

THE WESTERN NEW YORK BRANCH

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“In October, 1889, in Buffalo New York, the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (ACA) and the Western Association of Collegiate Alumnae met, the latter organization merging with the former. At the time of this meeting, Mrs. George Townsend, president of the Buffalo Women’s Educational and Industrial Union, called upon the college women of the city to assist her in entertaining the combined meeting. There were at that time only eight college women eligible to membership in the ACA and of these eight, only three had gone to college from the city of Buffalo. With the meeting of this little group, the Western New York, now the Buffalo Branch of the ACA began its history. The five who attended the first meeting were Harriet Ransom Milinowski, Lena Hill Severance, Mary M. Wardell, Maude Austin, and Ella C. Lapham. This group became the officers of the Association, with the exception of Mrs. Severance, who became shortly the chairman of the Committee for Educational Legislation. In October, 1890, the officers and eight other members were admitted as a branch to the Association.

The first undertaking of the newly formed branch was to assist in every way the development of the University of Buffalo. Beginning with assistance to the endowment fund, its service has continued throughout the years, not only in the material way of furnishing rest and recreation rooms, but through scholarships and an annual meeting with the branch and the women students together. In 1893 and 1894, the work of establishing home libraries in the poorer portions of the city of Buffalo has been continued with encouraging results. Two libraries are now in operation. Members of the branch visited them regularly once a week spending an hour or two with the children over the books, and playing games. The Buffalo Branch considers as its outstanding achievement a work begun in 1902 in establishing a college crèche (day nursery). Early in that year an urgent appeal was made to the branch by the Charities Society of the city to establish a crèche in a thickly settled part of Buffalo in order that working women might leave their children under adequate care while they were at work during the day. After considerable deliberation, the branch decided to undertake this work. ‘feeling that we could perhaps in no way render a greater service to the city than by giving to some of its needy children an opportunity to develop into healthy useful citizens.’ In about three months from the time the crèche was established, eleven hundred dollars had been secured as a result of appeals to the public. A desirable house had been rented and the work had begun with more than a score of children under the care of the crèche. In 1904, the branch reported that sixteen hundred dollars had been raised in the previous year. The branch continued to carry its support until, the need having been adequately demonstrated, the City of Buffalo took over the project and continued its support.

The Buffalo Branch has always given assistance to educational movements and needs, not only in the City of Buffalo, but in the State of New York, and in cooperation with the national organization. The branch assisted in adjusting a scale of salaries in state normal schools, and in 1931 is working for adequate compensation for the teachers in the city schools.”

Marion Talbot & Lois Rosenberry (1931). *The History of the American Association of University Women*, Houghton Mifflin, pg. 111-112. Read online at http://openlibrary.org/a/OL186259A/Marion_Talbot