librarian speculated that the Astral’s statistical decreases may have been due to room repairs that made “it very uncomfortable and inconvenient for a time for both readers and borrowers,” or perhaps, she thought, the visits to the reading room might be down and totaling only 30,976 because of “greater care exercised to exclude a gang of youths who have come to the room expressly to create a disturbance.” Other possible explanations were the decrease in the Greenpoint population and the library’s need for new reading material. “Whatever the cause may be, it does not lie in any failure on the part of the assistants, who are deeply interested in the Library and ambitious for its success. The circulation from the Main Library to the Branch has been 3,481 volumes, more than ever before.”⁶³ One wonders who toted all those books back and forth over the three miles.

On the positive side, the reference department assisted 10,257 visitors, up from 8,320. Nearly half of the total circulation was to children under fourteen, “doubtless owing to

the fact that early in the fall the juvenile collection of the Main Library was duplicated at the Branch, giving the children large numbers of new books.”* The number of periodical subscriptions increased to thirty-nine, and the assistants “made and kept up to date an index of the current numbers of the *Electrical World*, the *Scientific American* and *Supplement*, and of the *American Machinist*, making the contents of these papers much more available to the numerous artisans who use the library.” The assistants also worked to establish a drawing-class for some of the neighborhood boys who liked to copy designs from the books. Usually the Astral Branch was open every day except Sundays and holidays from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m., but one assistant volunteered her services in the reading room on Sunday afternoons from November to May for adult readers. The assistant is not named.⁶⁴

The following year registration and circulation statistics for the Astral Branch greatly improved. The new lighting and heating repairs added to patron and staff comfort, and a watchman posted at the door from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. kept the “hoodlums” with their “annoyances and insults” out of the library. The children in the neighborhood were quickly learning to use the reference collection with less assistance, and teachers and debating societies were making greater use of the library. Because the Long Island

* The significance of this collection cannot be overemphasized. Anne Carroll Moore, who graduated from the Pratt Institute School of Library Training in 1896, was hired by Mary Wright Plummer to take charge of the library’s new children’s room. This room, dedicated exclusively to library service for children, was the first of its kind. It was here that Moore began her library career which was devoted to the development and promotion of children’s books and services. Besides Mary Wright Plummer, Moore was mentored by Caroline Hewins, children’s library services advocate and director of the Hartford Public Library. Moore introduced the idea of special training for children’s librarianship at the 1898 ALA Conference, where she presented the paper titled “Special Training for Children’s Librarians.” The Pratt library school introduced a course in children’s librarianship, taught by Moore, shortly afterwards in 1899. In 1906 Moore began her 35 years of service as the Superintendent of Work with Children at the New York Public Library.

Branch of the Pratt Library had been forced to close, the Astral assistants catalogued and shelf-listed the nearly 1,400 volumes transferred to their branch.⁶⁵

During this period of Helen's employment, librarian salaries, hours, and vacations were studied by the Pratt Library. There was concern in the American library community about the possibility of an "influx of untrained or semitrained apprentices called out of the void by the demand of large public libraries which a defective public sentiment requires to be conducted on a purely commercial basis as regards assistants." Under such conditions, salaries and salary increases might be threatened. The objective of the study was to encourage librarians to be persistent in their demands for a high standard of payment. The ninety-nine respondents to the survey included nineteen members of the class of 1897. The report was released in the June 1899 *Pratt Institute Monthly*. The study concluded that Pratt graduates earned an average yearly salary of \$686 for a forty-four and one-half hour week, and the average was on the rise. Of the three assistant librarians who answered the questionnaire, their average yearly salary for 1898 was \$700. Graduates enjoyed, on average, a vacation of four weeks and five days, with additional time off for illness and library meetings. Most of these were paid vacations. Some were taken at a reduced salary, some with no salary, and one librarian was required to pay for a substitute.⁶⁶

One of the highlights of Helen Plummer's Pratt Institute years was her summer vacation in 1898. Her savings had been depleted helping her brother, and she despaired of having a vacation "somewhere that I could rest and forget my identity."⁶⁷ Mary Wright Plummer, unable to go home for the summer, generously offered for Helen to go

in her place. Helen was thrilled at the thought of visiting with her cousins Hannah and John Plummer on Lake Michigan as well as her cousin Lizzie in Richmond. But first, along the way, Helen attended the 1898 American Library Association Conference at Lakewood in Chautauqua, New York. Writing a glowing eleven page letter from Glencoe, Illinois, on 11 July 1898, Helen described at length and with great excitement her days at the conference.

The past ten days have been so rushed from one thing to another....To begin, our New York & a few neighboring librarians left New York July 2nd, in a specially reserved day-coach over the Erie Road for Lakewood. The day was hot and dusty, but being free to move around lessened the discomfort somewhat and I became acquainted with nearly every one in the car....We reached Lakewood at 11 p.m., having been 14 hrs. enroute....Miss Koster [Pratt class of 1893] and I had a room together at one of the cottages, within two or three minutes walk of both the hotels, the Waldmere (headquarters of conference) & the Kent....The views around Lake Chautauqua are very beautiful; the ground rises gently from the water and is both farmed and wooded in pleasing variety....We attended meetings most of the day-time and the programme was exceedingly entertaining; the papers being short and very well-written, the discussions interesting. I am more than glad I attended and only hope I may be able to attend coming ones for not only are the meetings very helpful in regard to one's work but it is refreshing to meet so many and such bright people, as there are not a few, both men and women. The only drawback to me was the consciousness of being so ignorant and dull by comparison, but I suppose we can't all be bright and have the "gift of speech" which I especially crave....It was the largest convention ever held, over 400 in attendance....We girls were all simply "daft" over the president, Mr. Herbert Putnam* of the Boston Public L. and I was introduced to him before I left. He is married fortunately. He is simply fascinating as a presiding officer. I do not know who will be the next president. Cousin Mary's name was being mentioned all around but she declined the honor, which would have been a great honor as she would have been the first woman to have held the office. The entertainment committee of the place gave us several very enjoyable treats. Tuesday

* Herbert Putnam (1861-1955) was Librarian of Congress from 1899 to 1939. Previously librarian of the Boston Public Library, Putnam was the first professional librarian to be appointed to the office. He was the Librarian of Congress during the years that Helen Plummer was employed there as a cataloger.

evening we had a boat & band chartered to take us to Celeron on the Lake....Wednesday evening a Mr. Proudfit who has a country home along the Lake, entertained the crowd at a Garden Party....After the party where a number of us had sauntered back to the Waldmere, dancing began and everyone was convulsed by a cake-walk in which Mr. Dewey (of library fame) and Miss Hewins (of the Hartford Public) led. A description would be inadequate to anyone not having seen the individuals. Mr. Dewey is the projector of the library school & is state librarian at Albany, is very nice too. Everyone seemed to have left dignity behind when outside the conference meetings and it was like a concourse of young people....We had a magnificent address one morning by Bishop Vincent of Chautauqua and on Thursday afternoon went there by boat and held an afternoon session.⁶⁸

Helen's letter went on to describe her delightful visits with paternal relatives in Buffalo and maternal relatives in Illinois and Indiana. She seemed at last to have found not only an occupation in which she found fulfillment and security, but a family that she could trust and enjoy.

Family Matters

Helen Plummer's years at the Pratt Institute were constantly disrupted by correspondence dealing with family finances, the sale of the Muirkirk farm, and Frank Jr.'s reckless behavior.* His conduct was an ever-present concern that became especially burdensome when he took up residence in New York City. Late December 1897, Helen answered a knock on her apartment door to find her brother, a surprise arrival from

* Helen was particularly worried about her brother pawning their "Bird Books." Helen Plummer Goulding to Francis W. Plummer Sr., 5 December 1897, Plummer Goulding Papers. These books may have been the first octavo editions of Audubon's *Birds of America* that Richard Plummer of Baltimore subscribed to in 1839/40 (see page 33). Helen's father mentioned her books, "Audubon's Birds," in a letter he wrote to Helen on 3 September 1895. Francis W. Plummer Sr. had also considered selling the books in 1892. He was informed by a friend that " 'Birds of America' ... sold in London England for £435 which is nearly 2100 dollars." [illegible initial] Gordon Hardie to Francis W. Plummer Sr., 18 May 1892, Plummer Goulding Papers.

Baltimore, unemployed, ill, and reunited with Mabel. He asked for money, pleading that Mabel had lost her purse. Helen gave him what she had, but told her father that she was determined not to “give him money to waste, even if I am accused of selfishness.”⁶⁹ Two weeks later Mabel demanded that Helen “look after” her brother, because he was ill and injured and she was leaving for Buffalo. Helen had been looking forward to Christmas that year. Her “friend from Newton” was in town, and she had hoped to spend the few days before Christmas with her. Helen also had an invitation from Cousin Mary to dine with her on Christmas Day.

Frank was a heavy burden that Helen was still not ready to set aside. By the end of the month, Helen had situated Frank with the family of a Dr. Hamilton on nearby Classon Street in Brooklyn. By May, Frank Jr. was again appealing to Helen, this time to settle a dispute with Dr. Hamilton. Frank Jr. told his father, “She went down & saw Hamilton & ~~patched~~ settled it so I could stay the week out....Had another row with Hamilton....Helen has been the entire means of my getting well & getting straightened up & on my feet once more and as I hope for mercy hereafter she shall not regret it. I have been stopping in a lodging hotel (one block from Helen) clean place 25¢ a night and taking my meals with her & running around and trying to get work....If I get the R.R. office job I am going to make the hardest kind of fight [to] be a teetotaler....Helen sends her love. I am in her sitting room & she is sewing in her bedroom adjoining.”⁷⁰ Helen paid for Frank’s nightly lodging and cooked for him until “the first of June ... as Miss Ovington is to make many changes here.”⁷¹ Frank Jr.’s behavior was a strain on Helen, and she objected. “It completely unfits me for the work I am supposed to do.”⁷²

In addition to her family troubles, living and working in the Greenpoint neighborhood had its difficult moments. "The boys outside are incessantly firing torpedoes; they have thrown several lately into the library but fortunately no one was hurt."⁷³ On the whole, however, Helen seemed to enjoy her work at the library, and by the summer of 1898 she was free from the worry of looking after her brother. Frank Jr. joined the 202nd New York Volunteers and was sent to Cuba. And while Frank Sr. continued to trouble her by mail from Baltimore, he finally seemed to be pleasantly occupied and fairly well-settled. Helen could at last concentrate on her library career.

In 1895, Helen Plummer was struggling to emerge from the tight cocoon of Victorian culture and her father's anxious clutch. Middle-class Victorianism had defined her activities as a young woman, and any liberating influence from her Quaker background had been lost. Adherence to conservative cultural guidelines can enfold and ensure a sense of security, but those same strictures can squeeze and inflict a sense of entrapment. Even as California attachments had dwindled, Helen was reluctant to hurry back to Baltimore where her father's oppressive style of protection would hamper her need for independence. By delaying her return home and traveling on her own, Helen was finally able to test a different approach to life. The men on whom she was supposed to depend had not lived up to their promise of economic security. In fact, they seemed to depend on her. The women whom she came to know encouraged her to understand that she was intelligent, educated, and capable of earning her own living. Helen Plummer emerged from her cocoon at a pivotal time in American history when the swirl of cultural change

was reorienting American society toward a progressive twentieth century. Unfortunately, Helen's moments of deliberation and decision were not recorded in her open, articulate voice, but one can still imagine her motives for choosing librarianship.

Helen Plummer must have been delighted to discover an occupation that not only welcomed women and did not demand a college degree, but also indulged her love of the very books she valued for their knowledge and pleasure. She wanted to feel useful; this work had social value. She needed to support herself; this new occupation was striving toward a living wage. She wanted to be occupied; work in public libraries was expanding and full of opportunity. She enjoyed American middle-class culture; this occupation placed her in the society of people who were promoting their middle-class values to the American public. Whether Helen awoke to librarianship from a gradually dawning awareness or from a sudden flash of insight, we know only that she walked with enthusiasm into a profession that was very new, and it suited her.

In 1896, the formal education of librarians in library schools was just less than one decade old. The endeavor was developing alongside the birth of the technical school and the new concept of the professional. It coincided with the emerging ideal that the privileged classes had a social responsibility to the under classes of laborers, immigrants, women, and children. It was intimately tied to the public library movement and its cultural mission. It feminized itself by embracing the social mission, pursuing the technical model of education, and encouraging the public life of women. We, at the turn of the twenty-first century, can look back to the turn of the twentieth century and analyze these trends as separate entities and then theorize about their interrelatedness. Helen

Plummer was simply trying to earn a living and may not have been aware of these converging movements. Like her mother, who lived through the Civil War and the first woman's movement, Helen could not luxuriate in historical perspective when making decisions. She needed to tackle the practical considerations of daily life. Helen was embedded in her time and may or may not have been aware of its particular significance.

Yet, Helen Plummer was aware of and understood the importance of the contributions being made by her teachers, the pioneer leaders of the library movement and library education. Her ALA conference comments about "Mr. Dewey (of library fame)," and her mention of Caroline Hewins and Herbert Putnam allude to this awareness. When Mary Wright Plummer died in 1916, Helen's library school classmate Minnie Dill wrote, "I was so sorry to see in today's paper that Miss Plummer had passed away....She was a wonderful woman and will be missed greatly in the library world particularly....I know you will feel her loss dreadfully as she wrote you such interesting family letters, and you saw so much of her when you lived in Brooklyn—besides the tie of blood which I know means a great deal to you. It would be nice if the Pratt graduates under Miss Plummer's regime would raise a fund to place some memorial for her at Pratt....Strange, isn't it, that the heads of three of the then best known library schools when we were at Pratt are now all dead: Miss Kroeger, Miss Sharp, and Miss Plummer?"^{74*} Helen was an ordinary

* These three librarians, all graduates of Melvil Dewey's library school, were leaders in the American library movement and pioneers in librarian education. Each was a founding director of the first of the technical institute library schools where their programs not only contributed to the development of library education, but also influenced the feminization and professionalization of librarianship. Alice B. Kroeger (1864-1909) was director of Drexel Institute's library and library school which was established in 1892 at Philadelphia. She remained at Drexel until her death. Katharine L. Sharp (1865-1914) established and directed the library training program at the Armour Institute at Chicago (1893-1897). Later, the Armour

librarian learning and working during extraordinary library times, and we can trace her good fortune to the fact that she had drifted back to her mother's relatives in Indiana and found her connection to Mary Wright Plummer.

Mary Wright Plummer entered Helen Plummer's life just when Helen had finally concluded that she needed to support herself as a single woman. Mary Wright Plummer "resembled many of the women achievers who came into prominence at the turn of the century with 'a Quaker or dissenting Protestant past; a family history of doing good; a sturdy, self-reliant mother and a supportive high-minded father.'"⁷⁵ Both Helen and Mary came from similar Quaker backgrounds, but divergent family characteristics emerged when Helen's mother died and her father became ever more alienated from his Quaker family. Mary Wright Plummer's family supported the equality of men and women; Frank Plummer Sr. promoted the idea of male superiority and the concomitant idea that women are weak and need the protection of men. Mary Wright Plummer's family maintained their Hicksite principles; Frank Plummer Sr. led Helen away from her mother's liberal Hicksite heritage toward his particular blend of Quakerism and Episcopalianism. When death and financial misfortune destabilized his family, Frank Plummer was unable to compensate. Stability versus instability marks a significant difference between the two families; strong educational values mark their primary similarity. Helen's enthusiasm about meeting her mother's Mid-western family, which became a beacon of stability in her troubled life, made her receptive to their influence. Helen's intelligence surely alerted them to her potential. Mary Wright Plummer, who

Institute training class was moved to the University of Illinois where Sharp directed the university library and the library school from 1897 to 1907. For Mary Wright Plummer see footnote on page 89.

had defined herself as a single, self-reliant woman, met Helen at Helen's crossroad, and she led her young cousin to the same librarianship that had offered her a firm anchor as an independent woman.

Under the mentorship of Mary Wright Plummer, Helen Plummer attended the Pratt Institute School of Library Training where she learned about the new librarianship from the leading librarians and library educators of the day. This exposure permanently fixed Helen's identity as a public librarian, and she maintained this identity even after she married. The Pratt Institute library school, the Pratt alumni association, and her friends who stayed in the library profession would long serve to connect Helen to her days working as a librarian.

Helen's experiences as a student and a librarian were also part of the larger Pratt organization whose philosophy and work tried to meet the cultural, social, and economic challenges of the day. Helen's association with this organization—living in the Greenpoint Settlement and working at the Astral Branch—had the potential to nurture in her a perspective on life that was open to the progressive ideas of the coming era. With cultural guidelines shifting, social barriers falling, and a new library profession emerging, Helen Plummer had a chance to explore the world on her own terms.

Notes

¹ Helen Plummer Goulding (hereafter cited as HPG) to Francis W. Plummer Sr. (hereafter cited as FWP Sr.), 19 June 1899, Plummer Goulding Papers.

² Mary Niles Maack, " 'No Philosophy Carries So Much Conviction as the Personal Life': Mary Wright Plummer as an Independent Woman," *Library Quarterly* 70 (January 2000): 17-18.

³ HPG to FWP Sr., 12 May 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁴ HPG to FWP Sr., 1 June 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵ HPG to FWP Sr., 30 June 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶ HPG to FWP Sr., 13 July 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ HPG to FWP Sr., 20 July 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁹ HPG to FWP Sr., 29 August 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁰ FWP Sr. to HPG, 3 September 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹¹ HPG to FWP Sr., 20 September 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ HPG to FWP Sr., 30 September 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ HPG to FWP Sr., 9 November 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁷ Ernest J. Reece, *The Curriculum in Library Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 29; Sarah K. Vann, *Training for Librarianship before 1923: Education for Librarianship Prior to the Publication of Williamson's Report on Training for Library Service* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1961), 64-69.

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- ¹⁸ *Pratt Institute Catalogue, 1896-97*, 13, Pratt Institute Archives.
- ¹⁹ Mary Wright Plummer, "The Evolution of the Pratt Institute Free Library, January, 1888-June, 1896," *Pratt Institute Monthly*, 4 (June 1896): 287, Pratt Institute Archives.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 289.
- ²¹ "Charles Pratt's Gift," *New York Daily Tribune*, 1 January 1888, Clippings Scrapbook, Pratt Institute Archives.
- ²² Mary Wright Plummer, "Free Public Library," *Pratt Institute Catalogue, 1896-97*, 109, Pratt Institute Archives.
- ²³ Mary L. Avery, "The Opening of the New Library Building," *Pratt Institute Monthly*, 4 (June 1896): 294-301, Pratt Institute Archives.
- ²⁴ Annie Pope Newbold to HPG, 29 May 1896, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁵ HPG to FWP Sr., July 1896, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁶ HPG to FWP Sr., 30 September 1896, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁷ *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1978), s.v. The Pratt Institute Graduate School of Library and Information Science.
- ²⁸ Vann, *Training for Librarianship before 1923*, 64.
- ²⁹ *School of Library Training: Pratt Institute, 1896-1897* (n.p.: The De Vinne Press, n.d.), 7, in *Pratt Institute School of Library Science: Circulars of Information, 1897-1917*, Pratt Institute Archives.
- ³⁰ *Pratt Institute School of Library Training: Circular of Information, 1902-1903* (Jamaica, N.Y.: The Marion Press, n.d.), 11-15, in *Pratt Institute School of Library Science: Circulars of Information, 1897-1917*, Pratt Institute Archives.
- ³¹ Mary Wright Plummer, "Free Public Library," *Pratt Institute Catalogue, 1896-97*, 113, Pratt Institute Archives.
- ³² *School of Library Training: Pratt Institute, 1896-1897* (n.p.: The De Vinne Press, n.d.), 8, in *Pratt Institute School of Library Science: Circulars of Information, 1897-1917*, Pratt Institute Archives.

³³ HPG to FWP Sr., 30 September 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

³⁴ *The Pratt Institute Free Library Training Classes* (n.p.: The De Vinne Press, n.d.), 1, in *Pratt Institute School of Library Science: Circulars of Information, 1897-1917*, Pratt Institute Archives.

³⁵ *School of Library Training: Pratt Institute, 1896-1897* (n.p.: The De Vinne Press, n.d.), 3, in *Pratt Institute School of Library Science: Circulars of Information, 1897-1917*, Pratt Institute Archives.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-6.

³⁷ HPG to FWP Sr., 30 September 1895, Plummer Goulding Papers.

³⁸ Mary Wright Plummer, "Address to the Incoming Class of the Library School, 1896-97, by the Director," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (November 1896): 79-81, Pratt Institute Archives.

³⁹ Teachers, Students, and Things, *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (January 1897): 144, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁴⁰ Josephine A. Rathbone, "Library Meetings in Brooklyn," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (February 1897): 196-97, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁴¹ Library, *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (March 1897): 226-28, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁴² Mary Wright Plummer, "Report of the Free Library for the Year Ending June 30, 1897," 13, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁴³ M.D.W., "The Library School in Washington," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (May 1897): 300, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁴⁴ *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (June 1897): 325, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 326.

⁴⁶ HPG to FWP Sr., 12 April 1897, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁴⁷ HPG to FWP Sr., 30 September 1896, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *The Astral Apartments, Brooklyn, N.Y.*, pamphlet, 1-6, in folder labeled Astral Apartments, Pratt Institute Archives; Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins and David Fishman, *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999), 958-60.

⁵⁰ *Brooklyn Eagle*, 5 December 1885, in *The Astral Apartments, Brooklyn, N.Y.*, pamphlet, 7-10, in folder labeled Astral Apartments, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁵¹ Harry P. Kraus, *The Settlement House Movement in New York City, 1886-1914* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), iii, 18-21, 28-30.

⁵² Domenica M. Barbuto, *American Settlement Houses and Progressive Social Reform: An Encyclopedia of the American Settlement Movement* (Phoenix, Ariz.: Orynx Press, 1999), s.v. Ovington, Mary White; Harry P. Kraus, *The Settlement House Movement in New York City, 1886-1914* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 106-107; *Women in American History by Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. Ovington, Mary White, http://search.eb.com/women/articles/Ovington_Mary_White.html (accessed 4 April 2003).

⁵³ Mary White Ovington, "Neighborship," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 4 (June 1896): 325-26, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Grace H. Birdsall to HPG, February 1916, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁶ HPG to FWP Sr., letters dated 30 September 1896 through 1 May 1899, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁷ *Pratt Institute Monthly* 6 (October 1897): 23, 27, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁵⁸ HPG to FWP Sr., 26 August 1897, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁹ *Pratt Institute Catalogue, 1898-99*, 8, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁶⁰ Eleanor H. Frick, "Report of the Library Chapter," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 6 (November 1897): 63, Pratt Institute Archives; Mary White Ovington, "Neighborship," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (February 1897): 198, Pratt Institute Archives; Eliza S. Witham, "Astral Branch Free Library," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 6 (November 1897): 62-63, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁶¹ Eliza S. Witham, "Library: Astral Branch Free Library," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 6 (November 1897): 62, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁶² *Pratt Institute Catalog, 1897-98*, 112-13, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁶³ Mary Wright Plummer, "Report of the Free Library for the Year Ending June 30, 1898," 2, 14-15, Pratt Institute Archives; *Pratt Institute Catalog, 1897-98*, 112-13, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁶⁴ Mary Wright Plummer, "Report of the Free Library for the Year Ending June 30, 1898," 5, 14-15, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁶⁵ Mary Wright Plummer, "Report of the Free Library for the Year Ending June 30, 1899," 18-19, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁶⁶ Mary Wright Plummer, "Report on Salaries, Hours, and Vacations," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 7 (June 1899): 206-207. Pratt Institute Archives.

⁶⁷ HPG to FWP Sr., 7 June 1898, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶⁸ HPG to FWP Sr., 11 July 1898, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶⁹ HPG to FWP Sr., 5 December 1897, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷⁰ Francis W. Plummer Jr. to FWP Sr., 6 May 1898, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷¹ HPG to FWP Sr., 18 May 1898, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Minnie Dill to HPG, 22 September 1916, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷⁵ Barbara Brand, "Pratt Institute Library School: The Perils of Professionalization," in *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women In*, edited by Suzanne Hildenbrand, (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Co., 1996), 253.

Chapter 5

A BRIEF CAREER

Helen Plummer, graduate of the Pratt Institute School of Library Training and Astral Branch assistant librarian, had the education and was acquiring the experience to launch her career with ambition and pride. She could finally support herself with dignity, and live and work with friends and colleagues building the new library profession. Catalogers were needed, and Helen developed her skills within this specialty of librarianship. One brief position at an unnamed library and cataloging positions at the Denver Public Library and the Library of Congress are the sum of Helen Plummer's career while she was an unmarried, independent woman.

Because little was found about the details of her work through her personal papers, and because no official records of her employment could be located,¹ her career is explored within the context of the libraries where she worked. Philosophies of public library service are explored through library histories and through the biographies of the library movement leaders who directed these libraries. Perspectives on working conditions are examined through the reminiscences of Helen's colleagues. Her personal observations and any professional information, as much as possible, are gleaned from the relatively few letters she saved from the working period of her life.

Finally, her decision to marry and leave her career is explored through an almost daily correspondence between Helen and her fiancé during the months before their marriage.

Calamity and Compensation

It was 1899. In five years Helen Plummer would be married. In the meantime she looked to her future as a librarian. "At the Astral Branch, one of the staff accepting a position in Philadelphia," so noted Mary Wright Plummer in her annual report.² This could only have been Helen, and it must have been an exciting and liberating time for her as she accepted the position of a professional librarian in Philadelphia. Only one letter written on 1 May 1899 records her presence in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at "661 N. 33rd St., Phila, Pa."³ In it she remarked that she was just beginning to enjoy her work; she was settling into her new library. Not far away—less than a mile—was the Drexel Institute library. Also close by were the University of Pennsylvania Library and the Free Library of Philadelphia. It is not known where Helen worked, but it is known that her first month working in Philadelphia was her last month working in Philadelphia.

Helen had not been feeling well. Her temperature spiked one evening in mid-April, but she continued to work, aching all over, and missed only one day at the library. Her fever continued and the pain in her head was "almost unendurable."⁴ Against the advice of Dr. Jastrow* and a physician, whom she finally agreed to see, she would not stop working. She must have been very determined to make a success of her new job, her

* Helen Plummer's mention of Dr. Jastrow in her letter to her father dated 1 May 1899 is the only clue to which Philadelphia library she may have worked in. Morris Jastrow Jr. had taken the position of librarian at the University of Pennsylvania in 1898 when revision of the catalog and reclassification of the book collection was undertaken. The project continued through 1899 and was completed in 1907. Eleanor Devlin, "The Development of the Catalogue of the University of Pennsylvania Library," *Penn History*, <http://www.library.upenn.edu/exhibits/pennhistory/library/cards/cards.development.html> (accessed 19 July 2003); JewishEncyclopedia.com, s.v. Jastrow, Morris Jr., http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view_page.jsp?artid=171&letter=J&pid=0 (accessed 19 July 2003). It is possible Helen Plummer was hired as a cataloger for this project.

promising career. Finally she decided to "go out to Newtown for some days"⁵ to the home of dear Quaker friends from years gone by. She imagined that a visit with the Worstalls would cure her. "I can sit in the sun all day if I want and get the rheumatics out of me."⁶ Instead, Helen lay prostrate with typhoid fever for weeks while a flurry of letters passed between Newtown and Baltimore. Daily the Worstalls reported her condition and progress to her father.

Not until June 19th was Helen strong enough to write her own letter to her father, and her words expressed such painful discouragement. "You want to know my plans. I have none anymore; they never pan out as I expect and at present I am trying very hard to accept what has been planned for me." Helen wanted to go back to work in July, but unbeknownst to her, Cousin Mary had written to the doctor and asked to be kept informed of Helen's condition. "The other day received a letter from Cousin Mary which was in such emphatic language that, owing her what I do, I shall have to simply accept, but I am greatly disappointed." The debilitating effects of the disease dictated recuperation in the mountains, and all was arranged by Mary Wright Plummer and H. C. Worstall. Helen's work in Philadelphia was over, but she would not be defeated; she was determined to make her own way. In regard to Mary Plummer's kind concern, Helen wrote, much relieved, "She also offered to pay my doctor's bill; and what else I owed, but thank goodness, I was able to say that was unnecessary. I have paid all my debts except my Brooklyn doctor and think I will have enough, with what you can send through the summer, to pay my way until I get to work again, if I can go in two months which surely I ought to be able to do, and I may be able then to return what Cousin Mary does

for me. To be sure she is my relative, but I do not feel that she is near enough in blood to accept so much from her though I have to do it for the present. She has already done far more for me than I can ever return." Helen reassured her father, "You need not worry, I shall get along, and do not stint yourself on my account." Support from friends overwhelmed her, and with a hint of resignation she turned her misfortune to good fortune. "I knew I had some good friends but I never knew how many, nor how good they were till I had this illness, so there is some compensation even in such calamity."⁷

Helen saved not one of over thirty letters she received during her illness. She mentioned them to her father, but she did not keep them. They may have been lost, or perhaps the two most significant letters, one at the onset of the typhoid and one at its resolution, where the only reminder she wanted of the illness that changed the course of her life. Helen's long convalescence remains a mystery. It is not known whether she went first to mountains in the East or went straight to Denver, but July and August, and perhaps September, were spent not only recovering from typhoid but also looking for work. Helen's taste of success had seasoned her independence; determined, she would recover, and she would find work. Helen returned to Colorado.

The Denver Public Library

It is not difficult to imagine why Helen chose Colorado. Family ties, restored health, invigorating and challenging work, scenery that refreshed the eye and the soul; her memories of 1895 were shaped by experiences of ranch life deep in the Rocky Mountains

of northern Colorado. These memories must have inspired her to return to the West. She was quite free to go wherever she could find an opportunity for library work; family obligations no longer hindered her personal needs or her professional ambitions. She was unusually free for a woman of twenty-nine at the turn of the century, and she probably had the continuing encouragement of Mary Wright Plummer. This time, however, her journey to Colorado was not for a vacation, not for a respite before going home. Helen was about to embark on a pioneering experience as a librarian in Denver, Colorado. According to library historian Joanne E. Passet, "A few professionally trained female librarians worked in the West before 1900, but the majority arrived after the turn of the century."⁸ Helen, then, was one of the few, and her experiences anticipated the challenges encountered by the trained librarians who took their skills to libraries in the western states.

When Helen arrived in 1899, Denver, Colorado, already the traditional gateway to the state, had grown from an 1859 gold rush town on Cherry Creek to a thriving metropolis of 140,000 inhabitants. Mining and agriculture were the lures that brought the capitalist and the immigrant to Denver in the late nineteenth century. As the population grew, urban building and suburban expansion boomed and brought about the usual neighborhood and social divides amongst the upper, middle, and lower classes. In the midst of political controversies, public services managed to be instituted and improved. Water needs prompted plans to build a mountain reservoir, consolidated growth necessitated sewer construction, and modern technologies introduced telephone and electrical services. By the time Helen arrived, paid police and fire departments were in

full operation, the established system of cable cars was in competition with the newest overhead electric trolleys, and the Denver Public Library was advancing toward maturity and addressing the library innovations of the day.⁹

Ninety-nine members and officers of the "Denver City and Auraria Library and Reading Room Association" are listed in an 1860 "blank-book," recording "a group of men imbued with the reading habit and endowed with the library spirit."¹⁰ This association's enthusiastic start was premature and quickly dowsed by lack of support, but Denver's library spirit, kindled and rekindled over the years, inspired a succession of library organizations that eventually evolved into the Denver Public Library that hired Helen Plummer.

As early as 1874 the Denver Library Association had organized a reading room that was open to the public as well as its supporting members. When lack of funding forced the reading room to close in 1878, the books were donated to the Denver School Board with an eye to the future for a city public library. This collection eventually found its way to the new East Denver High School where the Denver Public Library (DPL) opened on 8 June 1889 with John Cotton Dana* in charge. Three years earlier the Denver

* John Cotton Dana (1856-1929) was a graduate of Dartmouth University and a member of the New York State Bar. As the first librarian of the Denver Public Library (DPL), from 1889 to 1897, he began to develop his innovative philosophy of librarianship which stressed education and public service. He was chiefly responsible for producing the 1895 publication *Public Library Handbook* which was developed primarily for use at DPL, but also offered guidance to other public libraries. This book, a compilation of essays written by John Cotton Dana, John Parsons, Frank D. Tandy, and George M. Lee, promoted libraries as instruments of education. Besides discussing the clerical aspects of managing a library, it encouraged an informed public through library advertising, open stacks and catalogues, specialized children's departments, and community needs assessment. It included three lists of suggestions: books for school libraries, "suitable" periodicals, and professional library service publications. After Denver, Dana directed the Springfield Library in Massachusetts and the Newark Public Library in New Jersey, where he established the first business branch library and helped found the Newark Museum Association. He was

Chamber of Commerce had established the Mercantile Library and appointed Charles R. Dudley* as the librarian. The Mercantile Library was later renamed City Library. In 1898, one year prior to Helen's arrival in Denver, the City Library and the Public Library were consolidated to address taxpayer concerns about separately funding two very similar institutions. At the time of the merger, Charles Dudley, head of the City Library, was appointed librarian and John Parsons, Dana's former assistant and current head of the Public Library, was named as Dudley's assistant. John Parsons, Harvard graduate and former Congregational minister, was considered to be a "liberal thinker and individualist," and he was admired by both the library public and the library staff. In his new position under Charles Dudley, John Parsons would head the reference department, but more important to Helen's story, he would also develop the library's catalog. The City Library collection of 35,000 books had been classified according to William Frederick Poole's system and the Public Library according to Melvil Dewey's system. John Parson's initial project was to re-catalog the merged collection using Dewey, and Helen Plummer would work for almost two years as a cataloger under his supervision.¹¹

It is also possible that Helen worked with Denver's new traveling libraries. In October 1899 the Federation of Women's Clubs instituted Denver's traveling libraries, the first of which went out in January 1900. Librarian Helen Ingersoll said, in her reminiscence of her days at DPL, that the books, packed in a traveling library box, were

the founder and first president of the Colorado Library Association, and he was president of the American Library Association in 1895/1896.

* Charles R. Dudley, Yale graduate and Massachusetts attorney, headed Denver's Mercantile/City Library from 1886 until 1899 when he was appointed librarian of the Denver Public Library (DPL). He continued as DPL Librarian during the years that Denver's Carnegie library was built, but resigned his position—amidst criticism by progressive members of the library board—in 1910, the same year the new building opened.

borrowed from the City Library.¹² Perhaps she meant the Denver Public Library, because, by that time, the two libraries had merged and moved to the rented Prudential Insurance Company building.

Before Helen Plummer arrived in Denver, the Public Library collection was moved into the Chamber of Commerce building, but the facility could not accommodate the enlarged collection. According to Ingersoll, that first move had been “chaotic.” “There was not enough shelf space and the books had to go on the floor.”¹³ Shortly after Helen’s arrival, the library moved again and reopened on 1 November 1899 at its new “splendid location” at 15th Street and Court Place in Prudential’s building.¹⁴ This was a great relief for Helen. She blamed her cold on “the drafts and dust that surround me where I work. I was never in a dirtier place and shall be so glad when we are in the newer building; it may be better although it is not a regular library building. It seems a shame for a city like Denver to be so behind in such matters. The conditions here are very different from all the libraries I have known; they need educating in many things.”¹⁵

Some of the “conditions” may have been the result of Charles Dudley’s conservative approach to library service. Originally, John Cotton Dana had instituted the practice of opening the stacks to the public. Under Dudley, the public was not encouraged to use them, and, in 1902, he closed the stacks citing theft and lack of appropriate space. Not until 1904, by public demand and city charter mandate was stack access returned to the open-shelf system. Appropriately, the open shelf room was named for John Cotton Dana.¹⁶

Ingersoll commented that Dudley “was not at all like Mr. Dana in his attitude toward books and people. They were as far apart as the poles.”¹⁷ Dana had instituted library training classes in 1894, and these were continued by Parsons after Dana left in 1897. Ingersoll attended the 1898 “apprentice class” where the students were required to “read and digest” the *Handbook of the Denver Public Library*,* survey English and American literature, and study Dewey decimal classification and cataloging.¹⁸ The training classes did not continue under Dudley,[†] who “did not encourage his staff to go to library school [and] gave no recognition to those who did go.”¹⁹ Dana maintained a close professional and personal relationship with all the members of his staff, whom he invited home for weekly book discussions and dessert.²⁰ Dudley conveyed the perception that he favored the male staff over the female staff. One male exception may have been John Parsons. Ingersoll observed that Parsons was treated by Dudley “like an underling and [he] humiliated him although he knew every book intimately and was loved by the staff and admired by people outside tremendously.”²¹

Helen’s value as an educated woman and a trained librarian suffered under Dudley. “You know my position at present is little more than a name; it was only persistence that got me in at all as there has been so much opposition to non-resident applicants.”²² Helen was a professionally educated woman from the eastern library establishment. It is not

* See footnote on page 131.

† Sarah K. Vann wrote that DPL’s training classes were discontinued in 1897. She suggested that its closure was possibly tied to Dana’s resignation. Sarah K. Vann, *Training for Librarianship before 1923* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1961), 73-74. Helen Ingersoll, however, seemed certain that she attended an 1898 library training class at DPL, citing her high school graduation as June 1897 and remembering an announcement for the training class entrance examination in January 1898. Helen F. Ingersoll, *I Remember...The Reminiscences of My Years in the Denver Public Library* (Denver: Denver Public Library, 1947), 10-11.

known how she secured her appointment; no archival record of Helen's hiring or her employment at the Denver Public Library has yet been found.²³ It is known that her pay was low. "I am doing work now that in the East would bring me at least \$50 per month; I am getting \$15; I hope in a few months they will see I am worth more."²⁴ Her salary did not cover her expenses.

When Helen first arrived in Denver, she boarded with her relatives John and Annie Plummer for four dollars per week. "I was discouraged at the idea of finding board here as it is impossible to get in a nice part of town under \$7 per week; living is high. Cousin Annie has kindly suggested that I remain here for several months anyhow, till I get on my feet again."²⁵ While it is not known how much her salary increased, it is known that she found housing. The 1900 and 1901 Denver city directories place "Miss Helen M. [sic] Plummer, asst. Public Library" in rooms at 817 East 17th Avenue,²⁶ Helen's address on her letters in the Plummer Goulding Papers. Helen's problems securing gainful employment and affordable housing in Denver illustrate some of the challenges that western librarians confronted at the turn of the twentieth century.²⁷

Finding personal fulfillment was just as challenging as finding suitable work and adequate pay. Passet notes how, "Many women wrote that they felt extremely lonesome or homesick, and that they missed being around people their own ages or others who shared the same taste in books, music, and entertainment."²⁸ Helen might have avoided this problem if she had worked under John Cotton Dana; his literary gatherings may have encouraged tolerance and friendship between the resident librarians and the eastern newcomers. Finding friends among the library staff proved to be unusually difficult for

Helen, who always seemed to make new and lasting friendships with ease, no matter where she lived.

There are a number of possible reasons for Helen's sense of detachment. Limited finances and boardinghouse living may have isolated her from her colleagues. Helen's eastern attitudes and opinions may have appeared condescending. "My companions ... are of a different class of women from those I have known so that I do not look forward to any pleasant companionship there; I suppose in time I may meet some pleasant people outside of the library."²⁹ Helen may have been unprepared for a less than serious approach to librarianship. Passet records what may have been a problem when she writes about the Denver library school student who "described many of her classmates as single women who lived at home and wished to earn a little 'pin money.'"³⁰ Ingersoll, however, related the problem of those workers who did take their library work seriously. When the libraries merged under Dudley, the younger staff members at the Public Library were "dropped" and required to reapply for their positions. Upon rehiring, their monthly salaries decreased from \$20 to \$15, paltry sums ridiculed by Ingersoll.³¹ Perhaps Helen faced resistance from staff who saw her as a competitor for their jobs and much needed salaries.

No matter what the reason was for her loneliness, Helen was able to console herself with her work and her books.

At present, my work absorbs me so I can possibly stand the loneliness; I do long for N.Y. sometimes, it is so quiet even down town. I am doing the kind of work I always wanted more practice in, namely classifying the books and assigning the subject heads for a dictionary catalogue. It requires a good deal of study and I often wish Pratt Institute were nearer so I could consult someone; there are very few here who have studied

modern methods at all so I am left to decide things my own way usually & it is a big undertaking. I have none of my notes or books here but Mr. Worstall is going to send them soon.... Your mention of Sir John Lubbock's books recalls some I have had lately on Antiquities that I wish I had time to read, I have read almost nothing in the 500's, Natural Science. This week I have been classifying books in History and have seen some very interesting reading on the Indians, one of my special favorites.³²

Despite difficult working conditions and loneliness, Helen stayed in Denver, probably for her health. She did make at least one close friend with whom she corresponded for several years after he left DPL and became the librarian for the United States Treasury Department in Washington, D.C.

Homer A. A. Smith's pronouncements on various subjects and incidents are tinged with affectation, and they are frustratingly vague. He may have had a romantic attraction for Helen. His letters tease and allude to their Colorado days together, yet they maintain an emotional distance that is never overcome. When Helen complained that she was lonely, Homer encouraged her to "be on better terms" with Miss Grove * "as you work in the same place and your interests are very much in common."³³ Smith alluded to a situation with John Parsons. "I am sorry you and Mr. Parsons 'had it out' yet I cannot blame you for it. Mr. Parsons is in a very hard place and those under him are the ones to suffer for it. Now that it is over with it will probably be better for all concerned." In the same letter, Smith asked, "How did you come out with the state librarianship? I certainly hope you will be successful and had I any influence I should have been glad to have used it in your favor."³⁴ Which state? Which position at the state library? These passing

* This may have been Hazel Grove, whom Helen F. Ingersoll mentioned as one of the four members of her 1898 Denver library class.

comments by Smith might never be fully explained, but they at least reveal Helen's dissatisfaction, her willingness to assert her views, her desire for change, and her ambitions in making that change. Again we catch a glimpse of Helen's perseverance in the face of difficulty, her diminishing timidity, and her evolving self-reliance and self-determination.

If Helen was ever happy working at the Denver Public Library, the few existing letters do not reflect it. Within a year of taking the Denver position Helen was looking for work in the East. In early August 1900, Homer Smith wrote, "This afternoon I visited the cataloguing department of the Congressional Library. The Head Cataloguer, Mr. Hanson. He said there were no vacancies now, but that with such a large force they would be occurring most any time. Write to the Chief Clerk, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and ask for information regarding appointments. He said the printed instructions would give very full information in regard to methods of appointment, requirements, etc. I don't believe a nicer place to work in could be imagined. The decorations are magnificent, and so is the building for that matter."³⁵ Helen would remain in Denver for at least another year.

In the meantime she encouraged Homer, who had studied for his law degree while working in Washington, to continue in professional librarianship in the East. Smith spoke with Herbert Putnam, but Putnam advised him to pursue the law instead. By the time Helen returned east in early 1902 to work at the Library of Congress, Homer Smith was planning his return to Denver to take the Colorado bar examination. It is not known how much longer their relationship continued, but Smith's last letter is dated 2 June 1902.

In it he may have said his final farewell, "I think too much of your many kindnesses to me to permit anything but absolute necessity to cut me off from the pleasure of at least one more day with you before I leave Washington....At present I am planning to leave here on the 21st the date cheap rates to Denver go into effect."³⁶ And so, Homer A. A. Smith returned to Denver to pursue his law career and possibly more.

While it is largely speculation, the coincidence of names, places, and timing suggest that Homer Smith might have been a serious love who bitterly disappointed Helen's expectations. Shortly after Smith's return to Denver and Helen's return to the East, Helen was utterly stunned over an unnamed love's hasty and unexpected marriage to Hazel* "who was afraid to trust him East without her and to make a sure thing of it married him at once."³⁷ Helen rebuffed "his" suggestion to continue as friends. With passionate encouragement from May Minifie Paterson, Helen's confidant, she overcame her heartache. May wrote, "Keep your wits about you and your mind on your work....Keep a tight rein on your thoughts and don't let go till you get home. It will take all the energy and vitality you have....And then when in the quiet of your own room your over strained nerves give way to the overwhelming misery within, just have it all out and when a little calmer just pray that you will learn the lesson He means for you through it all."³⁸ Helen would persevere and succeed. Work at the Library of Congress would satisfy her professionally, Washington life would absorb her socially, and a new acquaintance would fulfill her personally.

* The speculation that this Hazel is Hazel Grove from DPL is enticing, but not provable. A search of vital records from the period in the Colorado State Archives failed to find a marriage record for Homer A. A. Smith and Hazel Grove.

The Library of Congress

On 9 April 1870 Ainsworth Rand Spofford, Librarian of Congress, wrote to Thomas A. Jenkes, Representative of Rhode Island and chairman of the Committee on Patents, with “some leading reasons why the transfer of the entire copyright business to the Library of Congress would promote the public interest.”³⁹ He reasoned that “the advantage of securing to our only National Library a complete collection of all copyright entries can scarcely be overestimated.... We should have one comprehensive library in the country, and that belonging to the country, whose aim it should be to preserve the books which other libraries have not the room nor the means to procure.”⁴⁰ Three months later, on 8 July 1870, just one day after Helen Plummer was born, President Ulysses S. Grant approved the Congressional act that fulfilled Spofford’s vision. The Librarian of Congress would “perform all acts and duties required by law touching copyrights.”⁴¹ Spofford considered the action “by far the most important step forward in the annals of the Library.”⁴² The act meant that the Library of Congress would receive two copies of all copyrighted items and all of the pre-1870 copyrights; a centralized collection of America’s published works was assured. The resulting deluge of incoming materials was overwhelming and created such a massive storage problem, that the next year Spofford proposed a new library building. The history of this project spans decades, and its development is tied to the evolving philosophy of the Library of Congress.

Helen Plummer, too, was growing up—maturing, building her life, and finding her place. Helen’s life, from her birth to her graduation from the Pratt Institute, and the

development of the new Library of Congress, from the copyright act to the opening of the new building, span the same years—1870 to 1897. In 1897, when Helen's library class toured the old Congressional Library, it was Ainsworth Rand Spofford who led the tour. The class toured the new building as well, and the impression it made was one of wonder at the innovations. Just as Helen was entering the profession, American libraries, librarianship, and the Library of Congress were reaching a new maturity. Old ways were making way for new.

In 1897, Spofford had been the Librarian of Congress for thirty-three years. At the urging of the American Library Association, the 72-year-old Librarian stepped down, but was hired back by the new and progressive Librarian of Congress, John Russell Young. Spofford stayed with the Library as Chief Assistant Librarian until his death in 1908, while Young and his successors tackled the move into the new library and the subsequent arrangement of the collection. For the next four years, while Helen Plummer developed her skills as a cataloger, the Library of Congress developed a system of classification and methods of cataloguing that created a need for competent, experienced catalogers. The new Library of Congress building which opened to the public on 1 November 1897, opened to a new era of librarianship.

With a new vision for the Library, as a national, public, and research institution, new approaches were needed. The original Congressional Library, located in the Capitol building, had been designed to house a collection of books for the legislators. With the passage of the copyright law in 1870, the facility was overwhelmed, not only with an enormous quantity of material, but also with new varieties of materials. A new building,

a new library was needed to accommodate the flood of documents with space and a new and versatile system of organization and access. Library of Congress historian David C. Mearns estimates that between 1870 and 1896 "three hundred seventy-one thousand six hundred and thirty-six books, 257,153 periodicals, 289,617 pieces of music, 73,817 photographs, 95,249 prints, and 48,048 maps poured into the Capitol as copyright deposits ... and had to be accommodated somehow: in heaps in the Library rooms, in unlet chambers above the Library, in vaults in the basement."⁴³ Mearns observes, "Well might Spofford's successor report, from the spacious quarters of the new building at the end of 1897, that all but the books 'came in such disorder that some time must elapse before it can be arranged.'"⁴⁴ More than space and organization were needed. Progressive librarians wanted the public to know about their national public library, and they wanted the public to be able to use it.

In January 1897, the *Pratt Institute Monthly* ran an article about the new Library in Washington, D.C. Before summing up her detailed physical description of the building's layout, the author strayed to comment on the purpose of the Library and the hiring of its staff. She was impatient with traditional practices. Referring at first to the copyright deposits, she wrote,

In fact, these accessions have almost exclusively built up the library to its present dimensions, as the appropriations for book-buying have always been ridiculously below what would be required by a national library, which the Congressional Library is popularly supposed to be, and which Congress itself occasionally assumes it to be....Congress, however, has never acknowledged that the Library is for the use of any one but Senators, Representatives and the judges of the Supreme Court, the general public being admitted only through courtesy....It is to be hoped that the reorganization will include a generous relinquishment by Congress of its exclusive control of appointments in the Library, by

throwing it open to the nation at large through civil-service examinations, recognizing the fact that its work requires special education and technical training.⁴⁵

When John Russell Young died in early 1899, he was succeeded by Herbert Putnam.* Putnam, president-elect of the American Library Association, was the first Librarian of Congress to have prior library experience, and he brought to the job a well-developed philosophy of public librarianship. Putnam's 1901 letter to Theodore Roosevelt described his approach.

The public library in its modern form began in the United States fifty years ago. It is receiving a development here not paralleled elsewhere, in the activity of its service for the general public and also for the scholar. There are over 5,000 public libraries in the United States today....In the aggregate they represent a great educational interest distinct from the schools; and the movement which has resulted in their creation, development, and enrichment is the most characteristic movement in education during the past half century.

Now as a whole, these libraries in the United States are organizing their work with reference to uniformity in methods, to cooperation in processes, to interchange of service, and in general, to the promotion of efficiency in service.

They look to the National Library for standards, for example, for leadership, in all these enterprises. It is now in position to "standardize" library methods, to promote cooperation, to aid in the elimination of wasteful duplication, to promote interchange of bibliographic service. And not merely by the accumulation and liberal administration of a great collection at Washington, but by the distribution of the results of the bibliographic work which it is putting upon that collection it will be able

* George Herbert Putnam (1861-1955) was a graduate of Harvard University and a student at Columbia University Law School. As librarian of the Minneapolis Athenaeum (1884-1887) he introduced a new cataloging system plus the innovative concept of open stacks. Instrumental in the establishment of the Minneapolis Public Library, he was librarian there from 1887 to 1891. Putnam practiced law for awhile in Boston before returning to librarianship as the librarian of the Boston Public Library (1895-1899). Herbert Putnam was the Librarian of Congress for forty years from 1899 to 1939. A leader in the American library movement, his administration of the Library expanded its mission to comprehensively serve all Americans and their libraries. Under Putnam, the Library devised a new system of classification, produced and sold printed catalog cards, instituted an interlibrary loan system, revised copyright law, established a separate Legislative Reference Service, headquartered the ALA's Library War service during WW I, and expanded the collection. The Library's list of achievements during Putnam's time is extensive, but in summary, Putnam transformed the Library of Congress into a nationally and internationally renowned library.

to perform a service of the greatest utility to the library interests of the United States and to American scholarship.

The past two and a half years have been in part a preparation for such a service. Equipment, apparatus, and experts are being acquired....

The Library is now to initiate some of those projects of service for which the past four years have prepared. In these it will make return to the country for the recent great expenditure upon it.⁴⁶

Herbert Putnam was the Librarian of Congress under whom Helen Plummer applied for work as a cataloger.

Under Young and later under Putnam, James C. Hanson was the superintendent of the Library's Catalogue Department. Charles Martel joined Hanson as his assistant, and, together in 1898, they started work developing a new system of classification by which the Library's collection would be reclassified.⁴⁷ This was the beginning of the modern Library of Congress Classification system. They also started work on the official list of subject indexing terms that became the Library of Congress Subject Headings. The amount and variety of materials to be cataloged according to these innovative and evolving methods of classification and subject assignment required skilled catalogers. Within a year of beginning the massive project, the Cataloguing Department's five catalogers could not handle the volume of work. At Hanson's request, hiring commenced and continued for at least the next three years.⁴⁸

Helen was hired to work in the Library of Congress Cataloging Department in 1902. Mearns describes the department's progress at that time, but also points out the transitional state of the classification system.

At the beginning of fiscal 1901, the work of cataloging and classification was in the hands of 46 assistants, and there had been brought into existence a public catalog, an official catalog, a shelf list for the literature of bibliography and library science, and a special author catalog for the

Congressional Reference Library maintained in the Capitol. There was still an awkward, three-way classification system which Mr. Putnam referred to as the old, the intermediate and the new. The new, however, was in the process of development.⁴⁹

The Library also began printing cards for all the books that were being cataloged or re-cataloged. By the time Helen was employed, the Library was selling copies of the cards, and it was reported that "depository sets of all cards printed by the Library are being sent to 21 libraries throughout the United States and Canada to make the collections of the Library of Congress more widely known, to promote bibliographical work and uniformity in cataloging, and to facilitate the ordering of cards from libraries in different regions."⁵⁰ It was in this environment of historic cataloging innovations within the Library of Congress that Helen Plummer found the work that gave her the professional fulfillment and personal independence she had struggled for, for so long.

Few specifics are known about Helen's work. Two facts are certain: she had a desk in the cataloging room, and she worked under the supervision of Mary McNair.⁵¹ Mary McNair headed one of the periodicals sections. "The early cataloging was in some ways more difficult than at present, especially in the serials sections. There were long sets to be cataloged, the rules were in the formative state, and many bibliographies that later proved so useful were not yet published. Problems of cataloging taxed ingenuity to the utmost, while the physical effort of lifting hundreds of heavy books caused a chronic backache."⁵² These are the words of Harriet Wheeler Pierson, Mary MacNair's cousin and roommate, who wrote a reminiscence of her days working in the cataloging room at the Library of Congress. Concentrating on her first ten years at the Library, from 1900 to 1910, Pierson opens the window onto the world where Helen worked, her florid

descriptions revealing the Library of Congress as Helen Plummer might have entered it in 1902.

The first day in the new Library was etched upon the mind of the new appointee. The building, massive, imposing, stood bright in the June sunshine, its gold-covered dome refulgent, its torch of knowledge held high. Within, the way led to a long room on the main floor of the building, on the East side....Here, with a strong sun flooding every desk, were the members of the cataloging staff, to whom, one by one, throughout the entire length of the room, the new cataloger was introduced; their cordial friendly welcome still remains a warm and happy memory. The chief of the division, J. C. Hanson, straight, tall and dignified, greeted the new comer with sincerity and kindness, and created the impression that here was a chief indeed, competent, just, fearless and upright, a worthy representative of the Viking race to which he belonged; this first impression was more than confirmed in the years that followed. An atmosphere of hospitality pervaded the room, and the stranger felt at once that the institution invited its staff to congenial work.⁵³

Herbert Putnam greeted them as well.

It was the custom for those newly come to the Library to report at the office of the Librarian, Dr. Herbert Putnam. Ushered into the room of simple and appropriate elegance, embarrassment was banished for the timid cataloger by the genial smile of the Librarian, whose brief word was to be remembered through all future years, "We expect great things of you"....Upon the return from the interview by way of the central Reading Room, the neophyte looked up ... the afternoon light from the high arched windows rested upon words lettered in gold, high above the column for Religion, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."⁵⁴

Whether or not Helen's experience was as dramatic as Harriet Pierson's, it surely must have been memorable. The Library of Congress building was an aesthetic wonder. Pierson said that coworkers who lived near the library enjoyed "a frequent evening's diversion to study, corridor by corridor, the paintings, sculpture and mosaics of the

interior of the building.”⁵⁵ Guidebooks* in hand the catalogers explored and studied the building and its contents. Perhaps Helen joined these evening excursions.

On a practical note, this group of wandering catalogers had been hired, paid salaries, and assigned working hours and work. Catalogers were selected and hired by the Librarian of Congress, who evaluated their suitability for the work. Harriet Pierson placed her salary in 1900 at \$900 per year. The usual working day for federal employees was 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., but was extended by Theodore Roosevelt, in 1904, to 4:30 p.m. After their regular hours, the catalogers sometimes returned to their desks to assist in “pressing undertakings.”⁵⁶ Pierson related how they diligently worked evenings to proof-read the A.L.A. Catalogue, 8,000 Volumes for a Popular Library which was printed in 1904. The cataloging staff also suggested examples for rules for the A.L.A. catalog rules that were formulated between 1900 and 1910. In 1902, the Librarian reported that “the force in the Catalogue division is now considerable in number and in a high degree expert.”⁵⁷ Part of that expert force was in the person of Philip Sanford Goulding.

An Albany-Pratt Combination

Looking back to the last day of September 1896 we see Helen Plummer sitting in the “little alcove” in Mary Wright Plummer’s home in Brooklyn, New York, writing a letter,

* The 1897 *Handbook of the New Library of Congress* was perhaps the guidebook that Pierson mentioned. The preface to this 128 page volume explains that the book was organized to accommodate the way a “visitor might naturally walk through it.” Exquisite illustrations and detailed descriptions of the building and the art collection are complemented by an essay titled “Architecture, Sculpture and Painting” by Charles Caffin. Also included is a second essay by Ainsworth R. Spofford, “The Function of a National Library.” Herbert Small, comp., *Handbook of the New Library of Congress* (Boston: Curtis & Cameron, 1897).

describing for her father her first day at library school. Eight years later, on the first day of September 1904, we again find Helen sitting in Cousin Mary's Brooklyn home, this time writing to Philip her fiancé. "Cousin M. has asked me some questions about you. Says she has never known an Albany-Pratt combination before."⁵⁸ Philip and Helen, Albany and Pratt, librarians from library schools, husband and wife.

Philip Sanford Goulding, native of Vermont, young student at the Phillips Academy Andover, graduated from Yale University in 1898 and the following year attended the New York State Library School at Albany. Before his appointment at the Library of Congress, he held cataloging positions at the New Hampshire State Library, the University of Missouri, and the University of the South in Tennessee. From 1902 to 1906 he cataloged rare books and Americana at the Library of Congress.⁵⁹ Midway through his years at the Library of Congress, one day before his twenty-eighth birthday, he married Helen Plummer, fellow librarian and cataloger. They would be married for almost thirty-three years, and Helen would subsume her identity as a librarian within Philip's career.

In 1904 Helen Plummer came to another crossroad. Just when she least expected it, just as she settled into a secure position at the Library of Congress, just as she was able to comfortably meet her financial obligations, just as she accepted her life as an independent woman, she met Philip. Helen was thirty-four years old. In the face of crumbling relationships and financial hardships, she had worked steadily to advance her education and build her career. Persevering through her struggles, she had become decisive and forthright. Tenacious in her desire for family connections, she had recovered her

mother's family and her progressive Quaker heritage. She was a Plummer, a single woman, and a librarian. Now, in 1904, Helen and Philip were in love, and he wanted her to be his wife. Mature and confident, she was no longer afraid to continue depending on herself. Marriage implied returning to dependence on a man, and Helen expressed her conflicts and doubts. Helen's and Philip's letters, written in the months before their marriage, capture their love, their plans, and her ambivalence. Their words express a binding and tender affection; their plans herald the approaching date. As the summer wore on, as the date drew near, Helen became anxious.

At the end of June, Helen wrote from the Worstall home in Newtown, Pennsylvania, where she had gone to take a short rest before working her last month at the library. "Am writing at this desk which stands in a corner between the window & porch door and as I look out the latter I see the pretty meadow and a glimpse of some blooming sweet peas....I looked to the S.W. last night and wondered what someone might be doing. One corner of my baywindow faces the S.W. and I knelt there a few minutes last night. The moon was shining in. It seemed queer but very nice, when I waked this a.m. to see your pictures in a row on the bureau."⁶⁰ By August, Helen resigned her position at the Library of Congress and left Washington to prepare for their September wedding, their wedding trip west, and the practicalities of housekeeping when they returned to Washington. Thus began an almost daily correspondence between Helen and Philip as Helen embarked on a pre-wedding tour, visiting old friends.

11 August: Helen from Newtown:

I cannot realize entirely that I have left the Library for good....I think, I too, shall miss those morning hours but I shall probably get used to it

and will have the pleasure of looking forward to the end of the day when I shall have someone I love all to myself....I am glad our best friends feel as they seem to do and I am glad your friends may be mine and mine, thine....It seems so long since I left home; what will a month seem....A month today & where will Helen L. P. be, I wonder. It makes me feel so queer.⁶¹

12 August: Helen from Newtown:

I should not, either, like to see that empty desk and chair. How queer it must seem without that noisy Helen Plummer in that end of the room....I believe I do not fully realize how much you are to me nowadays until you are out of my reach. I do miss you and miss the clasp of your loving arms and the light of your eyes....I would like to talk with you about a furniture sale at one of the good stores. The prices seem very low. If I should see some parlor furniture....I have gone over the itinerary once and it seems beautifully put together....When does your leave expire, Oct 20th....How queer the Cat. Room must look.⁶²

15 August: Helen from Newtown:

I thought this morning's mail would bring me some money either from you or the library; it proved to be the latter....I shall keep a separate account of things as I do not wish my personal expenses to get mixed with household ones now....The mail brought me four letters this morning-the library one, the last I shall ever receive!...Give my love to Miss McNair.⁶³

16 August: Helen from Newtown:

I had the queerest dream about the wedding last night. Could not remember going in the church at all & when I started to come out it was from a pew, the church was full of people, you were not with me but far ahead, and when we were in the carriage, I suddenly realized that you were not at all what I thought you. From that I went to the library & was having a queer time there.⁶⁴

16 August: Philip from Washington:

I can scarcely believe that the Day is barely three weeks off now, that only twenty two days separates me from the happiest experience of my life, from the beginning of a series of the very happiest times either of us has ever known. I only hope it will come to pass as we are planning

and that three weeks from Thursday there will be one person instead of two—no need of letters or notes, or arranging for calls or meetings at the library, or car rides, for a chance at each other, but we shall be together, and in the sweetest, best way, I hope and trust.⁶⁵

18 August: Philip from Washington:

Somehow or other this has been one of the most lonesome days I have passed since you left me. It seems as if everything reminded me of you—every time I opened a catalogue drawer a card in the dear familiar hand would seem to appear by magic.⁶⁶

18 August: Helen from Newtown:

Have been relining my tan suit jacket; had to cut a new lining from the old skirt lining....I trust when you see the quality of my purchases you will think I did well for the money. I really feel jubilant and think our home will be many times prettier than I expected to have it....I just have to lie down awhile each day & even then it is not for long. I know you do not have any conception of the numerous little things I needs must do whether I wish or no—how can you, being a man.⁶⁷

19 August: Helen from Newtown:

To pick up some dropped threads, you will never have any more Sundays with Helen PlummerAs for clinging to my own name, I suppose it is all of a habit to cling to old things, and the inability to think of myself as anybody but Helen Plummer—queer, cranky and ancient.⁶⁸

22 August: Helen from Newtown:

Stop counting out my days as if I were a prisoner or going to be. It makes me want to run away....Your crosspatch, Helen L. Plummer!!!⁶⁹

24 August: Helen from Newtown:

It most makes my heart stand still to think that just about this minute two weeks from today we shall be saying “for better, for worse.” Have you read those words lately; they are so few and yet when one thinks what they really mean it seems so much. I am sorry if my words hurt you, dearest. I suppose a man always views the matter differently from a woman, but it means so much more to her, even life itself, to which we naturally cling even when it has brought us so much pain. Perhaps

marriage seems even more solemn to me than to many because unfortunately I know too well what a hell it can be, even after things have promised so much. But there, I do not believe we shall ever make it a sacrilege, I hope we make it a sacrament, because we have some conscience to know what is right to do and I do hope and pray we may always have the strength to do what we think best for both of us even if it costs us something, & if we do that, surely we shall be blessed. Don't think the mere fact of the invitations being printed would keep me from running away, but I guess there is no danger now, your love is too much to me and I am too hungry for a sight of you, so I am much afraid I shall find myself running to you instead of away, and I do believe you will be good to me because you have been for so long and because you love me, I don't know why.⁷⁰

Greenwich, Connecticut, was the next stop on Helen's tour. Annie nee Dennis and Frederick Bursch, Pratt '97 graduates, now husband and wife, managed the Literary Collector Press. Helen boasted, as she sat "perched up on a broken-bottomed chair" between the press and folding machine, that she thought Annie "a large part of the success of the firm."⁷¹ The friends took walks through the country suburbs while Helen admired the scenery and listened to the birds, and they talked about library school days, reminiscing over their happy pastime. How timely it was for Helen to observe a contented husband and wife who utilized their professional talents, collaborating on a scholarly enterprise while making a pleasant home. Perhaps in response to her surroundings, Helen confessed two painful memories which enlighten us, as perhaps they enlightened Philip, about her past loves.

Oh, my dear, I wish I could tell you all the thoughts and feelings that have possessed me these last two years. I wonder sometimes why such things happened and yet I suppose it was to prepare me somehow for the present. The three men who really touched my life the closest have all been so different & yet appealed to me in ways I cannot explain. The first seemed all I had hoped for, and I am sure, cared for me greatly and I gave him the best I had and waited six years, thinking that the time would some day come when he could act independently of his

family; but he was not strong enough and now he has his money & his fine country home (not far from here) and from all accounts is—well, reaping his desserts. The next one who seemed to have all the strength & gentleness I most admire in a man & who might, someday, have persuaded me to his way of thinking, fortunately for me fell a victim to the wiles of a scheming woman. And then you came, you, the weakest and the strongest of them all. I say weakest, because from your weakness has grown your strength. Am I not right? I did doubt you at first and did not believe you would persevere in your intentions, but now, I am tempted to think that had it been a choice between a fortune and—something else, you would have chosen the something else, for reasons I never could fathom.⁷²

With the same letter Helen enclosed a poem she saw hanging on a wall in the Bursch home.

The beauty of the house is order,
The blessing of the house is contentment,
The glory of the house is hospitality,
The crown of the house is godliness.⁷³

Contentment came to Helen as she wrote to Philip on her return to the Worstalls.

It seems too good to believe, that I shall be gazing at those grand old mountains, with you beside me....Dear, it makes me feel so queer, (now that I have had a little time to think about it) that I shall never come to this old place again as Helen Plummer, that in a few days there will be no such person. It almost makes me feel as if I were going clear out of the world, but I do not wish to go back now, and I think maybe when I see you, the queer feelings will go away. I am always content when with you and soon I shall be there—for good—yours “to have and to hold,” “for better, for worse;” I pray only that whatever comes we may never let go the memory of these past months, or forget that it is only by clinging together that we can bear the ups and downs that come to all.

I have your pile of letters beside me and shall keep them close as long as you are you, and I am I.

Never forget that I love you and shall always love you as long as you will let me, and are the man I think you are, and so—until we meet again,
I am

Your sweetheart
Helen Lancaster Plummer⁷⁴

Helen and Philip decided on a church ceremony. They had considered a parlor wedding, but knew no one with a parlor large enough to accommodate the guests. Philip was Episcopalian, and while Helen was by family tradition a Quaker, she had also attended Episcopalian services throughout her life. No specific mention was made of Helen adopting her husband's faith, but she indeed made the transition. Helen Lancaster Plummer and Philip Sanford Goulding were married in an Episcopal ceremony at the Church of the Ascension in Baltimore, Maryland, on September 7, 1904.

Helen Plummer confronted significant barriers that might have interfered with the progress of her career. As a woman who never relented, however, but always persevered, she steered her life in directions that exposed her to some of the most influential leaders of the American library movement and involved her in the issues of the feminization and professionalization of librarianship.

At the Denver Public Library, Helen would have been keenly aware of the contrasting approaches of John Cotton Dana and Charles Dudley regarding open stacks, progressive services to the public, professional training for the staff, and gender equity. One wonders if Dana had remained at DPL, whether Helen would have reacted differently to the library and Denver society, and chosen to build her career in Colorado.

Helen's experience in Denver reflected the living conditions, and the social and professional challenges, that confronted trained librarians from the East who worked in

the West. Some of these women felt disconnected from society because of their isolated locations, while others felt isolated because they were perceived by their communities as cultural outsiders. Helen had difficulty making friends with her western colleagues and sought companionship outside the library. In letters home she criticized library “conditions,” commenting that Denver was “behind” and needed “educating.” If Helen verbalized her opinions to her colleagues, her words may have been received as threatening and her attitude perceived as alienating. It is significant that the only people from Denver, besides her cousins, with whom she maintained a long-time correspondence, were her cataloging department head, John Parsons, and his wife. Helen made no other lasting friendships from her DPL days. For her that was very unusual.

Helen’s experience at the Library of Congress was completely different. Society in Washington was fully compatible with her cultural expectations. Within their singular library society, she developed many long-lasting friendships. Camaraderie amongst the staff was based on cultural activities, political and literary discourse, and high professional standards.

At work in the Library of Congress, Helen was associated with the progressive administration of Herbert Putnam as he expanded the scope and mission of America’s national library. Cataloging under James Hanson and Charles Martel, she participated in the development of standards and methods that redefined the organization of access to materials and information in libraries. New standards, enhanced cooperation amongst public libraries, and innovative approaches to serving a wider public—Helen Plummer,

cataloger and public librarian, worked within a select professional group, the leading innovators of the American library movement.

The types of library positions Helen held reflect the gender dichotomy of professional library employment, as well as the turn-of-the-twentieth century's changing expectations for women. Helen Plummer was a cataloger. She was an educated, professionally employed woman intimately involved in the late nineteenth-century library movement. As with many library women, her work lay behind the scenes, under the management of historically recognized male directors and administrators.

Whether Helen's path to cataloging was a matter of opportunity or an intentionally chosen field was not discovered. Health was certainly a factor in her choices. Her sometimes conflicting needs for rural solitude and the cultural advantages of eastern city-life reflect an undercurrent of discontent and probably influenced her choices for employment as well. Perhaps one of the most significant influences that led her to become a cataloger was her love of books which she enjoyed for their intrinsic value as well as their content. As illustrated in previous chapters, her respect for books and knowledge was rooted in her family heritage, where books were an essential part of life. Helen, like her forbearers, owned books, read them, saved them, stored them, traveled with them, and worried about them. Philip Sanford Goulding also valued books.

Helen met Philip at a stable point in her career. Faced with love and the prospect of marriage, she was forced to reconsider her life goals and choices. Helen had the choice between continuing autonomy and marriage. As seen in her letters, Helen's decision was influenced by her and her family's history, both recent and distant. Helen was also aware

of society's changing perceptions of women's roles. Expectations remained high for women to marry and assume a domestic role. New job opportunities offered women a choice for independence, but women's work still reflected lower status and lower economic value. Marriage offered an economic advantage as well as a promise of love and companionship. Helen chose to marry.

Once married, she also had the choice between housekeeping and continuing her library work. She chose to keep house in the traditional sense and gave up her career. The choice would have been more or less difficult depending on her needs and her perspective. She could envy or appreciate Philip's career; she could be a passive observer or an active participant in his career; she could limit her work to housekeeping, or she could assist him with his projects. Perhaps she evaluated these options.

Three things are certain. Her name was important to her, her career was important to her, and her identity was important to her. She faced difficult choices, and Helen Lancaster Plummer relinquished her Plummer name and her career as a librarian. She did not, however, give up her identity. Somehow, throughout her marriage and widowhood, Helen saw herself, always, until she died in 1959, as a Plummer and a librarian.

Notes

¹ Philip J. Panum, Special Collection Librarian, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colo., email to author, 12 June 2003; Stephen Janick, Archivist, W.W. Haggerty Library, Drexel University, Philadelphia, Penn., email to author, 15 July 2003; Amey Hutchins, Public Services Archivist, University of Pennsylvania Archives, Philadelphia, Penn., email to author, 30 July 2003.

² Mary Wright Plummer, "Report of the Free Library for the Year Ending June 30, 1899," 18, Pratt Institute Archives.

³ Helen Plummer Goulding (hereafter cited as HPG) to Francis W. Plummer Sr. (hereafter cited as FWP Sr.), 1 May 1899, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ HPG to FWP Sr., 19 June 1899, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁸ Joanne E. Passet, *Cultural Crusaders: Women Librarians in the American West, 1900-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), xvi.

⁹ Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and David McComb, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Rev. ed. Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982), 233-53, 335.

¹⁰ Rena Reese, "The History of the Denver Public Library, 1860-1928," typescript, (Denver: Denver Public Library, 1928), 2.

¹¹ Frederick J. Yonce, *The Denver Public Library: 100th Anniversary Celebration* (Denver: Denver Public Library, 1989), 2-7.

¹² Helen F. Ingersoll, *I Remember: The Reminiscences of My Years in the Denver Public Library* (Denver: Denver Public Library, 1947), 21-22.

¹³ Ibid., 20.

¹⁴ Yonce, *The Denver Public Library: 100th Anniversary Celebration*, 6-7.

¹⁵ HPG to FWP Sr., 24 October 1899, Plummer Goulding Papers.

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- ¹⁶ Yonce, *The Denver Public Library: 100th Anniversary Celebration*, 7, 10.
- ¹⁷ Ingersoll, *I Remember*, 28.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 11-12.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 27.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 4.
- ²¹ Ibid., 28.
- ²² HPG to FWP Sr., 24 October 1899, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²³ Philip J. Panum, Special Collection Librarian, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, email to author, 12 June 2003.
- ²⁴ HPG to FWP Sr., 24 October 1899, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Philip J. Panum, Special Collection Librarian, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colo., email to author, 17 June 2003.
- ²⁷ Passet, *Cultural Crusaders*, 5-8, 44-45.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 51.
- ²⁹ HPG to FWP Sr., 24 October 1899, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁰ Passet, *Cultural Crusader*, 20.
- ³¹ Ingersoll, *I Remember*, 20.
- ³² HPG to FWP Sr., 24 October 1899, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³³ Homer A.A. Smith to HPG, 5 June 1901, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁴ Homer A.A. Smith to HPG, 25 December 1900, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁵ Homer A.A. Smith to HPG, 2 August 1900, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁶ Homer A.A. Smith to HPG, 2 June 1902, Plummer Goulding Papers.

³⁷ Mary Minifie Paterson to HPG, 31 July 1902, Plummer Goulding Papers.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ John Y. Cole, *For Congress and the Nation: A Chronological History of the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1979), 34-35.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 35.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² James Conway, *America's Library: The Story of the Library of Congress, 1800-2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 74.

⁴³ David C. Mearns, *The Story Up to Now: The Library of Congress, 1800-1946* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1947), 97. Reprinted from the Annual Report of the Library of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1946, with the addition of illustrations and a slight revision of the text.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Edith E. Clarke, "The New Building of the Library of Congress," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 5 (January 1897): 138, Pratt Institute Archives.

⁴⁶ David C. Mearns, "Herbert Putnam: Librarian of the United States." *D. C. Libraries* 26 (January 1955): 16-17.

⁴⁷ Cole, *For Congress and the Nation*, 61-62.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁹ Mearns, *The Story Up to Now*, 173.

⁵⁰ Cole, *For Congress and the Nation*, 75.

⁵¹ HPG to Philip Sanford Goulding (hereafter cited as PSG), 12 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers; HPG to PSG, 24 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵² Harriet Wheeler Pierson, *Rosemary: Reminiscences of the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C., 1943), 9.

⁵³ Ibid., 4-5.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 4, 11, 14-15.

⁵⁸ HPG to PSG, 1 September 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁹ *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York: J. T. White, 1944), s.v. Goulding, Philip Sanford; University of California at Los Angeles, "1937, University of California: In Memorium," s.v. Philip Sanford Goulding, http://dynaweb.oac.cdlib.org:8088/dynaweb/uchist/public/inmemoriam/inmemoriam1937/@Generic__BookTextView/224 (accessed 12 July 2003).

⁶⁰ HPG to PSG, 27 June 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶¹ HPG to PSG, 11 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶² HPG to PSG, 12 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶³ HPG to PSG, 15 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶⁴ HPG to PSG, 16 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶⁵ PSG to HPG, 16 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶⁶ PSG to HPG, 18 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶⁷ HPG to PSG, 18 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶⁸ HPG to PSG, 19 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶⁹ HPG to PSG, 22 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷⁰ HPG to PSG, 24 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷¹ HPG to PSG, 29 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷² HPG to PSG, 31 August 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ HPG to PSG, 4 September 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

Chapter 6

MRS. PHILIP S. GOULDING

Love, courtship, marriage, and happily-ever-after—what became of Mrs. Philip S. Goulding? Did the once very young Helen Plummer, who yearned for a family and a home of her own, finally find fulfillment in domesticity; in her marriage; in making a home? Did the experienced librarian, who loved books and enjoyed the scholarly challenges of the cataloger, miss her career and the professional expression of her education? This final chapter, an overview of many years, browses and chooses significant events that, viewed together, hope to achieve a general, but informed impression of the life of Mrs. Philip S. Goulding. Fifty-five years is a long time—thirty-three married, twenty-two widowed. Helen Plummer Goulding's post-1904 correspondence provides the background for this period, as well as suggestions for further research into the lives of librarians Helen Lancaster Plummer Goulding and Philip Sanford Goulding.

1904: The Wedding Trip

Mr. and Mrs. Philip S. Goulding crossed the American continent by rail on their wedding trip. Always mindful of her father, Helen and Philip wrote several letters describing their train trip, the places they saw, and the people they visited. The married couple stopped in Glencoe, Illinois, and Denver, Colorado, where Helen proudly

introduced Philip to the Plummer family. By chance, Helen ran into Charles Dudley while on a Denver trolley, but she planned a visit with John Parsons and his wife in their home. Mr. Parsons "was properly surprised....It was great fun."¹ Helen felt a tender affection for John Parsons, her "old cataloguing chief,"² and the two families corresponded for many years with Parsons often signing his letters "Papa Parsons." Helen and Philip visited the Mormon sites in Salt Lake City, and Helen was pleased with the first time she had ever "seen the Sierras by daylight; they are similar to parts of the Rockies but are not so rugged; we have been following a lovely stream for miles."³ In Oakland, Helen reunited with the Randols and happily brought Philip into the fold of her adopted western family. In "Frisco" Philip presented his bride to his western cousins, and as they traveled south through Los Angeles to Arizona, the wedding couple visited more of Philip's relatives. The few letters that Helen and Philip wrote to Frank Sr. were only sketches. They promised to fill in the details later, but this was not to be. Francis W. Plummer Sr. died in October with his adopted daughter Nellie Plummer at his side. None of his family knew of his impending death; none knew that he died. Edward Plummer,* Frank Sr.'s younger brother, wrote to Helen from his army post at Fort Egbert, Alaska.

It seems to me that it was such a blessing you were married—and I am so glad, Darling, that the trip was nearly over, that you had had the happiness before the news reached you....Have you ever heard of Frank [Jr.]?

* Edward Hinkley Plummer, born at Esperanza, Elkridge, Maryland, in 1853, was a younger brother of Francis Wallace Plummer Sr. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1877, and his extensive military career included service as a Navajo and Moqui Indian agent and service during the Spanish American War and World War I. His post assignments spanned the American continent. He retired as a Brigadier General 30 November 1918. He and his wife Georgia Alice Moody had six children. He died at his home in Pacific Grove, California, in 1927. *Who Was Who in America, Vol. 1, 1897-1942* (Chicago: Marquis—Who's Who, 1968), s.v. Edward Hinkley Plummer.

Would you like to have a notice published in California papers?...I had letters from Mother ... but they were dated October 11th—I would like to know if any of them knew & whether they went to him or you. I know you do not care—nor do I very much—but perhaps he would. When the end comes we feel differently and barriers of our own building seem so trifling compared to the great one between here and hereafter. I loved him dearly. He was always kind to me—more than kind. He had my tender, loving sympathy in all his trials—and he had many, many bitter ones. I believe his aims were always high, pure, noble—and that he did not always attain them was due to others more than to himself.⁴

Helen must have treasured this fitting tribute and letter of loving condolence from her Uncle Ned, as once again she faced loss and sorrow during what should have been her time of hope and happiness.

1904-1906: Washington, D.C.

No letters have been found that describe Helen's life as the newlywed wife of a Library of Congress (L.C.) cataloger. Helen's familiarity with the cataloging department and her new status as a homemaker no doubt prompted the beginnings of her famous hospitality which complemented Philip's continuing professional association with their L.C. friends. The Gouldings were an integral part of the L.C. milieu, and they remained so over many years. That the catalogers were a tightly knit group, interested in each others lives, is evident in later letters. Harriet W. Pierson wrote to Helen in 1913.

May was a sad month in our Library world, for within a week we buried our dear old friend Mr. Solyons, and our inimitable and brilliant friend Mr. Stefánson....We enjoy having Mr. Martel as chief, so much. He is rather handicapped at present, for he misses Mr. Stefánson, and then Miss Sheldon and Miss Martin are going out to the Univ. of California Lib., Dr. Wiley has already gone there, and Mrs. Stevens is taking leave from May to September in the Adirondacks.⁵

In 1916 she wrote,

Now as to the Library, what a flurry we had before Christmas because of diphtheria in our midst. Miss Watson has been having a genuine case of it, so her desk was fumigated. After that, a doctor from the health service came to our division one day, and one by one we went to him, opened our mouths wide, and had a culture taken of our throats; even Mr. Martel had to go through it too. The report came up that the cultures were all negative except one, Miss Jack's. She was notified that she was wanted in the Chief Clerk's office, and the health officer there told her an ambulance was waiting to take her to her house. So she was packed off, feeling perfectly well, and she was shut up alone in her room for 18 days, all the time feeling very well indeed.⁶

Helen's continuing involvement with this group of caring colleagues, who shared each others lives and troubles, may have meant that Helen felt almost as close to that "Library world" as she had when she went to the office every day.

The fun-loving and affectionate nature of the catalogers is uniquely demonstrated in a thin, handmade book that was probably made after Philip's resignation and presented to him from the department before the Gouldings' departed from Washington. Its thirty-two, 10 inch x 8.5 inch pages are cut from gray construction paper and penned in black and red inked calligraphy. Whether characterized as a lampoon or a playful caricature, this cleverly designed scrapbook displays clipped photographic images of faces, pasted onto whimsical printed cutouts, of Library of Congress colleagues. A few pages bear esoteric captions, and no names identify the cameo faces. The contents will remain a mystery until someone looks for, finds, and compares the images with recognized photographs. Also, it is not known who made the book. According to the donor of the Plummer Goulding Papers, Helen created this album and others like it as a gift for her husband and some of his Library of Congress colleagues.⁷ The title page, however,

suggests that it was probably a gift from the cataloguing department. Perhaps Helen contributed. The following represents the form and the text of the little book's title page.

U. S. Library of Congress
Who's who in Libraryland
a portrait gallery of notable living librarians
in the United States
or
The delectable dreams and horrible hallucinations
of
Gentle Genevieve
being what the Fairy showed her.
Illustrations partly in colors with portraits of the compilers from plates
made especially for this work
“We careful painters who made it our care
To paint men as they might be – not as they are”
Washington D.C.
Privately printed
1906

The verso records “Hand-made” and “Only one copy issued,” and is dated “June 30. 1906.”⁸ This book commemorated years of cataloging camaraderie as Philip left the Library to advance his career by taking the position of head cataloger at the University of Illinois library at Urbana-Champaign.

1906-1917: Urbana-Champaign, Illinois

When Helen's classmate Minnie Dill mentioned “the three heads of the then best known library schools when we were at Pratt,”⁹ she named Mary Wright Plummer of the

Pratt Institute, Alice B. Kroeger of the Drexel Institute, and Katharine L. Sharp of the Armour Institute.* The Armour Institute Department of Library Science opened in Chicago in 1893 under the direction of Katharine L. Sharp. Within four years this technical training class was moved to the University of Illinois where Sharp developed the country's second university-based library school after Melvil Dewey's school at Columbia College.† The Armour Institute's move to a university constituted an important step in the continuing development of library education. Sharp insisted on "advanced admission requirements, joint teaching-library responsibilities and full authority to plan the curriculum."¹⁰ The University of Illinois conferred on the library school not only the advantages of university life and access to university faculty, but also equal standing with other state university schools and a full professorship for the director.¹¹

It was under the directorship of Katharine Sharp that Philip Goulding accepted the position of head cataloger at the University of Illinois library. No less than four head catalogers had preceded Philip, all women, and, in 1906, he was the first man to head the university's cataloging department. One might ask the significance of hiring a man to a position traditionally filled by women. Did this indicate that Philip was struggling to advance his career? Or might we interpret Philip's move, to head the cataloging department of a prestigious academic library and library school under the direction of Katharine Sharp, as a significant advancement for his career? Perhaps the latter, as Philip

* See footnote on page 118.

† The Columbia College library school founded by Melvil Dewey in 1887 was moved to Albany in 1889 as the New York State Library School. The school returned to its university base at Columbia University in 1926.

was also given teaching responsibilities. Procedures instituted under the previous department heads were well-established routines by the time Philip arrived, so Philip was given the additional assignment to, "meet the library seniors about once a week for the discussion of advanced library problems which they might not meet in regular work."¹²

While Philip was busy at the University of Illinois library, Helen was busy at home and in their community. Her eleven years in Urbana, one of the longest periods of time she had ever lived in one location, might be described as the culmination of her domestic pursuits. Correspondents thanked her for dearly admired handmade gifts, praised her cooking talents and hospitality, and mentioned magazine subscriptions such as *Good Housekeeping*. She was socially involved with neighbors and her husband's university colleagues. Emma Knott Klinkhart, former Library of Congress colleague, who had also married and "gone to keeping house," appreciated the path that she and Helen had chosen, and she commiserated with her. "It seems that every year gets busier ... and no doubt you find it so, too, with the neighbor's babies to care for, calls, teas, lectures, etc., such as a college town is made up of."¹³ In the tradition of the period, Helen became the domestically and socially occupied wife of her professionally occupied husband.

Helen was also involved in the service works of her church. She belonged to the St. John's Guild of the University of Illinois Episcopal Church. Her specific responsibilities within this organization are not yet known. The only mention of her membership is a brief note thanking Helen for her "good services."¹⁴ The thank-you note was written from Osborn Hall which was a university rooming house for Episcopalian female students.¹⁵ Helen's long-term experience with boarding houses, the Greenpoint

Settlement in Brooklyn, and life as a struggling single young woman certainly gave her the knowledge, insight, and expertise for work in such an association. While the nature of Helen's service is not known, it is known that Episcopalian women during this time had become deeply involved "in social service and in Christian education" through "carefully planned programs."¹⁶ The University of Illinois Episcopal Church provided services to Episcopalian students.¹⁷ Helen's membership in the guild is a natural extension of her prior church affiliations. Delving into this organization's records at the University of Illinois might shed light on Helen's community service as a married woman and reveal how she utilized the skills she had developed through her unique life experiences.

Even though there is little specific information about her activities during the Urbana years, it is clear that Helen was not idle. Harriet W. Pierson, in 1913, answered one of Helen's letters, noting how it "gives a vivid picture of your life—What a busy life you lead!"¹⁸ Helen embraced homemaking, enjoyed vegetable and flower gardening, engaged in her community, and supported her husband's career with such enthusiasm and commitment that friends and relatives often cautioned against her tendency to overwork and encouraged her to slow down. Early in her marriage Helen worked hard to build the life and create the family she had longed for.

The answer to the obvious question is, yes, Helen and Philip wanted to have a child. Throughout the years Helen always wrote fondly of children. She enjoyed their care and company, and letters to "Aunt Helen" attest to shared devotions. To have her own child must have been one of her great desires. By the summer of 1907, the Gouldings were

settled in their Urbana home, and Helen consulted with her Washington, D. C., physician, Dr. A. Frances Foye, who told her, "Be sure you are in good health and strong and I do not see why you cannot have an increase in your family and more than likely you will be better in every way and there is no doubt in my mind but that all of your internal organs would get up in their right places. Then as so often happens you might take on flesh and be much stronger in many ways provided you had good care and attention and took a long time to recuperate. You should be watched most carefully during nine months and—yes! for eleven months. Since my sister, in her poor health, could have such a beautiful baby, and get along so well, I think you can go and do likewise."¹⁹ In January 1909, about one year and six months later, Dr. Foye commented on Helen's "severe trial" and wished she could be "where I could see you often enough to find out the cause or put you in the hands of someone who could."²⁰ While the trial is not explained, it is hard to image that the doctor was referring to Helen's much discussed indigestion. About June 1909, Helen went to Baltimore to consult with Dr. Foye again. Helen's long-time Baltimore friend Mary Minifie Paterson was "distressed" at Helen's reported "condition," "weakness," and "loneliness." She hoped Dr. Foye was "mistaken," and that "Dr. Ballock would not confirm the diagnosis."²¹ Emma Knott, at the time unmarried and still at the Library of Congress, recommended Christian Science when "you get tired of materia medica"* suggesting it might help her avoid "another operation."²² Both Mary and Emma offered to go to Helen, and both reminded her that the "darkest hour is just before the dawn."²³ This illness may or may not have been associated with conceiving a

* Helen advocated homeopathy.

child, but Helen and Philip, if they ever did have a baby, for however brief the time, would have no living children.

That ill health stalked Helen is apparent in all of her correspondence, both before and after she married. She first mentioned her health problems when she was twenty-one years old, and, at that time, she expressed her wish to “feel as I did four or five years ago.”²⁴ Her symptoms varied: breathing difficulties, digestive disturbances, fatigue, neuritis, rheumatics, and so on. At least one letter written in 1915 implies that she may have had a “breakdown” that required an extended period of rest.²⁵ In the letter, Eliza Witham scolded Helen for working too hard at housekeeping and exhausting herself mentally with readings about “the wild time in which we are living.”²⁶ The basis or bases for the variety of symptoms mentioned throughout Helen’s correspondence remains undetermined. That she may have had at least one abdominal surgery is revealed in her 1959 death certificate which records the cause of her death as “intestinal obstruction” due to “adhesive bands.”

During the last half of the nineteenth century, neurasthenia or “American Nervousness” became a popular diagnostic label for a host of idiopathic complaints. First described by Dr. George Miller Beard, neurasthenic ailments included such symptoms as chronic fatigue, lassitude, poor appetite, headache, and irritability. Initially attributed to the social effects of industrialization and urbanization, and applied to men and women alike, neurasthenia soon became associated with “female complaints.” Upper and middle class women seemed to be particularly susceptible to vague, overarching symptoms, and

* See full quotation on page 71.

excessive intellectual pursuits were considered to be a contributing factor. Advanced education and managerial responsibilities, regarded as dangers that threatened a woman's health and stamina, actually became controversial issues in the employment and compensation of librarians.²⁷ The female constitution, it seemed, was weak and susceptible to over-stimulation.

The female sex organs, the ovaries and uterus in particular, became associated with woman's "weakness," both physical and mental. It was thought that neurasthenia inevitably resulted in a number of gynecologic diseases, and conversely, the sex organs were pinpointed as offending culprits. A number of dubious treatments were practiced, and some physicians employed controversial surgical interventions, such as ovariectomy and hysterectomy, to relieve mental and physical symptoms.²⁸

To say that Helen was involved in these questionable medical practices would be speculation; to say that she was influenced by the medical opinions of the day is certain. It is impossible, however, to define her health problems or judge them as psychological, organic, or an interaction of the two. An accounting and analysis of the symptoms mentioned in Helen's letters might suggest a number of chronic physical diseases and/or psychological conditions. Comparing her symptoms, as they were described by the lay terminology of the times, with current studies of turn-of-the-twentieth-century medical assessments and diagnoses of female illnesses might help clarify why Helen suffered without relief.

Mary Wright Plummer tried to help Helen cope with her ailments, even during the time that Mary was fighting her battle with cancer. "I am so sorry to hear thee has had

such a siege. I believe nerves are worse than a major operation. Can't you board this winter, so that thee can have a rest from housekeeping?"²⁹ In February of the year that she died, 1916, Mary, who had consulted a Christian Science practitioner, advised Helen to study the practice as well. "Dr. Smith, who has just been here from Chicago—our old family physician,—says she and other doctors often advise patients to try it, and she has seen very good effects. Instead of beginning on 'Science and Health,' read some of the pamphlet literature,—it is much more easy to understand and is done, much of it, by men and women who have been eminent in law, medicine, the ministry, etc. So one hasn't the prejudice against Mrs. E. to contend with. I daresay it wd. be a very good thing for thee, since thee is ailing so much and so takes a dark view of things."³⁰ Whether Helen followed her cousin's advice is not known. As was her custom, Helen retreated to the Colorado Rocky Mountains.

Helen and Philip spent a number of summers at Manitou Springs, Colorado, escaping the midwestern heat of Illinois, resting, sleeping outside on the porch, drinking the "soda water," and generally trying to improve their health. Manitou Springs was a health resort just west of Colorado Springs, and the Gouldings owned one of the "Illini Cottages," which they rented out and vacationed at. In truth, their letters make the trips sound busier and less restful than intended, because Helen spent most of her vacation entertaining guests. During the summers of 1915 and 1916, Philip stayed in Illinois working on the library budget and staffing problems, but he wrote to Helen almost daily. In late August, he joined her, and they stayed on, beyond the vacations of their houseguests and the noisy nearby renters, to make house repairs, plant the flower seeds Philip brought from their

Urbana garden, take long walks, watch the birds, and celebrate their wedding anniversary. Unfortunately, the times were changing, and the Gouldings became discouraged with the growing local population, the lack of peace and quiet, and the new motor car roads carving up the mountain sides. They talked about selling their cottage. Change was ahead for Philip's career as well, and Manitou days would eventually slip into the past. Philip's world became Helen's world as she followed him throughout his career.

When Emma Knott married and became Mrs. Klinkhart, she commented to Helen that she was "out of the library world now."³¹ When Helen married, she never really left the profession, and she may have actively participated in directing her husband's career. In January 1910, Charles Dudley, who was still the librarian at the Denver Public Library and was in the process of supervising the library's move into the new Carnegie building, replied to Helen's inquiry about finding a position for Philip at the Colorado State University library. "Mr. Whitaker left the state university library some time in September....It was decided to give the assistant librarian a chance to show what was in him, and we made him acting librarian until the end of the college year....It will do no harm for Mr. Goulding to write the president about the first of the month saying that he wishes still to be considered an applicant for the position. He may use my name as a reference if he wishes."³² It is not known if Philip ever applied for the position, but this letter does show Helen's ambition for her husband to become a library director.

Helen's participation in Philip's career also included at least one American Library Association conference. In 1917, she went with Philip to the conference in Louisville,

Kentucky, where they took the opportunity to lodge with and visit Annie Pope Newbold's family. At the conference, Philip presented a discussion on "Co-operative Cataloging," and his comments were quoted at length in the *Bulletin* of the American Library Association.³³ Philip had written at least one other published article titled "Classification of Literatures in the University of Illinois Library," which had appeared in the April 1914 *Library Journal*.³⁴ Philip's career was making steady strides; yet, Helen, a married woman unemployed in her profession, was not content to merely pace the sidelines of her husband's career.

When the disappointment of not having children became a permanent reality and the strain of keeping house affected her health, Helen's thoughts may have strayed back to the professional life she had left behind. One wonders if Helen had regrets. Reading Emma Knott's words as she became Mrs. Klinkhart, raises the possibility. What does Emma mean when she asks Helen, "Why do you rebuke me for following in your footsteps?"³⁵ Was this a rebuke for marrying? Probably not. For marrying and leaving librarianship? Possibly.

Mary Wright Plummer, ever Helen's support, encouraged her and tried to keep her within the Pratt library fold. They shared news about various librarians and Mary even prodded Helen to become politically aware. "I enclose a coupon that I hope thee will feel thee can fill out and send to Mrs. Catt,* —all the Plummers in our branch are woman suffragists and always have been, I send also a copy of Woman's Journal from which the coupon was cut, as it is very good reading."³⁶ Regarding news of Pratt, Mary wrote,

* Plummer is probably referring to Carrie Chapman Catt (1859-1947), leader in the American woman suffrage movement.

"There was no issue of the Handbook last year, because the Students' Bulletin contained all the news in its Annual No. in May, sent to all graduates. It will not be issued this year; or there will be a handbook."³⁷ A year later, Mary wrote, "Send 50¢ for the Student Bulletin & thee won't feel far away from the School, thee'll get lots of news."³⁸

Helen retained her identity as a librarian by staying in touch with her classmates and colleagues, their personal lives, and their professional work. These were active men and women engaged in the rigors of library work, and they told Helen all about their busy library lives. Mary Wright Plummer wrote, "I shall try to remember to send thee a circular of the School, and when thee sees what I have been doing since May 12, 1911, thee will begin to believe that 'I, too, have not been idle.'"³⁹ One former colleague consulted Helen. "Have you any good speakers to suggest for a state library association meeting? I am president of the Conn. Lib. Assoc. this year and have a meeting to arrange for October."⁴⁰ Minnie Dill of Decatur's Free Public Library summarized many of the challenges faced by public librarians when she wrote,

Four of us worked behind closed doors on the 22nd of Feb. to try to get caught up when the public could not get at us. If we only had a week or month of that sort of work we might get straightened up and see daylight. Of course Jan.-March is always the busiest time of our year; then the advertising called out more ('it pays to advertise'); and the permitting of six books on a borrower's card makes more work all along the line (but pleases the people and increases the circulation—of fiction at least); and being short-handed in help; and having art exhibitions in the building; and keeping up with the procession in general—all of these and more have worn us all to a frazzle.⁴¹

Minnie goes on and on, as do so many others, and one must finally consider the possibility that Helen's own frenetic life, which compromised her health, was an effort to compensate for a dormant career and childlessness as she read about and perhaps

competed with these busy librarians' lives. Nonetheless it remains that regular contact with classmates and library colleagues from Pratt, Denver, and Washington helped Helen preserve her hard-won identity as a professional librarian.

The Gouldings' busy life in Urbana lasted from 1906 until 1917. Toward the end of their stay, Urbana like Manitou was enjoying some questionable progress. As buildings sprouted and changed the country atmosphere near their Illinois home, Philip observed, "The other day I discovered a foundation started in the east end of Reasoner's orchard facing Busey, where we hunted birds last spring. With the houses back of Pickels and all about that region there will soon be no orchard or birds and the [illegible] orchard is also for sale for building lots. The cemetery will very soon be the only haven for bird-lovers!"⁴² As their rural haven developed into a bustling suburban neighborhood and the Illinois weather remained as oppressive as ever, the move when it came was not entirely unwelcome. Yet Helen, as always, had made life-long friends in Illinois. After Philip took a cataloguing position in New York City and they moved from their home of many years, Helen's correspondence with people from the university and their Urbana neighborhood attested to continuing close relationships.

1917-1920: New York City

Nineteen seventeen was tattooed with significant events. New York State adopted woman suffrage, the United States declared war on Germany, and the golden age of library development (historians bracket the period between 1887 and 1917⁴³) came to a

close. Nonetheless, amid progressive activism and war, the American Library Association created the Library War Service to provide American servicemen at home and abroad with reading materials; headquartered at the Library of Congress, Herbert Putnam was appointed director.⁴⁴ The Denver Public Library supported the war service effort by serving as the center for Colorado's book collections; its staff also raised money for and served in ALA wartime library activities.⁴⁵ The Pratt class of 1897 celebrated its twenty-year reunion, the Gouldings attended the American Library Association conference in Louisville, Kentucky, and Helen celebrated her forty-seventh birthday. In September, Helen and Philip moved from Illinois to New Jersey when Philip accepted a cataloging position at Henry E. Huntington's private library in New York City.

Henry Edwards Huntington (1850-1927), born in Oneonta, New York, was the nephew and heir of Collis P. Huntington, railroad executive and president of the Southern Pacific Company of California. Henry, known as Edward, worked for Collis's railroad empire. After his uncle's death in 1900, Edward built the Pacific Electric Railway Company, creating an integrated system of electric rail transportation throughout the Los Angeles area.⁴⁶ Having amassed a fortune, Edward retired in 1910 and divided his home-life between New York City and San Marino, California, devoting himself to the gardens surrounding his newly constructed San Marino home, his art collection, and his New York library.⁴⁷

Edward had been collecting books since the 1870s, and over the years his acquisitions had progressed from purchased sets, to "individual volumes of special interest to him," to

“rare material of international importance.”⁴⁸ Huntington biographer James Thorpe* records Edward’s “first spectacular book purchase” as the E. Dwight Church Library of 2,133 volumes, “choice and rare,”⁴⁹ noting that, with this purchase, Edward “entered the ranks of major book collectors.”⁵⁰ Huntington housed his growing library in his East 57th Street home in Manhattan, and in 1915, he hired George Watson Cole,[†] cataloger of the Church collection, to be his librarian.⁵¹ During negotiations for the position, Edward stipulated that Cole’s suggestion of female assistants be abandoned in favor of men. Edward wrote to Cole, “The only obstacle [to Cole’s employment] is the employment of women which for reasons of my own I object to. I know that in employing men the cost will be more, and I presume this is your principal reason for employing women. I hope you will not object to this or think I am too set in my idea. I do not think, aside from this idiosyncrasy of mine, you will regret taking up this work. I certainly intend giving you a free hand, and I shall be most happy to know that you accept.”⁵² Cole accepted the position at a salary of \$6000 a year and hired a staff of six men. Chester M. Cate was the head cataloger.⁵³ Two years later, Chester Cate left the library to serve in the war, and Cole hired Philip Goulding to take his place. During his New York tenure, Philip was

* James Thorpe was the director of the Huntington Library and Art Gallery from 1966 to 1983. At the time *Henry Edwards Huntington: A Biography* was published in 1994, Thorpe was Senior Research Associate at the Huntington Library.

† George Watson Cole (1850-1939), Massachusetts attorney and member of the Torrington library board in Wolcottville, came to librarianship through the advice of his mother-in-law and consultation with Melvil Dewey. His first library position was at the Fitchburg library in Massachusetts, followed by a temporary position with Charles Pratt prior to his founding of the Pratt Institute. During his time with Pratt, Cole attended Dewey’s first Columbia College library class. Work at the Newberry Library under William F. Poole, 1888-1891 was followed by work at the Jersey City public library, 1891-1895. Cole’s cataloging of the E. Dwight Church library from 1902 to 1909 established his reputation as a bibliographer. He was librarian of the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery from 1915 to 1924. Theron J. Damon, *George Watson Cole, 1850-1939: A Biographical Sketch* (Worcester, Mass: The Davis Press, 1940), 3-11, Reprinted from the Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society for October 1939.

credited with the compilation, under Cole's direction, of the "Check List or Brief Catalogue of the Library of Henry E. Huntington (English Literature, 1475-1640)" in 1919 and its supplement in 1920.⁵⁴

From 1917 to 1920, Helen and Philip lived in Leonia and Palisades Park, New Jersey, across the Hudson River from Lower Manhattan. These three years culminate the process of discovery that has informed Helen's story from the level of her personal papers. Helen's private life is about to cloak itself in mystery, because the chronology of her papers ends in 1920. In the meantime, Helen and Philip lived for one last time in the East, and Helen came full circle, back to her Pratt associations.

The Graduates' Association of the Pratt Institute School of Library Training was organized the same year that Helen graduated from the institute in 1897. The association's focus was Pratt students. Students as well as alumni became members; a fall reception welcomed incoming students, and a commencement dinner honored graduates; luncheons were regularly held at various hotels in New York City; student loans and scholarship funds offered assistance. Meetings, dinners, and a handbook kept Pratt alumni in touch and informed, and Helen's papers reflect an active correspondence amongst Pratt graduates during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

To name just a few of her classmate correspondents and their libraries: Charles E. Wright, librarian of the Carnegie Free Library in Duquesne, Pennsylvania;⁵⁵ Edith Tobitt, Omaha Public Library⁵⁶ and past president of the Nebraska Library Association, 1901 and 1902;⁵⁷ Minnie A. Dill, the Free Public Library in Decatur, Illinois;⁵⁸ and Grace A. Child, librarian of the State Normal School at Willimantic, Connecticut, and Connecticut

Library Association president, 1919.⁵⁹ These examples suggest that tracing the activities of Pratt graduates from the class of 1897 might be an interesting exercise in the study of early twentieth-century public librarianship. But there is one Pratt graduate from the class of 1895, who might provide a particularly interesting story—Helen's close and constant friend, Eliza Witham.

Pratt alumnae, former Greenpoint roommates, and Astral Branch colleagues until 1899, Helen and Eliza had chosen very different lives over the past twenty years. Eliza, unmarried, remained in Brooklyn at the Brooklyn Public Library. Addressing Helen as "Dear Plummie," she sang the praises of her children's room and complained about the wages. Over the years, Eliza had maintained her connections with the Ovingtons of the Greenpoint Settlement, and for a short time she moved back into the Astral Apartments. Eliza was a suffragist and social progressive, and she peppered her newsy letters with political views and social commentary that challenged and sometimes chided Helen. Occasionally, Eliza inquired about Philip, lightheartedly referring to him as "the man." When Helen moved back to the East Coast, these two friends took full advantage of their proximity, visiting each other in New Jersey or Brooklyn and meeting in Manhattan for lunch or tea. One can only imagine their three years of spirited conversations. In 1920, as California loomed in the Goulding's future, it must have been difficult for Helen to think of moving so far away from this dynamic personality and forthright friend.

When Helen and Philip learned that they would soon be moving to California, another Pratt alumna, Flora R. Petrie, New York City's 57th Street Y.M.C.A. librarian, looked at the impending move from a practical point of view. "Was greatly surprised to hear of

your prospective removal to Pacific Coast. I knew the possibility lurked in the offing, but thought you were unwilling to go so far west again, for keeps. But as you say a librarian hasn't unlimited choice."⁶⁰ When Henry E. Huntington moved his Manhattan library to his new, as yet unfinished, library building in Southern California, he took his New York library staff with him.

1920-1924: San Marino, California

Helen and Philip were contemplating a significant move. Not only did they need to consider the personal impact and scale of a move to California, but they also needed to consider such factors as Philip's salary and the security of his position. In December 1918, George Watson Cole and Philip had a private, confidential meeting in the Grolier Club in New York City where they hammered out staff salaries, raises, and "various maxima" placing the "Head Cataloger's" at \$2800, which was \$400 more than Philip's currently negotiated salary. The prospect of a future increase was surely attractive.⁶¹ The next year, however, Philip's title and position were challenged. Chester M. Cate, the previous head cataloger, who had left the library in 1917 to serve in the U. S. Army Hospital Corps, returned and was "given his old job back."⁶² Perhaps there had been a misunderstanding of the original agreement regarding the permanence of Philip's position, but when Philip "complained to Cole," Cole reassured him "in 1920 that he and Cate were equals."⁶³ Helen and Philip may have based their decision to move to California, at least partially, on assurances from Cole about Philip's position, his continuing status, and concomitant salary. It is not known whether Philip had chances for

other positions in the East, or whether any were compared and considered, but in 1920, Helen and Philip decided to make the move that would permanently locate them in California.

James Thorpe notes that Henry E. Huntington could be a frugal man, and the expense of moving his library staff and their families, “eight couples, three bachelors, and nine children,”⁶⁴ became a contentious issue. Huntington thought they should move at their own expense. When the families protested, it was George Watson Cole who finally convinced Huntington that his employees simply could not afford to do so. Huntington finally relented, stipulating, however, that the staff and their families were required to travel together in groups at reduced rates and were responsible for crating and transporting their belongings to the freight car.⁶⁵ And so it was in September 1920, that Helen and Philip moved themselves and their belongings to Southern California where Philip continued his cataloging work at Huntington’s San Marino estate.

On the San Marino estate, where the library building was under construction and books and manuscripts were being unpacked and organized, Huntington continued to expand his collection and promote efforts to establish his library as a renowned research institution. By 1923, Philip had worked under George Watson Cole for six years, and he had been at the San Marino library for three years. Perhaps the significance and prestige of heading such an important library contributed to what James Thorpe calls “the Philip S. Goulding affair”⁶⁶ If Cole, at the time of the “affair,” was considering retirement, professional rivalries may have emerged as thoughts about who might succeed him began to surface.

The convolutions of the "affair" produce more questions than answers. Thorpe relates the following: "In 1923 Cole sent a three-page report, presumably prepared by Cate, telling Huntington of the errors that Goulding had made in cataloging and in ordering books that turned out to be duplicates.... On December 31, 1923, Huntington issued a memo to the staff in which he announced that all cataloging was under Cate."⁶⁷ Philip defended himself and "wrote an incensed letter to Huntington ... in which he gave his side of the story, declared that a great injustice had been done him, and asserted that the 'order has taken away all the real joy I have felt for my work.'"⁶⁸ According to Thorpe, Huntington declared surprise and "denied that there had ever been any intention of having Goulding become head cataloger" and was concerned that "Goulding will be a disturbing element in the staff."⁶⁹ Philip replied on 6 January 1924 that, "I know the incident has been a shock to the whole staff. Has it never occurred to you what will be the effect on their attitude toward their work when they see that a man who has given honestly of his best is suddenly deprived of his rightful position, while one who has persistently defrauded the library of its due, in the matter of time at least, is rewarded by advancement?"⁷⁰

Contributing to this scenario, Thorpe observed that "there had never been much warmth between Edward and Cole; Edward and Cate, on the other hand, enjoyed a spirited correspondence with one another: Cate wrote Edward often while he was in the service, once sending a ten-page letter describing minute and amusing details of army life."⁷¹ It should also be noted that another Huntington biographer, Donald C. Dickinson, points out that George Watson Cole took a dim view of his staff leaving their

professional responsibilities to volunteer for the war, and Cole was “annoyed” with Chester Cate when he volunteered and left the library in 1917. Dickinson adds another twist to the “affair” when he writes that Cole “dismissed” Philip in late 1923 and took responsibility for the duplicate purchases, offering to pay for them.⁷² The concluding events, according to Thorpe, are that Philip resigned by the end of January 1924, Cole retired in September, and Huntington appointed Cate librarian.⁷³

Building this long and convoluted set of circumstances may seem irrelevant to Helen’s story, but the details provide the necessary context for Thorpe’s inclusion of an extensive excerpt from a “long” letter that “Helen L. Plummer Goulding” wrote to Henry E. Huntington on 2 February 1924 just after Philip’s resignation. The excerpt and Thorpe’s commentary are here included in their entirety.

Goulding’s wife, Helen L. Plummer Goulding, added a bitter farewell on February 2, 1924. First she wrote a long letter to Huntington that began, “It seems a cruel thing to hurt a fellow-being who has never done anything to you or for you but good. You have had neither a legal nor a moral right to treat my good husband as you have done, and aside from your outrageous injustice to him, your treatment of Mr. Cole has been unpardonable, and will be resented by every person in the library world who knows him and his work, for they know that he is the one who really put your library on the map, so to speak.” She then took direct aim at Huntington:

“You are an old man, Mr. Huntington, with not many more years to look forward to. Have you ever thought of those last days or hours on your couch, when you will have to realize that in a short time you must go out alone into the great Unknown, and give an account of your every action to the Maker you have ignored? There will be no evading of questions then as now. When that time comes, you will realize too late that all your power and material possessions amount to nothing in view of what you might have had—the heartfelt respect and love of your fellow-men and women, which would have brought you real happiness and satisfaction in your declining years.”

She concluded by saying how glad they were to be leaving the library, and how sorry she was for those staff members who had to remain “in an atmosphere which I am pretty sure is distasteful to them.”

Mrs. Goulding had enough hostility left to write a letter on the same day to Cate and denounce him for “the underhanded ways of a mere cheat to work injury to another man.” She alleged that he had hurt Cole and misrepresented her husband, lost the respect of his colleagues, and “placed a stigma on the library and the profession.”⁷⁴

Helen was a veteran letter writer, and she had a great and enduring respect for family, friends, libraries, and librarianship. A review of her entire letter, and the other letters concerning this event, might shed more light on Helen’s defense of her husband. Her words at the very least reflect the family she came from, and they hark back to her grandfather, Richard Plummer, who loyally and skillfully defended his wife and family in the face of accusations made by the Lombard Street Friends Meeting.

Thorpe, however, portrays Helen as bitter and hostile. Understanding Helen’s history—her religious traditions, her struggles, her education, her life as an independent woman, and her exposure to progressive ideas—we might reevaluate Thorpe’s bitter/hostile interpretation as Helen’s frank sense of outrage and loyal defense of her husband and Cole. Fifty-four years old, Helen L. Plummer Goulding was a self-assured mature woman, and she was not afraid to express her honest views on any situation. As Eliza Witham once observed, Helen’s letters went “to the heart of things.”⁷⁵ With the added perspective of Helen’s background, her letter may reveal a confident woman, mature, courageous, and assertive—perhaps unusual for her time. This glimpse into Helen’s character at midlife reveals her sense of justice, moral and religious, and clarifies her value system. She clearly reaffirms her loyal support and defense of family and

friends, as well as her solid identification with libraries and librarians. She writes her letter as Philip's wife, but retains her identity as a Plummer and a librarian. These final words that we hear from Helen resonate not with bitter defeat, but with triumphant self-assurance and a clear sense of identity.

1924-1937: Working in Southern California

During the time Philip was employed at Huntington's San Marino library, and later while he worked at the University of California, Philip and Helen cooperated on an impressive project. Together they compiled the almost 1400-page *Index to American Book-Prices Current, 1916-1922*, which was published by E. P. Dutton & Company of New York in 1925. A massive work, it indexed the volumes of *American Books-Prices Current* (ABPC), annual records of books, manuscripts and other print items sold at auction. A standard bibliographical tool, it was and is still used by dealers, appraisers, auction houses, and scholars. Email communication with the current publisher of ABPC failed to locate records relevant to the Gouldings' employment,⁷⁶ but the publishers of the 1925 edition of the *Index* expressed "their appreciation to Philip S. Goulding and his wife, Helen Plummer Goulding, for the untiring devotion with which they have undertaken and completed the long and arduous task of compiling the *Index*."⁷⁷ Helen must have done a large portion of the work, because Philip was occupied with his work at the Huntington Library and the University of California.

The Southern Branch of the University of California was originally located on Vermont Avenue in Los Angeles, on what is now the campus of Los Angeles City

College. On 25 October 1926, "Founder's Rock ... [a] 75-ton granite boulder was hauled from Perris, Calif., for the formal dedication of the chaparral-covered Westwood campus"⁷⁸ Perhaps Helen and Philip were present for the dedication, since Philip had taken the position of head cataloger at the university's library in 1924.

Philip worked at both campuses of the University of California Southern Branch between the years 1924 and 1937, and Philip was surely involved in moving the university library and cataloging and organizing the collection at its new location. Several articles were also attributed to Philip during his years at the University of California, two of which were "The Value of Research in Cataloging," published in the ALA 1930 *Catalogers' and Classifiers' Yearbook*, and "The Card Catalogue," published in the 24 October 1927 issue of the *California Daily Bruin*. Perhaps the best summary of Philip's University of California work was written after his death on 10 May 1937. His 1937 UCLA "In Memorium" reads in part, "His enduring contribution to the University is the public card catalogue covering author, title, and subject entries for more than a quarter million volumes. Goulding was a student of the classics and was scholarly, careful, and painstaking in his contributions to librarianship. Elected to Phi Beta Kappa, he was also a member of the American Library Association and the California Library Association and was a leader in the regional group of catalogers. In 1904, he married Helen L. Plummer of Baltimore, who survives him."⁷⁹

Helen and Philip had moved to Westwood when the Westwood campus opened, but after Philip's death Helen returned to the Pasadena area where she lived for twenty-two years until her own death on 22 November 1959. As yet, no records have been found of

any of Helen's activities during her widowhood. Helen was 89 years old when she died, and the occupation recorded on her official Los Angeles County death certificate reads: Librarian, Public Library.

There are no definitive answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. Did the once very young Helen Plummer, who yearned for a family and a home of her own, finally find fulfillment in domesticity; in her marriage; in making a home? Did the experienced librarian, who loved books and enjoyed the scholarly challenges of the cataloger, miss her career and the professional expression of her education?

Without a doubt, Helen loved Philip and they were happily married. They shared so many common interests including books, birds, gardening, travel, and the love of friends and family. Housekeeping was physically challenging for Helen, but she was enthusiastic about her crafts, her gardening, and her famous entertaining. Keeping so busy was either an inherent drive or a social challenge. Perhaps it was an effort to distract herself from unwanted childlessness and a relinquished career.

Helen probably missed her career deeply, but she had the opportunity to fill that void in two ways. She helped Philip with his career and his work, and she stayed in touch with her own classmates and colleagues. Helen Plummer Goulding was a wife and a librarian, and her life was fulfilled with the love of family and friends, and deep interests in libraries, books, religion, and the natural world.

One last look back to the Goulding home in South Pasadena will find Helen in her garden.

1920-1929: Living in South Pasadena

“Prosperity and Growth: 1920-1929.”⁸⁰ So reads the chapter title written by South Pasadena historian Jane Apostol. Officially incorporated in 1888, South Pasadena had seen its lands of orchards and vineyards gradually subdivided into housing tracts to accommodate its growing population.⁸¹ As civilization encroached, concerns for the local environment surfaced early, and in 1894 volunteers planted 800 eucalyptus and 200 pepper trees throughout South Pasadena.⁸² By 1921, efforts were underway to preserve the beauty and idyllic nature of the Arroyo Seco, a dry wooded ravine which still winds its way along the western border of the city. In 1922, a bond measure passed that bought 100 acres of the Arroyo Seco for a city park,⁸³ and “by 1927 most of the Arroyo within South Pasadena had become city property.”⁸⁴ “The people celebrated in April by planting some three hundred native trees in the park, alongside the little cascades and pools formed by Garfias Spring.”⁸⁵

Helen and Philip lived on Spruce Street in South Pasadena from 1920 until about 1929. Young liquidambar have replaced many of the trees that once lined the streets of their still quiet neighborhood. Only one old California oak remains near their house, its roots and trunk thickly curling over the cracked cement curb. The yard of their little bungalow is shaded and well-tended and was surely, in their day, a haven for the birds Helen and Philip loved to watch. Young Helen Wig Elgin, donor of the Helen Plummer Goulding Papers, used to walk by this house in the early morning on her way to school, and she would find Helen in the yard tending the flower garden. The two Helen’s would

pause and talk, mostly about birds. "She loved to watch the birds."⁸⁶ And, as their friendship developed, Helen Goulding took Helen Wig on several of her bird walks.

Helen and Philip, avid bird watchers, were active members of the Pasadena Audubon Society. A 1949 newspaper article remembers their contribution.

It appears that "bird-walks" as they are now called were not a regularly scheduled activity of the society until 1920 when Mr. and Mrs. P. S. Goulding came to live in Pasadena and joined the Audubon Society. Mrs. Goulding, a very good bird woman, immediately became trail leader; and for eight years until she and Mr. Goulding moved to Westwood, she organized many pleasant excursions as well as regular walks in the local parks and wilderness areas. She set the pattern for the society's out-of-door meetings. Everyone brings a simple box lunch. Small groups walk hither and yon keeping a list of the birds seen or heard and gathering at an appointed place when hunger compels. There, after lunch, the leader for the day compiles a complete list of the birds identified that morning (sometimes as many as fifty kinds) and conducts an informal bird discussion.⁸⁷

One thinks back to 1840 when Richard Plummer, Helen's grandfather, subscribed to the first octavo edition of *Audubon's Birds*, and also to the stressful days of 1897 when Helen worried that her brother might sell part of their grandfather's set. Helen Wig Elgin remembers at least one of Helen's bird books and regrets that she had not been able to afford the purchase of so precious an item. It is not yet known what became of this family treasure.

We do know that Helen Plummer Goulding entrusted Helen Wig Elgin with a different family treasure, her family's papers, and so it was that the key to Helen's rich history found its way to Library and Archives of the Pasadena Museum of History. Helen Wig Elgin remembers Helen Goulding as a "remarkable woman," interested in

education and birds and “new things that were happening.” “I had a great admiration for her.”⁸⁸

In Baltimore, Maryland, on Harford Road is the Friends Burial Ground. Interred in the same plot, Helen Lancaster Plummer Goulding and Philip Sanford Goulding share their final resting place in the Quaker cemetery. Their ashes lie together next to Helen’s parents, Francis W. Plummer and Elizabeth Plummer. Richard Plummer and Elizabeth Plummer, Helen’s maternal grandparents lie nearby. The Stony Run Meeting, once the Lombard Street Meeting where Richard Plummer worshiped as a Hicksite Quaker, cares for the cemetery.⁸⁹ At the end of her life, Helen clearly declared her testimony to her enduring identity as a Marylander, a Plummer, a Quaker, a daughter, a wife, a friend, and a librarian.

Notes

¹ Helen Plummer Goulding (hereafter cited as HPG) to Francis W. Plummer Sr. (hereafter cited as FWP Sr.), 11 September 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

² Ibid.

³ HPG to FWP Sr., 19 September 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁴ Edward Plummer to HPG, 4 November 1904, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵ Harriet W. Pierson to HPG, 23 June 1913, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶ Harriet W. Pierson to HPG, 8 January 1916, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷ Helen Wig Elgin, telephone interview by author, Altadena, Calif., 25 April 2002.

⁸ "Who's Who in Libraryland," photo album/scrapbook, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁹ Minnie Dill to HPG, 22 September 1916, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁰ Laurel Ann Grotzinger, *The Power and the Dignity: Librarianship and Katharine Sharp* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1966), 103.

¹¹ Ibid., 101-103.

¹² Ibid., 163-64.

¹³ Emma Knott Klinkhart to HPG, 25 October 1912, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁴ Maude Whitley to HPG, 26 September 1917, Plummer Goulding Papers.

¹⁵ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "Episcopal Church Foundation Records, 1901-1985," University of Illinois Archives, <http://web.library.uiuc.edu/AHX/uasfa/4169008.pdf> (accessed 10 August 2003).

¹⁶ James Thayer Addison, *The Episcopal Church in the United States, 1789-1931* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951. Reprint, Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1969), 339-40.

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- ¹⁷ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "Episcopal Church Foundation Records, 1901-1985," University of Illinois Archives, <http://web.library.uiuc.edu/AHX/uasfa/4169008.pdf> (accessed 10 August 2003).
- ¹⁸ Harriet W. Pierson to HPG, 23 June 1913, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ¹⁹ A. Frances Foye to HPG, 12 July 1907, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁰ A. Frances Foye to HPG, 31 January 1909, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²¹ Mary Minifie Paterson to HPG, 16 June 1909, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²² Emma Knott Klinkhart, 15 June 1909, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²³ Mary Minifie Paterson to HPG, 16 June 1909, Plummer Goulding Papers; Emma Knott Klinkhart to HPG, 15 June 1909, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁴ HPG to Francis W. Plummer Sr., 28 November 1891, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁵ Eliza Witham to HPG, 31 May 1915, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Rosalee McReynolds, "The Sexual Politics of Illness in Turn of the Century Illness," *Libraries and Culture* 25 (Spring 1990): 194-217; Sarah Stage, *Female Complaints: Lydia Pinkham and the Business of Women's Medicine* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1979), 64-88.
- ²⁸ Stage, *Female Complaints*, 76-84.
- ²⁹ Mary Wright Plummer to HPG, 2 August 1915, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁰ Mary Wright Plummer to HPG, 5 February 1916, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³¹ Emma Knott Klinkhart to HPG, 18 January 1910, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³² Charles R. Dudley to HPG, 17 January 1910, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³³ Debbie Hughes, Graduate Assistant c/o Chris Prom, Assistant Archivist, University Archives, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, email to author, 11 August 2003.
- ³⁴ Anne Harwell Jordan and Melbourne Jordan, eds., *Cannons' Bibliography of Library Economy, 1876-1920: An Author Index with Citations* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976), 176.

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- ³⁵ Emma Knott Klinkhart to HPG, 18 January 1910, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁶ Mary Wright Plummer to HPG, 17 January 1909, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Mary Wright Plummer to HPG, 16 December 1909, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ³⁹ Mary Wright Plummer to HPG, 10 January 1912, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴⁰ Grace A. Child to HPG, 30 July 1919, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴¹ Minnie A. Dill to HPG, 4 March 1917, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴² Philip S. Goulding to HPG, 6 August 1916, Plummer Goulding Papers.
- ⁴³ Joanne E. Passet, *Cultural Crusaders: Women Librarians in the American West, 1900-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), xiii.
- ⁴⁴ John Y. Cole, *For Congress and the Nation: A Chronological History of the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1979), 87.
- ⁴⁵ Rena Reese, "The History of the Denver Public Library, 1860-1928," typescript (Denver: Denver Public Library, 1928), 47.
- ⁴⁶ James Thorpe, *Henry Edwards Huntington: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 182-83.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 250, 258-59.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 262.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 272.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 281.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 340-41.
- ⁵² Ibid., 341.
- ⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York: James T. White & Co., 1944), s.v. Goulding, Philip Sanford.

⁵⁵ Charles E. Wright to HPG, 31 May 1917, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁶ Eliza Witham to HPG, July 1916, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁷ Nebraska Library Association, "NLA Handbook," <http://www.state.ne.us/home/NLA/handbook/handbk9.htm> (accessed 12 August 2003).

⁵⁸ Minnie A. Dill to HPG, 6 April 1919, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁵⁹ Grace A. Child to HPG, 30 July 1919, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶⁰ Flora R. Petrie to HPG, 8 June 1920, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶¹ Philip S. Goulding to HPG, 30 December 1918, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁶² Thorpe, *Henry Edwards Huntington*, 473.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ John E. Pomfret, *The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery: From Its Beginnings to 1969* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1969), 44.

⁶⁵ Thorpe, *Henry Edwards Huntington*, 410-11.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 473.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 473-74.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 474.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 475.

⁷² Donald C. Dickinson, *Henry E. Huntington's Library of Libraries* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Press, 1995), 109, 202.

⁷³ Thorpe, *Henry Edwards Huntington*, 474-76.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 474-75.

⁷⁵ Eliza Witham to HPG, July 1916, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁷⁶ Katharine Kyes Leab, Editor-in-Chief, American Book Prices Current, email to author, 7 June 2003.

⁷⁷ Philip Sanford Goulding, and Helen Plummer Goulding, comps., *Index to American Book-Prices Current, 1916-1922* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1925), v.

⁷⁸ Marina Dundjerski, "Coming Home," *UCLA Magazine* 14 (Fall 2002): 22-25.

⁷⁹ Online Archive of California, "1937, University of California: In Memoriam," s.v. Philip Sanford Goulding: Los Angeles, <http://dynaweb.oac.cdlib.org:8088/dynaweb/uchist/public/inmemoriam/inmemoriam1937/224#X> (accessed 16 September 2003).

⁸⁰ Jane Apostol, *South Pasadena: A Centennial History, 1888-1988* (South Pasadena, Calif.: South Pasadena Public Library, 1987), 87.

⁸¹ Ibid., 25, 30.

⁸² Ibid., 38.

⁸³ Ibid., 87.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 93.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Helen Wig Elgin, interview by author, Altadena, Calif., 7 June 2002.

⁸⁷ Flora McIntyre, "Wholesale Killing of Doves Led to Formation of Audubon Society," *Pasadena Star News*, 10 July 1949, photocopy, Plummer Goulding Papers.

⁸⁸ Helen Wig Elgin, interview by author, Altadena, Calif., 7 June 2002.

⁸⁹ Nancy Moore, Archivist, Stony Run Friends Meeting, Baltimore, Md., emails to author, 8 August 2003, 15 August 2003.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

Helen Plummer's librarianship was discovered while processing the collection of her family's papers. As each bundle of envelopes was untied, as each letter was opened, each document released bits of information, facts, clues, and suggestions that created a mosaic of her life, a mosaic that has yet to be completed. Without her collection, however, Helen's story would have remained entirely hidden or at least very obscure. Librarian biography with its traditional focus has only recently evolved to include lesser-known librarians. An initial review of the historiography of librarianship revealed a traditional library literature that recorded the lives of prominent male library administrators. Female librarian biography later extended the traditional approach to include women's major contributions. To this expanded record was added the women's culture model of historiography which examined librarianship from the perspective of culturally defined female interests, roles, and activities. Later still, social histories gathered information about various segments of librarianship and analyzed the collective records of groups of "humbler" librarians. The information for these histories was gleaned mainly from institutional records, but also included some personal perspectives gathered from private papers. Helen Plummer's librarianship was reconstructed chiefly from the personal perspectives found in her family papers, and expanded through an examination of the records and histories of the library institutions that educated and employed her.

This thesis is a social history which looks in detail at the personal life of one woman who became a pioneer librarian and worked behind the scenes as a cataloger. Through her private papers and the research inspired by them, Helen Plummer was revealed as a woman who struggled with and responded to her family situations and the cultural circumstances of her times. She arose from her anxious dependence on an unreliable family, to become, through her librarianship, a confident woman of self-determination and forthright thought. Although she left librarianship after a brief seven-year career, she maintained a close association with the profession through her husband's librarianship and her own connections with past library colleagues.

Helen was a daughter of the generations of women and men, who influenced colonial and federal America, experienced the long span of the Victorian Era, suffered through the Civil War, and delved into the social reforms of the Progressive Era. Her Quaker heritage was rooted in seventeenth-century Maryland. Her family's social and religious backgrounds were defined by the paradoxes and conflicts that embroiled them in two major Quaker separations—religious schisms that eventually influenced her mother's and her father's conflicting views of life. Helen's maternal ancestors leaned toward the quietist, liberal, and socially progressive Hicksite philosophy that celebrated the spiritual equality of men and women, tolerated and even encouraged women's independent roles, acknowledged the individual's personal connection to a higher being, and supported responsible social activism. In contrast, Helen's father adopted an ill-defined mixture of orthodox Quakerism and conservative Episcopalianism which accepted dogma, practiced rituals, embraced secularism, and defined distinct roles for men and women based on an

emerging industrialized culture. Helen's approach to life evolved as a curious blend of her mother's and father's religious and social backgrounds. She became a free-minded Quaker who practiced conservative Episcopalianism, an economically dependent daughter and wife who also lived, thought, and spoke independently, a woman who yearned for solitude yet engaged in a hectic social life, a woman of ill health who remained strong and active throughout her long life. Like her Quaker heritage, her life was filled with conflict and paradox.

Helen Plummer was a child of privilege and misfortune. As a young woman she was caught between the traditional values of her middle-class upbringing and the realities of her father's personal financial failures. She grew up to be a middle-class Victorian woman whose options were constrained by her father's demands and complicated by a changing American culture. Ill health and economic dependence had put her under her father's protection and economic support, but the idealized lifestyle imposed on her was false and impractical. The family fortune had been lost, and the men in Helen's immediate family, her father and her brother, failed to meet their traditional obligation to take care of the women in their lives.

In the midst of the conflicts she faced, Helen utilized the two constants that stabilized and defined her life: her education and her bonds with family and friends. Both were gifts from her Quaker heritage. The first taught her to read, learn, and think for herself. The second gave her a sense of community. Using these tools, Helen recognized her need to establish a realistic economic independence, and she went to her extended family and her many friends for help and advice. She grew into full womanhood challenged by

personal need, and she was assisted not only by her education and personal associations, but also by a changing social order that was calling women out of the home and into public life.

Helen's need for independence came at a time when American society was establishing and accepting woman's public role, and librarianship was offering a unique opportunity to the educated woman. Public and academic libraries and library education were emerging from an early foundation of private and subscription libraries.

Librarianship was emerging from the purview of the male scholar. Schools dedicated to the education of librarians were new, and women were welcome and encouraged to participate. Helen's participation in library culture was the combined result of her financial need, her educational background, her maternal family ties, and the library leadership that advanced librarianship as a profession and fostered its feminization. Her life was profoundly affected by the social changes that redefined woman's roles and developed new ideas about libraries and librarianship. She seized her opportunity at a historically significant period of library development, and, while she was not well-known, she was still a pioneer librarian. Helen Plummer participated in the golden age of American library development.

The library leaders mentioned in Helen's biography attest to her involvement in this revolutionary period. Mary Wright Plummer was her relative, friend, and mentor.

Melvil Dewey, Caroline Hewins, Helen Haines, Charles Ammi Cutter, and Mary S. Cutler were a few of the speakers Helen was privileged to hear when she attended the Pratt Institute School of Library Training. While Helen was working at Pratt's Astral

Branch library, Anne Carroll Moore was working nearby at the Pratt Institute Library developing the concepts of children's libraries and children's librarianship. The conflicting philosophies of John Cotton Dana and Charles Dudley at the Denver Public Library exposed Helen to some of the most innovative ideas and significant controversies surrounding the purposes and goals of public libraries. At the Library of Congress, Helen worked under the progressive Librarian of Congress Herbert Putnam, and she cataloged under classification developers James C. Hanson, and Charles Martel. After Helen married librarian Philip S. Goulding, her husband was hired by Katharine L. Sharp to head the cataloging department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Philip's work under George Watson Cole at Henry E. Huntington's private library in New York and San Marino embroiled the Gouldings in a controversy that eventually led Philip to head the cataloging department at the University of California at Los Angeles. Helen's life as a librarian, educated and influenced by some of the most important turn-of-the-century libraries and library leaders, defined her identity even after she married and left her public work in the profession.

As an unmarried librarian, Helen Plummer enthusiastically adopted the independent lifestyle of a single working woman; when she married, she left active librarianship and adapted her life to the traditional role of the housewife. While one might consider Helen's librarianship as a bridge to matrimony, one must remember the struggle she faced before deciding to marry. Hers was not an easy decision, and she expressed her conflict openly. Librarianship had given Helen independence; she could not easily give it up; and, its impact on her life defined a part of her permanent identity.

One might look at Helen's marriage as incorporating a career move. She married a librarian with professional potential, and she actively participated in prompting his career. Subsuming her career under her husband's may have satisfied some of her own frustrated ambitions in librarianship. Even though librarianship had become feminized, a dichotomy of opportunities for men and women was embedded in the profession. Male scholars achieved status through directorships and higher pay. Technically trained women were generally held to lower level positions and lower pay.

Philip's and Helen's backgrounds in librarianship illustrate several aspects of this practice. Philip had a liberal, university-based education. He had a degree; he was a scholar. For Helen, any scholarly education would be self-taught. Her formal high school education was followed by library school training with its practical orientation. She was a technically trained assistant. Philip's career was directed toward academia; Helen's work had been in the public libraries and the Library of Congress. Philip as a man could command a higher salary. Women, by virtue of their gender, were paid less.

When Helen decided to marry, she may have thought she could satisfy her dreams for professional advancement, as well as tackle some realistic needs and expectations. She would have the love, family, and security she had longed for, and she could preserve and enhance her professional identity within her husband's. Her husband's career would, most likely, surpass her own, and she could participate as his support and his assistant. As Mrs. Philip S. Goulding, Helen Plummer would be a wife, a homemaker, and a woman of social conscience. But she would also remain a librarian deeply involved with the books and libraries she loved.

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