

In Search of Influence and Authority: Parents and the Politics of the Home-School Relationship in Philadelphia and Two of its Suburbs, 1905-1935

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Educators have long held a decided advantage over parents in the politics of American education. In the second half of the nineteenth century the assiduous and unrelenting bureaucratization of public education gave teachers, principals, and especially superintendents increased control over the mission and management of schools. However, parents always have had a big stake in schools, and at the beginning of the twentieth century they were eager to exercise influence. Because technological changes in the workplace helped make child labor and compulsory school laws more effective, even working-class children were staying in school longer than ever, while the rising tide of schooling persuaded many middle-class parents to be increasingly committed to excellence at school. Teachers, administrators, and school board members could not ignore parents, but they did not necessarily wield much political clout. To make themselves heard they had to organize and cooperate. School directors, after all, were still elected public servants, and despite the trend toward smaller, more centralized boards of education their constituents could influence them.¹

The parents of school children first became an organized interest group at the end of the nineteenth century. Introduced in rural America, home and school or parent-teacher associations soon formed in many cities and suburbs. In Boston and Philadelphia individual associations merged into home and school leagues. Founded in 1897, the National Congress of Mothers became the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations in 1908. Shortening its name to simply the National Congress of Parents and Teachers in 1924, it expanded from 532,000 to more than 1.25 million members by the end of the decade and built a network of affiliates that blanketed the country. Like the General Federation of Women's Clubs and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the National Congress was an outspoken advocate for mothers' pensions, prohibition, and child welfare reform. Beseeking women to be collectively responsible for improving the lives of all children, it yoked social reform to the acceptance of Anglo-American values and middle-class standards of life.²

A prime example of a voluntary organization, the home and school or parent-teacher association drew inspiration from an American tradition. Voluntarism empowered men, but by the middle of the nineteenth century it had become a way of life for middle-class women. They could join any number of social,

benevolent, and reform organizations, giving them a respectable reason to escape the house. Participation brought them in contact with other women who shared their background, values, and interests. The experience could be reaffirming, but aside from building confidence and self-assurance, it exposed them to new ideas and gave them the opportunity to make a difference in their communities. Coming together on their own, they dispensed charity and expressed concern, even outrage at the existence of ignorance, immorality, and injustice, in the United States. Perhaps to their surprise, their voice was heard, first among themselves and then among a wider audience.³

Voluntarism and education made a natural combination for the middle-class, American woman. Female abolitionists and temperance reformers relied on reason and moral suasion to reclaim the unregenerate. Suffragists insisted that the ballot for women would enlighten voters and elevate politics. Schools attracted the personal interest and active involvement of many women. The expansion of schooling encroached on their domain, prompting them to volunteer time and effort at school. Even the most traditional women's organizations supported educational reform. At its third biennial meeting the General Federation of Women's Clubs called upon all its affiliates to study schools and exert pressure for reform from the kindergarten to the university. Women's clubs throughout the nation worked for playgrounds, curricular reform, the medical inspection of school children, and better school buildings. Even as late as 1920 women who engaged in such activity ran the risk of being charged with dereliction of domestic duty by those who believed that wives and mothers should spend all their time at home. But bridging the gap between the home and school was usually not sufficient grounds to accuse them of maternal neglect.⁴

Local home and school associations attracted parents, especially mothers, mainly because they offered their members a chance to be of service to themselves and their communities. By coming together mothers enjoyed the pleasure of each other's company. They learned about parenting and raised money for special projects at school. Parents soon discovered that home and school associations also amplified their voice in the politics of education. For women, in particular, there was strength in numbers. Denied access to positions of leadership on boards of education, let alone in school administration, many mothers and women teachers joined home and school associations to associate with those of like mind and improve schools.

But to what extent could parents in such organizations affect the policy and practice of schools? Composed mostly of white, Protestant, middle-class women, parent-teacher associations often insisted upon increased spending for local schools and the adoption of curricular and administrative innovations. To achieve these objectives they drew upon the moral authority of the Protestant, middle-class home, a strategy that sometimes blinded them to the

needs of those unlike themselves. But was the integrity of the Protestant, middle-class home enough to move urban or suburban educational systems managed by professionals and governed by attorneys, physicians, and businessmen? Whether the political relationship between the home and school was one-sided is a thesis that can be tested by examining the interaction between parent-teacher associations and boards of education. Elected volunteers were more exposed to political pressure than appointed professionals, but parents were just one interest group among many that demanded satisfaction from boards of education. Framed by expectations imposed by social class, both gender and community context shaped the political relationship between parents and school boards and contributed significantly to its nature and outcome.

The politics of voluntarism forced parents, especially mothers, to ask pointed questions and make painful choices. Should they restrict themselves to subtle pressure tactics such as discrete lobbying or be more partisan, endorsing and campaigning openly for specific causes and candidates? Leaders and followers often disagreed about the scope and direction of parent-teacher associations. Held to different expectations, national, state, and local PTAs had to choose between social reform and school improvement as their organizational mission. The National Congress of Parents and Teachers (NCPT) opposed child labor and advocated international understanding, while its affiliates focused on more mundane issues like lunchrooms, libraries, and health clinics in neighborhood schools.⁵

Between 1905 and 1935 political behavior by local parent-teacher associations increasingly became a subject of popular discussion and a source of official concern. As advocates for public education, PTAs might be useful allies, but when they pressured school boards or tampered with the work of principals and teachers, their actions ceased to be perceived as helpful or even appropriate. Addressing the National Education Association's Department of School Administration in 1919, the president of the Milwaukee board of school directors, William Pieplow, urged his colleagues to resist all outside interference from "various societies, clubs and associations." The "constant pulling of strings on fully empowered public representatives is a serious impediment to efficient public business," Pieplow said, "whether the pullers are club ladies of either sex or old-fashioned liquor men." Running schools was a technical business beyond the knowledge and understanding of lay persons. School boards needed expert advice to make sound policy decisions. PTAs trod on foreign ground when they tried to tell either board members or trained practitioners how to do their jobs.⁶

Such complaints were not lost on the men and women who joined PTAs. According to a survey of NCPT affiliates in the 1920s, less than three percent were willing to admit that lobbying the school board or staff was one of their activities. But almost from the beginning some home and school associations

urged reform. In 1896 the Mother's Club of Cambridge established a vacation school that counted more than 200 participants by the end of its second year, and the city's school committee soon assumed responsibility for it. In Milwaukee and Kansas City home and school associations advocated the community use of the school plant.⁷ Some adopted the political style of the temperance reformers and suffragists. In New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania PTAs at every level—state, regional, and local—sang marching songs to inspire their membership. At a Philadelphia rally in April, 1909, 4000 women raised their voices "For Home and School," singing:

To get the best for all of us each must do his best;
And give his highest service for the good of all the rest.
So the Home must give its mothers, and the School its teachers send,
With the Children ready all the time their loving help to lend.⁸

National leaders acknowledged the importance of such collective consciousness raising. The director of the publications Bureau of the NCPT claimed that "the associations which sing the best do the ablest work. The movement," said Joy Elmer Morgan in 1930, "has hardly begun to realize the possibilities of singing as a means of maintaining its spiritual vigor."⁹

But PTAs differed in their political tactics. Some adopted a cautious approach, avoiding open conflict with school authorities. Others were more direct, ignoring the expectation that parents and especially mothers should not be confrontational. The choice of strategy depended upon many variables. What seemed inappropriate to some in an urban setting found even less favor in the suburbs. Gender and class contributed greatly to the mix; in the city gender was not necessarily an inhibiting factor while in Protestant, middle-class suburbs the ratio of male to female leaders in a home and school association or PTA could change its political demeanor. In both settings white, Protestant, middle-class parents did not bring immigrants or blacks into the political equation. Consider, for example, the experience of parents in Philadelphia and two of its middle-class suburbs, Abington Township north of the city in Pennsylvania, and Haddonfield to the east in New Jersey. Between 1905 and 1935, when Americans were first experimenting with PTAs, organized parents confronted school boards in each of these communities. Trying both cooperation and confrontation, they discovered that there was no single formula for success. In each case, gender, mediated by race and class, shaped the politics of the home-school relationship.

The Philadelphia Home and School League never shied away from taking a public stand. Founded in 1907, it quickly fashioned a loose affiliation with a well-established civic organization, the Public Education Association (PEA). The first president of the League, Mary Van Meter Grice, authored this alliance from her seat on the PEA board. Both independently and together, the two

organizations campaigned for school reform. The PEA took special aim at the Philadelphia board of education that it perceived to be composed of corrupt and senile men. Old fashioned and hidebound, they resisted "an impartial and independent survey of the schools." In 1917, 1919, and 1921 the PEA backed legislation to reduce the size of the board from fifteen to seven and make it elective.¹⁰ Although unsuccessful, this reform was hardly original or idealistic. Enacted in 1905, the Public School Reorganization Act had already halved the size of Philadelphia's central school board while stripping its ward-based counterparts of considerable power. Elsewhere, urban school reformers chased the same goal. In Detroit and Chicago they achieved complete success, convincing voters and legislators to trust their public schools to small, consolidated boards in 1916 and 1917 respectively.¹¹

The Philadelphia Home and School League was more inclined than the PEA or the board of education to view the schools from a local perspective. In 1912 it was composed of 55 member organizations that were concentrated in the city's middle-class neighborhoods north and west of the downtown. They focused on such parochial matters as the school building in their vicinity, classroom apparatus, and playgrounds. The League did not make immigrant or black parents feel very welcome: its local affiliates included only two from the Italian and eastern European district of South Philadelphia. Parents in three of the city's twelve schools for blacks were associated with the League, but these black locals were not the same as the two that had belonged in 1909, suggesting perhaps that African American parents found membership in the League to be something less than they expected.¹²

In keeping with the priorities of urban educators and middle-class reformers elsewhere, the League joined the PEA in support of such city-wide improvements as new school construction, district high schools, and the transformation of public schools into community centers. It encouraged the Philadelphia board to hire home and school visitors and serve penny lunches, a practice for which the school authorities assumed full responsibility in 1915. It helped convince the superintendent that public schools could wield "community influence" by reaching parents through their children, a lesson that had special appeal during the xenophobic days of World War I. Working with the PEA, the League shaped the agenda of the Philadelphia public schools, encouraging the expansion of their mission.¹³

As the leader of the Home and School League, Mary Grice thought of herself as an advocate for all teachers, parents, and children. Eager to be consulted by the superintendent and board of education, she believed the League should be a laboratory for educational reform, experimenting with improvements that might become the basis for institutional change.¹⁴ But Grice was not predisposed to compromise and never one to walk away from a possible confrontation. In 1919 she led the Episcopal Churchwoman's Association in

an effort to persuade the Finance Committee of City Council to authorize more funds for the abatement of unsanitary living conditions in Philadelphia. Conflict with the board of education arose over the community use of school buildings and the rate of pay for teachers. In January, 1919, Grice publicly condemned the board for its failure to open the schools at night during World War I. Taking special aim at board member Simon Gratz, she characterized him and his colleagues as tight fisted, insisting that "we can retrench on some things, but never on education."¹⁵

As early as 1911, Grice convinced the PEA to endorse a salary hike for the city's elementary school teachers, most of whom were women. Such complaints were hardly one of a kind; suburban parents also challenged school boards to increase teacher compensation. In Abington Township parents made it clear in 1916 that they disapproved of their frugal school board's salary schedule. It made the Abington district uncompetitive with its neighbors, preventing the township from hiring the best qualified teachers.¹⁶ Inflation during World War I exacerbated the problem, and in its aftermath teachers' wages lagged far behind the soaring cost of living. In 1918 Harlan Updegraff, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, estimated that the cost of such essentials as food, clothing, and utilities had nearly doubled in four years, and he counseled school boards to increase teachers' pay immediately by 45 percent. The Pennsylvania State Teachers Association put the problem in terms that its members could easily understand. It reckoned that the inflationary effects of the war had caused commodity prices to advance three times more rapidly than teachers' salaries. Of course, some blamed the teachers themselves, fingering high turnover and low standards as reasons for their meager compensation. Others cited reformers for this state of affairs. The high school building program that they favored in Philadelphia drained the budget, burdening taxpayers to such an extent that they could not meet the teachers' demands for increases.¹⁷

Educators and reformers agreed that something had to be done. In 1915 the governor of Pennsylvania, Martin Brumbaugh, campaigned for better teacher compensation. Addressing a crowd of school directors assembled for the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania State Educational Association, the former superintendent of schools in Philadelphia complimented those among them who had the courage to raise taxes and pay teachers what they deserved. By January, 1919, the issue was being discussed widely in Philadelphia. Both the school board and the Civic Club urged the legislature to increase the mill rate in the city to benefit the teachers.¹⁸ The leaders of the Home and School League certainly favored such legislation. The question was not whether the teachers were entitled to a raise but how much it should be. Some like Mary Grice insisted that their pay be doubled. Such an advance seemed outrageous to Simon Gratz, and he began to question the sincerity of the leaders of the

League. In fact, the board felt so threatened by the behavior of these men and women that it temporarily locked them out of the public schools. While this tactic probably did not intimidate Mrs. Grice, it distressed her colleagues who soon adopted a less confrontational posture, diminishing their pressure on the board. As League president S. D. Benoliel explained, many members are teachers and principals who feel that they cannot attend meetings if criticism is directed against "the Board of Education, who are their superiors." Moreover, "the league often meets in schoolhouses and aims to be a part of the school system itself."¹⁹

Mary Grice had a different idea. She refused to think of herself as an appendage of the board. If anything, she was its conscience, reminding it to mend its ways. The Home and School League had lost its nerve, and on the grounds that she could not exercise her right to free speech if she remained on its board, she resigned as a director in March, 1919.²⁰ The remaining leaders of the League took Mrs. Grice's departure in stride. Some may even have been relieved, for Grice believed in testing the limits of cooperation between the home and school. While many parents were satisfied to buy playground equipment or classroom decorations, she aspired to join the Philadelphia board of education. It was not a post for which she lacked direct experience; living in Riverton, New Jersey in the 1890s, she used her prominence as a founder of a local woman's club to run for the school board to which she was elected on her second try. Could parents make a difference at school? Mary Grice not only believed that they could but that mothers should serve on the body that made policy for public education.²¹

At the beginning of the twentieth century women in politics attracted considerable attention on both sides of the gender line. Given the importance of the school to the home, suffrage for women in school elections seemed justifiable to some at least, and it was achieved in many states long before the nineteenth amendment. The Massachusetts legislature extended this right to women in 1879. New Jersey followed suit in the next decade, but its Supreme Court soon overturned the provision that allowed women to cast ballots for school directors. By 1891, 28 states had experimented with such legislation. In some cities women gained the right to vote in school elections. Toledo and Rochester added them to the school suffrage rolls in the 1890s. In Boston and Chicago women not only voted but won seats on the board of education.²² Active in the New England Women's Club, Abigail May, along with three other Protestant women, won a seat on the Boston School Committee even before she could vote, but two years passed before the men on the committee allowed May and five more women, elected by the voters in 1875, to take their rightful places. In the 1880s nativist women seized control of school politics in the city. Far from uplifting the process of electing school committee members, they reduced it to a contest between Protestants and Catholics. In

fact, they engaged in such active and biased campaigning that in 1888 the Catholic clergy tried to defuse the tension by counseling Catholic women not to vote.²³

In 1915 the Equal Franchise League of Philadelphia endorsed Mary Grice for a place on the city's board of education. To achieve this distinction she would not have to stand for election. In Philadelphia the Court of Common Pleas appointed board members. Designed to shelter the public schools from partisanship, this procedure merely exposed them to politics of a different, less transparent kind. The PEA called for school board elections in which women could vote.²⁴ Grice stood with the reformers on this issue, but in seeking a place on the board, regardless of how it was chosen, she offended the more traditional elements in Philadelphia, including many women. Writing to express her support for the existing board, Mrs. William W. Birdsall reminded Simon Gratz that the woman "who recently so ostentatiously resigned from the Home and School League . . . has had for a long time an ambition to have a place on the school board and through her strident friends made an effort to be appointed and failed." Mrs. Grice's loss, Birdsall thought, was Philadelphia's gain. "I think I know a little about the Public Schools, and I say one only needs to look at the schools of Denver and Chicago to see what would be the situation here should some of the public women get their way."²⁵

In many cities women's clubs acted as advocates for such "public women." By 1911 affiliates of the General Federation of Women's Clubs existed in every state, and they often tried to place women on boards of education. PTAs provided a ready supply of candidates, and in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware their members soon began to volunteer for service. In 1915 the mayor of New Brunswick, New Jersey, Austin Scott, named the organizer of the city's PTA to the school board. That Mrs. Drury W. Cooper was married to Scott's predecessor at city hall certainly helped her candidacy. Nevertheless, she was the first woman to serve on the board in New Brunswick history. Two years later PTA women in rural Middletown, Delaware, decided to nominate one of their own for the school board, only to discover that their campaign got "started too late." Mothers in the Philadelphia suburb of Lower Merion were better organized. Working through the Neighborhood Civic Club, they endorsed Mary Stewart Gibbons for school director after the existing board discharged a popular principal. They carried their fight to the ballot box only after failing to get "any satisfaction out of an investigation of this act." The second woman to run for the board in Lower Merion, Mrs. Gibbons believed in the merit of her qualifications. "There are innumerable things in the work of the board," she explained, "on which mothers are more capable of passing judgment than are the men."²⁶

Advocates for women on boards of education relied on several arguments to make their case. Echoing their sisters in the suffrage and peace movements,

they maintained that women, especially mothers, brought special qualifications to educational decision making. Women board members, said Edith Alvord, who was herself a school director in Highland Park, Michigan, can contribute an "intimate understanding" of children. "A woman member can make a mother's appeal to mothers," Alvord added, "and, if she is the right kind of woman, she can be a great help to teachers. She can see their problems as well as the children's from a woman's viewpoint." Even *The American School Board Journal*, a periodical dominated by the male establishment in education, advanced a similar opinion. Editorializing through the words of "a superintendent's wife," the *Journal* noted that school boards benefited from having access to the different talents of both men and women. The former knew more about such technical matters as budgets and taxation, but the latter had a better grasp of "the other half of the problem." Because of their knowledge of the home, they understood whether school expenditures produced "adequate results."²⁷

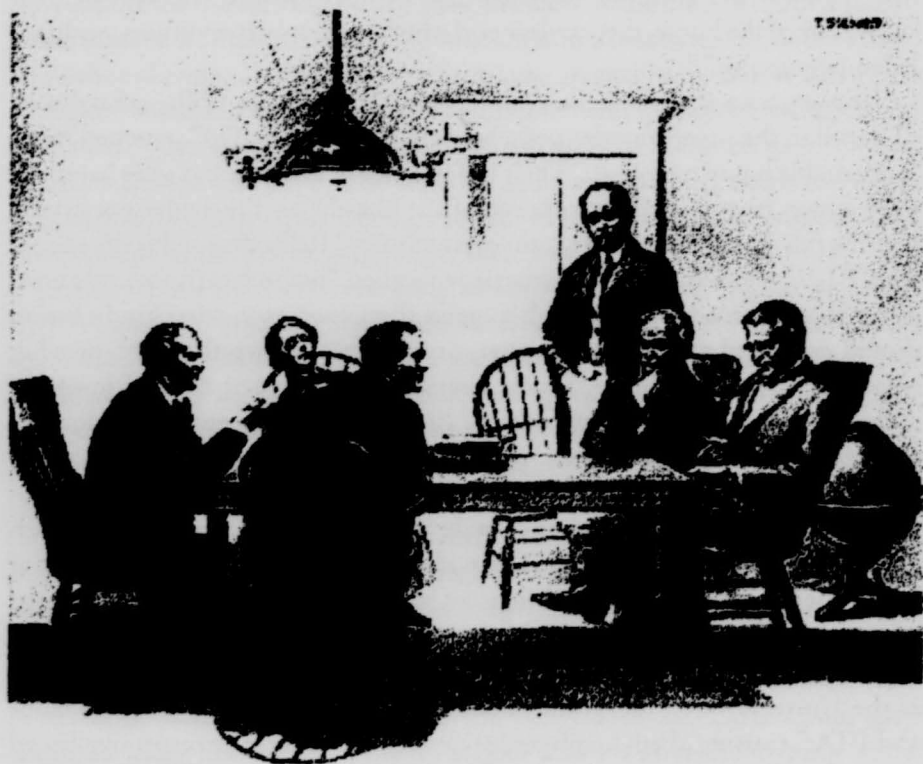
Not every school administrator felt this way. According to William Estabrook Chancellor, the superintendent of schools in Washington, D.C., women made "undesirable board members." Their indifference to business was a big handicap since it was "the only direct concern of the board," and their presence ruled out "the full discussion of several important topics." Reflecting on his experience with PTAs, another male administrator recalled "many wearisome minutes" when he was forced to sit through a "grave discussion as to what kind of salad should be served at a coming supper, or who should pop the corn, or what color the tickets should be." Such discussions threatened the self-image of male principals and superintendents. Striving to be accepted as scientific managers instead of moral exemplars, they could not take orders gracefully from politically active women.²⁸

Women volunteers sensed the anxiety and hostility projected by such professional men. Some expressed fears about assuming the responsibilities of board membership, saying publicly at least that they knew "little" about education. Educational critic and reformer Harold Rugg recommended that superintendents and school boards cultivate and recruit parents. While teaching at the University of Chicago, he advised them to work with women's clubs and PTAs, treating them as places to identify and educate prospective board members.²⁹ Even Chancellor conceded that, as half of all parents, women deserved to sit on boards of education. However, no board should ever include more than one, and, if elected, women—young or old, traditional or progressive—should defer to men (see figures on the following pages).

Adding women to boards of education was no easy task. According to the economist Scott Nearing, who compiled data about school boards in 104 American cities, women accounted for only seven percent of their members in 1916. By 1922 that proportion had risen to slightly more than nine percent

THE AMERICAN School Board Journal

A PERIODICAL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION



September, 1917

The Reformer. Cover, *The American School Board Journal* 55 (September 1917). A woman may be a school director but the president of the board and his chief advisors are men.

THE AMERICAN School Board Journal

A PERIODICAL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION



AUGUST, 1918

The Bruce Publishing Company

The Matron. Cover, American School Board Journal 57 (August 1918) Distinguished, diligent, and determined, all board members shoulder a heavy public burden.

THE AMERICAN School Board Journal

A PERIODICAL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION



December, 1918

The Young Mother. Cover, The American School Board Journal 57 (December, 1918) Maternal virtue counts for something but when difficult decisions have to be made, there is no substitute for the wisdom of experienced men.

with big cities leading the way. Of course, not just any women could get appointed or elected. In Detroit Laura Osborn, a well-connected reformer, won a seat on the school board when the voters swept the old guard out of office in 1917. Two years later Adele Chase, whose husband was the president of the Gary Street Railway Company, became the first woman to serve on that Indiana city's board of education.³⁰ But even in large cities progress was slow and halting. "This writer recalls two cities which elected women to membership in their school boards for several years and later discontinued the practice," said the executive director of the Public Education Association in Philadelphia. According to Bruce Watson, "this apparently was not due to any deliberate change of policy, and certainly not to dissatisfaction with women's service on the board."³¹ There were those in Watson's own city, however, who were not convinced. According to one former member of a now advisory ward school board, the men on Philadelphia's central board were unwilling to accept women. "The Board of Education has only one principle that it adheres to," said Mrs. Mary Mumford, "that no woman shall be a member of the Board."³²

If there was such a principle, it fell in 1920 when Anna S. Lingelbach joined the Philadelphia school board. The wife of a geology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Lingelbach was chosen ahead of three other prominent women, none of whom was Mary Grice. An academic in her own right, Lingelbach possessed a doctorate in history and high school teaching experience. The PEA counted her among its directors, but she also was the mother of three children, all of whom attended the Philadelphia public schools. She understood what her new colleagues expected of her. When interviewed by the press following her appointment, she declined to speak out on educational issues, saying that she wanted to confer with her husband first. "So the new member of the board is not an extreme feminist," *The Evening Bulletin* said, "disinclined to consult with men."³³

Reorganized twice, the Philadelphia Home and School League struggled to stay alive in the 1920s. Perhaps its decline reflected a national trend. The political apathy of many middle-class, white women, especially compared to blacks, disappointed suffragists in the years immediately following the winning of the vote.³⁴ The League's pre-war commitment to an expanded mission for the public school was less appealing in a more conservative time, and without Mary Grice to lead its fortunes languished. A census conducted in 1925 revealed that only thirteen home and school associations still existed in the city, and two of them had not met for years. Of course, such dreadful returns may have been incomplete. In his annual report for 1928 the superintendent, Edwin C. Bromme, reported finding a home and school association in about 85 of the city's 251 schools. No doubt, he wished for many more. "The schools have felt the need of selling themselves to the community," said Jean B. Hagerty, principal of the Robert Morris School at 20th and Thompson. But they "have

been rather hard put to find a medium dignified enough and yet sufficiently effective. I believe we have discovered in home and school associations the medium par excellence." Her counterpart at Germantown High School emphatically agreed. The Mothers' Association "has brought about a sympathetic understanding between parents and the school," said Leslie B. Seely, "which is extremely helpful."³⁵ In Philadelphia school administrators believed that PTAs extended their reach into the community. The school controlled the home, not the other way around.

In the 1920s teachers and administrators encouraged parents to form new home and school associations. However, after the onset of the great depression the professionals did not hesitate to take their own advice. Faced with declining resources and enrollments, they organized PTAs themselves, hoping to build political support. In 1935 half the PTAs in Philadelphia were less than six years old, and the principal had been the prime mover in the formation of more than 62 percent of these. Sensing that most parents focused on the needs of their own children, school officials promoted home and school associations as protectors of child welfare. According to a survey conducted during the winter of 1935, both parents and principals believed that PTAs improved cooperation and understanding between the home and school, especially at the elementary level. But the professionals were far less likely than parents to think of PTAs as fostering solidarity at home or helping mothers and fathers monitor the performance of the school.³⁶ Such activities were not what school officials had in mind when they touted home and school associations as instruments of good public relations.

In retrospect, the outreach efforts of Philadelphia's principals only seem to have prevented precipitous decline. In 1935 the number of home and school associations in the city stood at 61. They were still concentrated in white, middle-class neighborhoods that now more than ever were at the fringe of the city. With just two inside its borders, South Philadelphia remained significantly under-represented. However, nine of the city's twelve elementary schools with African American personnel had active PTAs. The majority of Philadelphia's black children still attended integrated schools in the 1930s, but African American principals and teachers could only work in all-black schools. Many faced dismissal when the depression forced the district to impose cutbacks and consolidate. By organizing parents in Philadelphia's segregated schools they demonstrated a commitment to self-reliance and strengthened their hand with the white school board in their fight against discrimination.³⁷

The depression posed a common threat to all parents with children in the Philadelphia public schools. In 1933 the district discontinued nineteen junior highs, 123 elementary schools, and two kindergartens, but even in the face of such a crisis, not all members of the Home and School League worked well together. Renamed the Philadelphia Home and School Council in 1935 when

it broke relations with both the Pennsylvania Congress and NCPT in a dispute over dues, the League alienated more than a few of its locals. Many among the rank-and-file did not trust its leaders, as one school official explained, because the "women in charge seem somewhat out of touch with the parent's problem; and are engaged in this work to widen the scope of their own personal influence."³⁸

Ambition was inappropriate for women in home and school associations. In keeping with the white, middle-class bias of the home and school movement, PTA mothers were expected to be modest and self-effacing, rejecting conflict in favor of harmony. In fact, different standards applied to middle-class men and women in the politics of home and school relations. Fathers could assert themselves as long as they avoided being openly partisan. Mothers were supposed to exercise influence through compromise and collaboration. Working with boards of education dominated by men, parents in many PTAs observed these unstated rules of middle-class gender relations. Between 1905 and 1930 fathers became active and outspoken in some suburban home and school associations. In others, mothers remained completely in charge, gently pressuring the school board to acquire more respect and control. Nowhere was this pattern more apparent than in two Philadelphia suburbs, Abington, Pennsylvania and Haddonfield, New Jersey.

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By 1910 much of middle-class Philadelphia had moved to the suburbs. The lure of nature and the appeal of open space were exceeded only by the ethnic and socio-economic homogeneity promised there. Both inside the city and beyond its borders many residential neighborhoods catered to the domestic needs of white collar families. In the suburbs schools stood atop the list of local civic institutions. After all, education spoke directly to the aspirations of the middle-class. Not all suburbs were alike, of course; they differed by degrees of affluence and levels of commitment to educational innovation. By 1920 middle-class parents in many Philadelphia suburbs had begun to develop a distinctive domestic lifestyle, rejecting the urban trade-off between large families and well-educated children.³⁹ Such parents wanted excellent schools, and because they had both time and resources to invest in education, they formed home and school associations. These organizations also satisfied the urge, felt by many men and women, to be involved in the life of their residential communities.⁴⁰ But the political relationship between the home and school was not the same in every suburban community.

In Abington Township, Pennsylvania, parents were not afraid to use organized pressure and confrontation. According to the superintendent, Edward S. Ling, the district's first home and school association formed to protest an unsanitary

building after an "unsuccessful personal conference with an unprogressive school board." Based in a neighborhood called Weldon, the association reported in 1912 that it planned "to change the attitude of our school board to a more progressive one," and it quickly won two major victories, persuading the board to replace an ineffective janitor and hire Ling as the new superintendent.⁴¹

The presidents of the Weldon Home and School Association were invariably male. However, women comprised the bulk of its membership, and because "one able woman gave freely of her time and talent," interest in the association and its "standard of achievement" was kept high. Working together, fathers and mothers made this organization a constructive force in the community. They promised prospective members that they would be "agreeably surprised at the social time we have," but made it clear that their association's primary purpose was "to become better acquainted with the teachers and their methods as well as with the school directors and to suggest things of mutual benefit to all concerned." The association's reputation as a force for change was no doubt reinforced by its efforts to stay informed. In the spring of 1916 it heard Superintendent Ling speak about the Gary schools, then a topic of hot debate among educators and school reformers.⁴²

As both the superintendent and the Abington parents were well aware, the Weldon Home and School Association had no official standing in the community. Legal authority for the schools resided in the board of education, and when its two most progressive members retired, conservatives replaced them. The attitude of the reconstituted board toward the home and school association "was either actively hostile, or contemptuous and indifferent." The association's most energetic members, said the new superintendent, "were regarded as meddlers and busybodies if their activities reached outward to any degree." Ling found himself caught between the staid board to whom he reported and the reform-minded parents with whom he was inclined to agree.

Parents soon organized two other home and school associations elsewhere in the township, and in the autumn of 1917, when a majority of seats on the board became vacant at the same time, the leaders of all three associations quietly forged a political alliance. Although careful not to associate their organizations with the election campaign, these fathers and mothers supported a reform ticket that included the former president of one home and school association and the current vice president of another. Composed of four men, this group easily won places on the board of education.⁴³

The triumph of the reformers did not bring peace among parents in the Abington schools. A new faction formed, and soon it was vying for control of the Weldon Home and School Association. The need for reform did not divide insiders and outsiders since both favored more efficient management of the schools. The mission of the association was the issue, and, according to Ling, the insurgents gained the upper hand by attacking the strong (but now

anonymous) woman who had sparked the organization for five years. Once in charge, the new leaders took advantage of the expectation that parents and schools should be above politics, confining discussion of educational matters to the organization's executive committee. They delighted in "getting out large crowds," said superintendent Ling, and sponsoring social occasions. This shift in focus deprived the school administration of a convenient forum for influencing public opinion, but the superintendent could not have been entirely displeased. After all, the new leadership's policy kept consideration of potentially divisive matters behind closed doors.

Opposition to the new leadership of the Weldon Association had difficulty mobilizing. Connected to Philadelphia by railroad and street car, Abington Township was growing rapidly by 1920. New residents did not know one another or the community, and they quickly fell in with the controlling group. Far from condemning home and school associations, Ling believed they could be "a stimulus to teachers, superintendents, and school boards." Hired by the reformers, he thought of himself as evidence that parents made positive contributions. However, even he acknowledged that because home and school associations could generate conflict, they required close supervision. The triumph of the reformers in the board election of 1917 did not completely transform the parents' relationship to the educational establishment in Abington. Ling and the school board remained in control, for as the superintendent pointed out, "election to a position on a school board tends to modify the attitude of a man toward home and school associations."⁴⁴ But by operating within the context of white, middle-class gender relations, Abington's parents had at least demonstrated that they could get the school board's attention.

Compared to Abington Township, Haddonfield was a more compact and well-established suburban community in 1910. Across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, it first attracted notice among upscale housing developers in the 1850s, but it did not turn from a country village into a suburb until the end of the nineteenth century. Convenient to both Camden and Philadelphia, it became a haven for the Protestant middle-class, sheltering white collar workers, professionals, business owners, and corporate executives.⁴⁵

The people of Haddonfield embraced family and community life. As if to compensate for the diurnal separation made necessary by the male routine of commuting, they cultivated togetherness, forming several social and athletic organizations for men, women, and children. Two athletic clubs, a debating society, a literary society, and a Natural Science Club provided the setting for many family activities. The women of Haddonfield also met on their own. Like respectable women everywhere, they assembled biweekly for meetings of the Fortnightly, a club that studied art, civics, and parenting. Founded in 1867, the Haddonfield Sewing Society gave them the opportunity to socialize

while making clothes for others. Such charity may have no longer seemed compelling in 1903 when the organization disbanded. But the women of the new Haddonfield did not sit on their hands; instead they put their energies to work for a cause closer to home. In 1905 they created a Mothers and Teachers Club (HMTc) "to establish an intelligent cooperation and sympathy between home and school."⁴⁶

The HMTc derived support from mothers and teachers. Although they lived very different lives as married or single women, they joined hands to found this organization. The teachers took the initiative in April, 1904, when they hosted a reception for the patrons of the school. One year later the president of the New Jersey Congress of Mothers told those assembled at the formative meeting of the HMTc that by coming together regularly mothers and teachers could avoid the unpleasantness that often occurred when the home and school only communicated about problems or difficulties. The personal responsibilities associated with the care of children interested many club members. They wanted to know more about such matters as diet, nutrition, and friendships among the young. The hymn that they adopted in 1910 reminded them that children come "fresh from the kingdom of heaven" and have to be guided back to their "heavenly home." The HMTc maintained close ties with the Fortnightly club and the local chapter of the WCTU. Its first president, Mrs. Wellington Bechtel, belonged to both organizations as well as the Garden Club and the YWCA.⁴⁷

Alice Bechtel moved in larger circles than just those surrounding Haddonfield. In 1914 she became president of the New Jersey Congress of Mothers. As early as 1906 she carried a resolution from the HMTc to the state women's club urging the legislature to prohibit the sale of cigarettes to minors. Keeping pressure on the politicians, the HMTc subsequently voted to form an alliance with the WCTU and many other women's organizations "to get the amendment to the present cigarette law passed," a campaign that achieved success in 1908.⁴⁸ But at home the HMTc chose to be more reserved. Although the Haddonfield public schools might need to be improved, its members were not prepared to confront the local board of education, especially when it came to such male domains as exercise and property. Alice Bechtel accepted even if she regretted the constraints imposed by the situation. "Introducing physical training into the school, and better equipped school rooms, is beyond the province of the club, as it now stands," she reminded her members. "Such effort must come from the Fathers of the children, working hand in hand with the Board of Education," while mothers should concentrate on encouraging "sympathy" among parents, teachers, and children.⁴⁹

What accounts for this apparent paradox? Why were Alice Bechtel and her peers willing to take on the political establishment in Trenton, but not the board of education in their home town? Was cigarette reform so clearly a woman's issue? The importance of community and social class should not be

underestimated here. In a small town turned middle-class suburb like Haddonfield, preoccupation with family life created a compelling context for cooperation between husbands and wives. Although men enjoyed more freedom to choose, each could enter, if only part way, into the others' lives.⁵⁰

In 1912 the HMTC renamed itself the Haddonfield Parent-Teacher Association, but it remained an organization for white, middle-class women. Unlike its counterparts in Abington and Philadelphia, it was led exclusively by women. The board of education, on the other hand, belonged to middle-class men. Between 1901 and 1917 all but one of its twenty-six incumbents were men. In the 1920s the ratio of men to women on the board was nearly twelve to one.⁵¹ Challenging this male preserve in Haddonfield was stressful to say the least and could be daunting as such behavior represented a greater threat to middle-class standards of domesticity and decorum than questioning the policies of faceless men, however powerful, in political arenas far from home.

Solid citizens served on the Haddonfield board of education. Its members reflected the white, middle-class character of the town, including many business owners, white collar workers, civil servants, and attorneys (see Table I p. 385). The only woman on the board before 1918, Anna Eastburn Willits, came from a respected Quaker family. Between 1896 and 1909 she presided over the Fortnightly Club on three separate occasions, spending nine years in the top position. She had no personal interest in the welfare of the schools. She and her husband, a real estate and insurance executive, had no children. Elected once to a three-year term in 1908, during which she also was the board's vice president, Willits had a tenure that was brief by comparison to some others in her time. William J. Boning, who joined the school board in 1903, served as its secretary from 1907 to 1919. A civil engineer, he was twice elected president of the Haddonfield borough council and from 1895 to 1900 led the Board of Health. George B. Glover presided over the school board from 1903 until his death in 1917. He also served on borough council and for ten years as president of the Haddonfield Republican Club.⁵²

Two generations of Hodgson men anchored the board of education. President of the Phoenix Paint and Varnish Company in Philadelphia, William W. Hodgson served consecutive terms before World War I. His son, an attorney and partner in his father's business, became president of the school board in 1923, his first year in office. Appropriately named W. Gentry Hodgson, the scion remained at the board's helm for a decade. He was a great booster of the public schools. After several rounds of pay raises for the district's teachers in the late 1920s, he called for "a full measure of cooperation between school and home," urging parents to regard money spent on education as an investment.⁵³

Such eminent and stable leadership put the board in a formidable position. Of course, the officers of both the HMTC and HPTA came from the same social background as their male counterparts on the board of education (see

Table II p. 386), although by the 1920s neither the HPTA nor the board were as exclusive as they once had been. There were some kinship ties between the school board and the Mothers and Teachers Club. Between 1906 and 1908 Glover's wife, Rebecca, was both vice president and acting president of the HMTA. Attorney Henry S. Scovel, who served on the school board for no less than seventeen years, was married to an active member of the HMTA. Their daughter, Ethel, worked as the paid secretary of the board from 1919 to 1922.⁵⁴ Despite such overlap it was not customary for leaders of the HMTA or HPTA to get promoted to the board. When Alice Bechtel ran in 1915, she received exactly one vote, probably her own. Another candidate in the same election, Harriet Dawson, did no better; she became president of the HPTA in 1920.⁵⁵

Even though they were excluded from the board, the mothers of Haddonfield were not willing to be invisible or mute. Never satisfied with the number of families in their association, the leaders of the HPTA experimented with different strategies to recruit and retain more. They awarded prizes to those classes in the district with the largest membership. They sponsored countless lectures and demonstrations on parenting and schooling. In 1919 they divided Haddonfield into twenty sections, assigning each to a resident mother who was responsible for inviting her neighbors with children to join the association. They even tried decentralizing the association, holding separate meetings in three different parts of town. Such efforts were not without effect; HPTA membership more than doubled in eight years, reaching 476 in 1927.⁵⁶

The HPTA wanted to make Haddonfield's teachers, especially the women, feel at home. It sponsored dinners for them and receptions that included the board of education. It made certain that the women among them who came from out of town found suitable apartments. It rejoiced in 1920 when every teacher became a member but despaired later on when they failed to attend afternoon meetings.⁵⁷ The relationship between mothers and teachers in the HPTA was not democratic. It was the homemaker's schedule that dictated when meetings would take place. Taking charge of hospitality, the mothers made the basis for their leadership perfectly clear. They derived their legitimacy from their status as married women at home. Teachers were entitled to respect in academic matters. When the HPTA decided to endow a scholarship at the New Jersey State Normal School for a graduating senior, this distinction came into play. The faculty would be "allowed to use any means they deem best to determine the most desirable pupil," the officers of the HPTA said. But "no one whose character is not of the best" would ever be considered.⁵⁸

Status conflict between mothers and teachers was not confined to Haddonfield. Deferring to single women in the classroom must have struck many mothers as incompatible with the moral leadership commonly associated with motherhood and the Protestant home. That most teachers were young women only compounded the problem. Addressing the readers of *Good*

Housekeeping in 1910, Elia Peattie urged parents to overcome age bias. Mothers, she said, should include "young teachers . . . in their social program" and lend them the weight of maternal authority.⁵⁹ No longer was it assumed that just because they were women, teachers carried the imprimatur of the home. Marriage and children conveyed social and moral legitimacy. Teaching, on the other hand, was for single women who wanted a career.

The mothers of Haddonfield wanted to make their influence felt at school. While unwilling to challenge the school board, they were not intimidated by it either. In fact, they often worked with the board. It granted their request for space in a schoolhouse to hold the first meeting of the HMTC, an indulgence that became precedent thereafter. The home and school association learned to initiate contact when it felt confident that the superintendent and board would listen. Only some educational issues fell within the province of the home; it was a mother's job, for example, to monitor the growth and behavior of children. "The school has a right to expect that the child be physically fit and happy," new superintendent Allen S. Martin told the HPTA in 1923. The school board also believed teachers would fail if they acted alone in matters of discipline. "There is need for definite cooperation from parents in this regard," it pointed out, "for all success of school work hinges upon sustaining the teachers' authority and influence with the child."⁶⁰

Both the HMTC and the HPTA tried to sway the board on matters having to do with nutrition and recreation. Experts, trained in physical education or home economics, were taking charge of the playground and lunchroom at school, but mothers resisted losing control. They were accustomed to supervising their children's diet and play, and as white, middle-class women, they still commanded some respect in these domains. In 1910 the board permitted the HMTC to use a school yard during the summer as a playground, and at the bidding of the HPTA it hired a playground director ten years later.⁶¹ Food was a topic of special interest to the members of the home and school association. In 1908 the HMTC petitioned the board "to forbid the sale of all food stuffs, such as apples, candies, pretzels, hokey-pokey, etc. without a special license." It soon followed with a request to lengthen the lunch period from thirty minutes to one hour, presumably to allow the children enough time to eat at home. More than a few must have gone elsewhere, however, because in 1921 the HPTA complained about school leaving at the noon hour. Only those with written permission from their parents should be excused, it said, a policy that the board adopted at its next meeting.⁶²

The board could have solved the lunch problem by serving hot meals at school. As early as 1920 it designated one of its two new female members, Mrs. Bertha Wilson, to confer with Harriet Dawson, the president of the HPTA, about the feasibility of catering soup at the Elizabeth Haddon School. When Wilson and Dawson decided that this was impractical, the noon hour

issue remained unresolved. In 1925 the HPTA appointed a committee to look into it, but Superintendent Martin warned the mothers off, telling the HPTA that the board had been discussing "this matter . . . for some time, realizing the need for responsible persons to efficiently serve such luncheons in a period of time that would not necessitate lengthening the noon hour."⁶³ Even on matters that struck close to home the board wanted the HPTA to know that it was well informed and would make the decisions.

By the early 1920s the mothers of Haddonfield were becoming bolder. The HPTA now pressured both the school and town to stop tobacco use by minors. The high school principal, Helen Woolston, refused to take the blame; "the amount of smoking could be reduced," she told the members of the HPTA, "if the parents would take this matter over and not leave it all to the school."⁶⁴ But the mothers of Haddonfield also knew that there still were strict limits on what they were supposed to do. Regarding school construction, the public issue that most concerned the town's parents and taxpayers alike in the 1920s, the HPTA kept its profile low.

Like many other urban and suburban school districts Haddonfield faced a building crisis after World War I. Between 1911 and 1921 enrollment surged, increasing by 476 pupils to a total of 1242. Expenses climbed right along with them, and in February, 1920, the HPTA expressed support for the superintendent and his increasingly hefty budget. The district was now holding classes in several churches as well as outmoded schools. To rectify the situation the board would have to face the voters, asking for permission to float bonds, buy land, and erect new schools. It had successfully traveled this road before, meeting with little or no opposition in 1903 and 1908 when the people of Haddonfield authorized the board to build a new elementary and high school.⁶⁵ Larger and less self-contained, Haddonfield had changed by 1921, but there seemed to be no reason to doubt that the board would prevail again.

In June the school board decided that the time had come to build a new high school, only to discover five months later that many residents did not agree. At a special meeting the board's proposal was rejected overwhelmingly. Both the cost and location of the project prompted widespread opposition that even a joint meeting of the board and the electorate could not dispel. Although many civic groups, including the HPTA, stepped forward to support the board, a second referendum, held the following May, suffered the same fate as the first. Haddonfield was not ready to invest \$412,000 in a new high school, as the board proposed, and even when it countered with a much less costly plan to modify an existing facility, the voters disapproved.⁶⁶

The community did not turn a deaf ear to all the school board's pleas. In May, 1923, it authorized the board to spend \$142,500 to build two new elementary schools, including one for the district's African Americans. These schools did not eliminate overcrowding, however, and the need for a new high

school remained acute. "The unsatisfactory housing for the High School is obvious," Martin complained; replacing it would benefit the entire system, satisfying "the requirement of the elementary schools [for] several years because of the release of the classrooms now occupied by the high school." In the fall of 1924 the school board approached the voters again, but they had not yet changed their minds, twice rejecting plans to build a high school two blocks east of the business district. It took another year to bring them around, and it was not until October, 1927, that the new facility finally opened.⁶⁷

The building of new schools was not necessarily a gendered issue. Every parent of a young child had a stake in the condition of the town's public schools. Unorganized and not identified with any particular interest or group, the naysayers lacked political definition. Frustrated parents found themselves condemning their neighbors' want of civic spirit. No doubt echoing what he heard at home, one student blamed the failed referenda on "the opposition of a comparatively large group of people who are habitually against any measures for the benefit of the place." Another pupil complained of a chasm between the townspeople and the schools. "We don't want a new High School as much as we want the help and interest of the people of the town," he said.⁶⁸ But persuading them to authorize new school construction was important to many families. What was the right strategy to get this job done?

The HPTA chose not to pressure the school board or challenge the voters of Haddonfield. It downplayed the problem of overcrowding and was not outspoken on the need for new schools. Instead, it followed the lead of the board, backing it when called upon to do so. In September, 1920, the executive committee of the HPTA asked its members to adopt a resolution informing the board of their support for the purchase of land on which to build a new high school. However, nearly twelve months elapsed before the committee followed through, agreeing by unanimous vote to send a letter to the members of the board "expressing our interest . . . and assuring them of our hearty co-operation and support when they deem it advisable to take action in the matter."⁶⁹

The HPTA did not speak for all parents in Haddonfield. Although they were not represented on the HPTA or the board of education, the few African Americans in town refused to be ignored. In 1920 they comprised 6.5 percent of the borough's population, a slight increase over 1910 when they amounted to just under 5 percent. Mainly domestics, laborers, and other service workers, Haddonfield's African Americans possessed little or no political capital. Those working as housekeepers, gardeners, and chauffeurs often lived with their white employers. Most black families lived near one another, clustered on three segregated blocks and streets. Between 1910 and 1920 the number of blacks living with their own families increased more rapidly than their scattered counterparts, accounting perhaps for an unprecedented show of interest by

the black community in the condition of the schools. In December, 1921, an independent committee of black residents presented a petition to the board urging it to include "better school facilities for the colored children of our Borough" in its construction plans. Four years later black parents asked for "a more competent teaching force" at their segregated school.⁷⁰ Such requests fell on deaf ears, but the black parents were nothing if not forthcoming.

Some white parents may have felt that the HPTA was too indirect in its approach to school politics. Married to an active member of the HPTA, Henry Pennypacker filled a seat on the board vacated by the resignation of an elected member in June, 1922. When his colleagues made him president five months later, it must have come as a shock to those accustomed to more familiar leadership. Pennypacker believed in the need for new schools. He reached out to the HPTA in January, 1923, informing its members about the board's building plans and receiving in return their promise "to do everything in their power to secure the adoption of the entire program." But Pennypacker soon found himself on the outside, looking in; he lost the next election, becoming the only officer of the board between 1900 and 1930 to serve as a member for less than three years.⁷¹

It is impossible to know for sure whether Pennypacker's stand on the school building issue cost him his seat on the school board. In the months following Pennypacker's defeat Superintendent Martin acted as the board's liaison with the HPTA, calling for cooperation to solve the problem of overcrowding. It was not until October, 1925, that another board member appeared before the HPTA to secure its support for the new high school. By then, the board was looking at the possibility of a third straight setback at the polls. But rather than meet with the women himself, board president W. Gentry Hodgson sent his colleague, Bertha Wilson, to remind the mothers to vote. Meanwhile, the husband of the immediate past president of the HPTA quietly convinced one of the most influential organizations in town, the Civic Association, to endorse the new school.⁷² Marshaling support without galvanizing the opposition was good politics. But in Haddonfield parents exercised limited influence as the many unsuccessful referenda demonstrated. The etiquette of white, middle-class gender relations affected the relationship between the home and school. Not only were white mothers understated in their interaction with the school board but the reverse was true as well. School authorities, volunteers and professionals alike, had to be decorous in relating to the public, especially mothers.

* * *

In Philadelphia and its suburbs gender, race, and class intertwined to gird the relationship between the home and school. The boundaries set by Anglo-

American culture dictated against the full participation of blacks and immigrants in PTAs. White, middle-class parents could exercise some influence at school if they organized, but their efficacy differed according to the context, urban or suburban. Expectations based on gender significantly affected parental involvement, encouraging middle-class men and women to adopt different demeanors and play different roles.

In Philadelphia home and school associations made their presence felt primarily at the neighborhood level. Led by Mary Grice, the Home and School League got the attention of the school board by advocating the expansion of the public school's mission, but Grice had to deal with an entrenched educational establishment in the city. When the League struggled to stay alive in the 1920s, educators took control of the home and school relationship. In Abington and Haddonfield PTAs got closer to the action, but the politics of gender shaped parental involvement there as well as in the city, as male school boards and superintendents struggled to maintain control. Middle-class white men served on boards of education while their wives belonged to PTAs. Of course, such restrictions were not absolute. Some fathers joined home and school associations, and when they did, they could adopt an assertive stance. Some women became school board members, but they were expected to defer to their male colleagues on the board and cooperate with the men in school administration. Outspoken women like Mary Grice were unwelcome, and those women who wanted to be effective learned to bite their tongues. Cooperation and collaboration gave white, middle-class women leverage at school. Working together in PTAs, they had a subtle but important influence on public education in their communities.

Notes

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6. William L. Pieplow, "Cooperation Between Boards of Education and the Public," *School and Society* 10 (September 13, 1919), 329-330; Alice Fox Pitts, "A Challenge to Parent-Teacher Associations," *The Parents' Magazine* 4 (November 1929), 15.
7. Scott, *Natural Allies*, 124-125; Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform*, 181-185.
8. Introduced at the annual carnival of the Philadelphia Home and School League, "For Home and School" by Grace Pennypacker celebrated the idea of the school as a neighborhood social center. Mary Van Meter Grice, *Home and School: United in Widening Circles of Inspiration and Service* (Philadelphia: Christopher Sower Co., 1909), 132-132. Two members of the Middlesex County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations in New Jersey wrote words and music for the "Marching Song" of their organization. Returning from the convention of the Delaware State PTA, Mrs. Dallas C. Moore copied a similar song into the minute book of her local PTA. To be sung to the tune of *Marching Through Georgia*, its chorus was:

Hurrah! Hurrah! We'll sing a glad new song!
Hurrah! Hurrah. We'll shout it loud and long!
PTA stands out today for service true and strong
For home and school and nation.

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12. *Annual Report of the Home and School League of Philadelphia, 1911-1912*, 7 (Philadelphia 1912), 16-34; *Annual Report of the Philadelphia League of Home and School Associations #4* (Philadelphia, 1909), 14-23; *Ninety-third Annual Report of the Board of Public Education, School District of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1912), 74-85, 254-266. The segregated schools affiliated with the League in 1909 were Catto and Ramsey, both near

the historically black neighborhood whose center was at Seventh and Lombard Streets, while in 1912 the League's black affiliates were at Joseph Hill and Thomas Meehan in Germantown and Wilmot just above the downtown. For an analysis of the black community's overall relationship with the school district, see Vincent P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 50-51.

13. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the PEA, November 25, 1907, May 25, 1908, September 28, 1908, & January 25, 1909; Minutes of the Board of Directors of the PEA, April 22, 1912, March 24, 1913 & December 28, 1914; and Minutes of the Thirty-first Annual Meeting of the PEA, May 31, 1912; *Ninety-ninth Annual Report of the Board of Public Education, School District of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1917), 18; Jeanette B. Gutman, "The Parent-Teacher Association in the Philadelphia Public Schools," M.Ed. Thesis, Temple University, 1936, 43-44, 47. See also Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 59-66; Ronald D. Cohen, *Children of the Mill: Schooling and Society in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1960* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 17-18, 29, 72-74.

14. "The League," said Grice in 1912, "is gradually forming itself into the thing it was meant to be, a channel through which the many forms of social activity, as approved by those in authority, shall flow into the larger life of the community, as it touches upon the life of the school." *Annual Report of the Home and School League of Philadelphia, 1911-1912*, 8; Gutman, "Parent-Teacher Association," 126.

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18. "Raise for Teachers Urged by Governor," *Public Ledger*, February 5, 1915; "Teachers Favor School-Tax Rise," *Public Ledger* February 11, 1919; "Good Schooling Urged as Bolshevism Cure," *Public Ledger* February 21, 1919.

19. "Gratz Hits School Critics," *The Evening Bulletin* December 3, 1919; "Mrs. Grice Resigns Head of Home and School League," *The Evening Bulletin* March 28, 1919, BCC.

20. "Mrs. Grice Quits League," *The Evening Bulletin*, March 28, 1919, BCC. Although the state legislature and the school board collaborated to give Philadelphia's teachers a raise in 1919, the salary issue continued to plague school officials in the city for the next several years. *Journal of the Board of Public Education, School District of Philadelphia For the Year 1919* (Philadelphia, 1920), 114; "Teachers' Salary Raise Approved," *Public Ledger* September 9, 1919; *One Hundred and First Annual Report of the Board of Public Education, School District of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1919), 10; "The Philadelphia Schools," *School and Society* 11 (February 28, 1920), 252-253.

21. *The Golden Rung, Golden Jubilee History of the New Jersey Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1900-1950* (Trenton: New Jersey Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1950), 17-18.

22. Lois B. Merk, "Boston's Historic Public School Crisis," *New England Quarterly* 31 (June 1958), 172, 176; Polly Welts Kaufman, *Boston Women and City Schools Politics, 1872-1905* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1994), 96-98; Neale McGoldrick & Margaret Crocco, *Reclaiming Lost Ground: The Struggle for Woman Suffrage in New Jersey* (New Jersey: 1993), 20; Alice Hyneman Rhine, "The Work of Women's Clubs," *Forum* 12 (December 1891), 527; Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform*, 58-60.

23. In 1875 there were 116 members of the Boston School Committee, each representing one of the city's wards. One year later bureaucratic reformers reduced that number to 24, elected at large. Scott, *Natural Allies*, 75-76; Merk, "Boston's Historic Public School Crisis," 181-197; Kaufman, *Boston Women and City Schools Politics*, 24, 27-28, 30-35, 150,

156-158.

24. Minutes of the Board of Directors of the PEA, April 24, 1916 & January 19, 1917; "Mrs. E. C. Grice Indorsed for School Director," *Public Ledger*, September 9, 1915.

25. Violet M. (Mrs. William W.) Birdsall to Simon Gratz, Philadelphia, April 19, 1918 (1919?) in a file marked correspondence, 1916-1920, Simon Gratz Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In 1917 Margaret Haley, the head of the Chicago Teachers Federation, and the superintendent, Ella Flagg Young, openly opposed the Loeb Rule, adopted by the Chicago school board, that challenged the right of teachers to remain employed if they were unionized. Meanwhile, Denver was perhaps the only major city in the United States to have a woman preside over its school board before World War I. Mrs. Myron Jones held the post for a year, beginning in May, 1913. PTAs were very active in the city at that time. Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 80-90; Hogan, *Class and Reform*, 211; *Tenth Annual Report-School District Number One in the City and County of Denver, Colorado* (Denver, 1913), 3, 12.

26. Skocpol, *Protecting Mothers and Soldiers*, 317-320, 329-331; Margaret Gibbons Wilson, *The American Woman in Transition: The Urban Influence, 1879-1920* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 98; "Women on Public Boards," *Public Ledger* January 2, 1915; Minutes of the Middletown PTA, May 4, June 1, & September 28, 1917; "Woman Leader in School Fight," *Public Ledger*, September 11, 1919.

27. William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), 50-51, 176; Cott, *Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 29-30; Edith V. Alvord, "Why is a School Board?" *The American School Board Journal* 60 (June 1920), 33; "Women on School Boards," *The American School Board Journal* 58 (February 1918), 33.

28. William Estabrook Chancellor, *Our Schools: Their Administration and Supervision* (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1909), 15; James Newell Emery, "The School and the Parent-Teacher Association," *Child Welfare Magazine* 23 (June 1929), 526; David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 108-109, 180, 190-193.

29. Isabel Underwood Blake, "An Invitation to Parents," *The American School Board Journal* 57 (October 1917), 22; Harold O. Rugg, "Cooperation Between Boards of Education and the Public," *National Education Association: Addresses and Proceedings* (Washington, D.C., 1919), 433-434.
30. George S. Counts, *The Social Composition of Boards of Education: A Study in the Social Control of Public Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 42-44; Scott Nearing, "Who's Who on Our Boards of Education," *School and Society* 5 (January 20, 1917), 89-90. Nearing confined his study to cities of 40,000 or more, discovering that in cities of 40,000 to 100,000 people, women represented 5% of board members, in cities of 100,000 to 500,000, 8%, and in cities over 500,000, 12%. Counts reported finding a similar pattern in 1926. Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 28; Cohen, *Children of the Mill*, 48.
31. Bruce M. Watson, "Tendencies in City School Board Organization," *National Municipal Review* 7 (January 1918), 60-61.
32. "Fling at Old Men on School Boards," *The Evening Bulletin* May 26, 1917, BCC. In Philadelphia the ward or neighborhood school boards were not eliminated altogether until 1931. Marilyn Gittell & Edward T. Hollander, "The Process of Change: Case Study of Philadelphia," in Marilyn Gittell & Alan G. Hevesi, eds. *The Politics of Urban Education* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1969), 217-235.
33. "Woman is Named on School Board," & "Woman Sees Great Crisis in Schools," *The Evening Bulletin*, February 21, 1920, BCC; Minutes of the Board of Directors of the PEA, March 22, 1920. The other women considered for the board in 1920 were Marion Reilly, dean of Bryn Mawr College, Mrs. I. H. O'Hara, a reformer associated with the PEA, the Playground Association, and the Home and School League, and Mrs. B. F. Richardson, a prominent club woman. The Home and School League did not place anyone on the board until 1929 when its president, Anna B. Pratt, became the third woman to serve on the board. "Men and Things," *The Evening Bulletin* May 25, 1929 & "Elect Miss Pratt to School Board," *The Evening Bulletin* June 7, 1929, BCC.
34. Cott, *Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 99-114, 318-319.
35. Gutman, "Parent-Teacher Association," 23-25, 38-39, 63; *One Hundred and Tenth Annual Report of the Board of Public Education, School District of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1928), 306; "Principals Like Home-School Idea," *The Evening Bulletin*, May 1, 1929, BCC.
36. Gutman, "Parent-Teacher Association," 63-65, 98, 111-112, 116-117, 127.
37. Gutman, "Parent-Teacher Association," 54-55; Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 71-82, 134-136. For example, black teachers were squeezed in 1931 when the district proposed to enroll all seventh and eighth graders in existing junior highs. The black teachers who would have taught them in segregated schools with pupils in grades one through eight now had no one to teach.
38. Gutman, "Parent-Teacher Association," 65-68, 134-135; "Drastic School Economy Fought," *The Evening Bulletin*, November 23, 1933, BCC; Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 135-136.
39. For a comparison of suburban Chicago on the matter of progressive education see Arthur Zilversmit, *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); John Modell, "An Ecology of Family Decisions: Suburbanization, Schooling, and Fertility in Philadelphia, 1880-1920," *Journal of Urban History* 4 (August 1980), 409-412.
40. PTAs were active in the middle-class suburbs of other cities. For their role in school politics in Somerville, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, see Reed Ueda, *Avenues to Adulthood: The Origins of the High School and Social Mobility in an American Suburb* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 206. The desire to be politically involved at school was not exclusive to the middle class, but historians of education disagree about the extent to which labor's involvement in school politics was based on class. See Ira Katznelson & Margaret Weir, *Schooling for All: Class, Race and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 121-141; Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 136, 151-152; Cohen, *Children of the Mill*, 157-209.
41. Edward S. Ling, "Home and School Associations," *The American School Board Journal* 60 (January 1920), 52; *Annual Report of the League of Philadelphia, 1911-1912*, 33.
42. Ling, "Home and School Associations," 52-53; *Times Chronicle*, June 26, 1915;

February 5 & March 18, 1916.

43. Ling, "Home and School Associations," 53; *Times Chronicle*, May 20 & July 8, 1916; January 13, September 22, & November 17, 1917.

44. Ling, "Home and School Associations," 53.

45. Margaret Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 103-107.

46. Marsh, *Suburban Lives*, 109-111; Minutes of the Haddonfield Mothers' and Teachers' Club, April 26, 1905, Historical Society of Haddonfield, Haddonfield, New Jersey (hereafter cited as HMTC).

47. Minutes of the Haddonfield Board of Public Education, April 21, 1904, Haddonfield School District, Haddonfield, New Jersey (hereafter cited as MHBE); Minutes of the HMTC, April 26 & May 17, 1905, January 17, 1906, March 9 & April 12, 1910, "Borough P.T.A. Founded 30 Years," in the Haddonfield PTA Scrapbook, Historical Society of Haddonfield, Haddonfield, New Jersey; Emma G. Gibson, *Pioneer Women of Historic Haddonfield* (West Collingswood, 1973), 126-128.

48. Gibson, *Pioneer Women*, 126; Minutes of the HMTC, April 3 & May 2, 1906, March 5 & November 6, 1907, May 13, 1908.

49. Minutes of the HMTC, May 1, 1907.

50. Marsh, *Suburban Lives*, 74-83. Marsh calls the participation by men in family life "male domesticity" and points out that in order to have such relationships with their husbands women had "to agree to share only partially in the world of men." *Ibid.*, 82.

51. MHBE, 1901-1931, *passim*. All subsequent information regarding membership on the Haddonfield school board comes from this source.

52. Obituary of Anna Eastburn Willits, Scrapbook, MS 39-35, Historical Society of Haddonfield; Glover/Banister collection, File Box 91-1104-1190, Folder 1149-1169, Historical Society of Haddonfield. Willits lost when she ran for a second term on the board in 1911. MHBE, March 21, 1911. "William J. Boning," *Biographical Review: Camden and Burlington Counties, N.J.* vol. 19 (Boston: Biographical Review Publishing Company, 1897), 115-117.

53. Obituary of William W. Hodgson, Scrapbook, MS 39-35, Historical Society of Haddonfield; *Haddon Gazette*, April 4, 1929

in the Haddonfield Parent Teacher Association Scrapbook, Historical Society of Haddonfield. 54. Minutes of the HMTC, November 1, 1905, May 1, 1907, May 13, 1908; MHBE, May 15, 1919; "Henry S. Scovel," *Biographical Review of Camden and Burlington Counties, N.J.* vol. 19, 472-473.

55. MHBE, March 16, 1915; Minutes of the Haddonfield Parent-Teacher Association, June 16, 1920, Historical Society of Haddonfield, Haddonfield, New Jersey (hereafter cited as HPTA).

56. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the HPTA, October 19, 1919, November 11, 1919, September 11, 1922, April 8, 1926, May 9 & December 1, 1927. In the 1920s there were presentations on such topics as nutrition, health, adolescent social life, and school punishment. Speakers included Mrs. A. H. Reeve, the president of the NCPT, Josiah Penniman, president of the University of Pennsylvania, and John Logan, New Jersey Commissioner of Education. Minutes of the HPTA, April 19, 1922, November 15, 1922, November 20, 1923, March 18, 1924, April 20, 1926, & February 18, 1928; *Camden Courier*, October 17, 1929 in HPTA Scrapbook.

57. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the HPTA, November 11, 1919, November 10, 1920, October 11, 1921, September 11, 1922, November 29, 1926.

58. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the HPTA, January 12, May 18, & May 31, 1921.

59. Elia W. Peattie, "Friends of the Family: The Teacher," *Good Housekeeping* 50 (1910), 187. On careerism among teachers see, for example: David F. Labaree, "Career Ladders and the Early Public High School Teacher: A Study of Inequality and Opportunity," in Donald Warren, ed., *American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 164-185; James W. Fraser, "Agents of Democracy: Urban Elementary-School Teachers and the Conditions of Teaching," in Warren, ed., *American Teachers*, 118-126.

60. MHBE, April 20, 1905, December 21 & September 20, 1906, November 17 & December 15, 1910, February 21, 1918, February 14, 1922; Minutes of the HPTA, May 16, 1923.

61. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the HPTA, April 13, 1920; MHBE,

November 17, 1910, April 15, May 20, & June 7, 1920.

62. Minutes of the HMTC, October 14, 1908, January 6, 1909; Minutes of the Executive Committee of the HPTA, October 11, 1921; MHBE, October 20, 1921.

63. MHBE, October 21 & November 18, 1920; Minutes of the Executive Committee of the HPTA, February 10, 1925; Minutes of the HPTA, February 18, 1925.

64. Minutes of the HPTA, December 20, 1922; Minutes of the Executive Committee of the HPTA, December 22, 1922, January, nd, 1923.

65. Minutes of the HPTA, February 16, 1920; MHBE, August 3, 1903, March 17, 1908, February 14 & March 20, 1922.

66. MHBE, June 16, November 22, & December 2, 1921, May 11, 1922.

67. MHBE, March 27, September 25, October 30, November 20, & December 16, 1924, October 27 & November 24, 1925; Minutes of the HPTA, September 17, 1924; "To Vote on New School," *The Evening Bulletin* November 18, 1924 & "Dedicate School at Haddonfield," *The Evening Bulletin* October 14, 1927, BCC; "Black School Anniversary," October 12, 1944, Scrapbook, MS 39-35, Historical Society of Haddonfield. 68. Albert Starkey "What is the Paramount Need of Haddonfield," *The Shield* (1924) 82-83; Joseph Walto, "A Paramount Need of Haddonfield," *The Shield* (1924), 83-84. Appearing in the high school yearbook, these two essays jointly received the prize for merit from the Haddonfield Civic Association.

69. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the HPTA, September 8, 1920, September 13, 1921; Minutes of the HPTA, September 15, 1920; MHBE, September 21 & October 20, 1921. The board responded by thanking the HPTA for its help and inviting the president and two other members to come to a meeting to discuss "the housing condition of the school children." Minutes of the Executive

Committee of the HPTA, December 5, 1921. 70. MHBE, December 15, 1921 & March 19, 1925. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Manuscript Schedules, Borough of Haddonfield, Camden County, N.J.; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Manuscript Schedules, Borough of Haddonfield, Camden County, N.J. That more blacks were living with their own families in 1920 is made apparent by shifts in the gender ratio. In 1910 black women outnumbered black men in Haddonfield by almost two to one, but ten years later there was virtual parity.

71. MHBE, June 29 & October 26, 1922, February 13, 1923; Minutes of the HPTA, January 16, 1923. Mrs. Henry S. Pennypacker chaired the program and child welfare committees of the HPTA in the mid 1920s and served as the organization's vice president in 1924-25. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the HPTA, July 16, 1923; Minutes of the HPTA, May 21, 1924. Pennypacker's term of eleven months was also the shortest of any board member between 1900 and 1930. However, two other board members also had brief terms at this time; Charles Vaughan served slightly more than a year, beginning in February, 1922, and William Standwitz slightly less, an indication of the political turmoil in Haddonfield caused by the school building issue. MHBE, February 14 & June 12, 1922, February 13, 1923.

72. Minutes of the HPTA, September 17, 1924, October 21, 1925; Minutes of the Haddonfield Civic Association, October 16, 1925 & November 27, 1925, Historical Society of Haddonfield, Haddonfield, New Jersey. No relation to Henry Pennypacker, James L. Pennypacker lobbied the Civic Association. His wife, Grace, was president of the HPTA in 1924-1925.

TABLE I
HADDONFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
1900-1930

<u>Continuity on the Board</u>	<u>1901-1915</u>	<u>1916-1930</u>
Mean Length of Service (in years)	5.78	5.00
Median Length of Service (in years)	4.62	4.00

<u>Longest Terms of Service (number of board members)</u>	<u>1901-1915</u>	<u>1916-1930</u>
15 years	2	0
14 years	0	0
13 years	2	1
12 years	0	0
11 years	0	1
10 years	0	1
9 years	1	1

Occupations of Board Members

	<u>1901-1915</u>	<u>1916-1930</u>
Attorney	3	3
Business Owner	6	5
Civil Servant	2	2
Dentist/Doctor	1	0
Engineer	0	2
Housewife	1	1
Politician	0	1
Teacher (retired)	0	1
White Collar Worker	9	10
Other	1	0
Unknown	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>
	23	30

Source: Minutes of the Haddonfield Board of Education, 1900-1930 Haddonfield School District, Haddonfield, New Jersey. Twelfth Census of United States, 1900, Manuscript Schedules, Haddonfield Borough, Camden County, N.J.; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Manuscript Schedules, Haddonfield Borough, Camden County, N.J.; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Manuscript Schedules, Haddonfield Borough, Camden County, N.J.; *Hoope's Haddonfield Directory Containing names of Haddonfield and Vicinity* (1901); *Directory of Haddonfield, Camden County, N.J. including Batesville 1908* (Camden, 1908); *Derbyshire's Directory of Haddonfield, 1910-1911* (1911); *Directory of Haddonfield for 1914* (Kolb & Lehr: 1914); *1921 Haddonfield Directory including Batesville* (1921); *Directory of Haddonfield Including Batesville, 1925* (1925); *The Haddonfield Directory, 1929* (1929).

TABLE II

Officers of the Haddonfield Parents and Teachers Association:
Occupations of Husbands and Members

Haddonfield Mothers and Teachers Club, 1905-1910

<u>Occupations of Husbands</u>		<u>Occupations of Members</u>	
Business owner	3	Housewife	9
Civil Servant	1	Teacher	4
Minister	1		13
White Collar	4		
	9		

Haddonfield Parents and Teachers Association, 1920-1928

<u>Occupations of Husbands</u>		<u>Occupations of Members</u>	
Business owner	3	Business owner	1
Dentist	1	Housewife	13
Politician	1	Teacher	2
White Collar	5		16
Unknown	4		
	14		

Source: Minutes of the Haddonfield Mothers and Teachers Club, 1905-1910; Minutes of the Haddonfield Parents and Teachers Association, 1920-1928, both in the Haddonfield Historical Society, Haddonfield, New Jersey; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Manuscript Schedules, Haddonfield Borough, Camden County, N.J.; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Manuscript Schedules, Haddonfield Borough, Camden County, N.J.; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Manuscript Schedules, Haddonfield Borough, Camden County, N.J.; *Hoope's Haddonfield Directory Containing Names of Haddonfield and Vicinity* (1901); *Directory of Haddonfield, Camden County, N.J. including Batesville 1908* (Camden, 1908); *Derbyshire's Directory of Haddonfield, 1910-1911* (1911); *Directory of Haddonfield for 1914* (Kolb & Lehr: 1914); *1921 Haddonfield Directory including Batesville* (1921); *Directory of Haddonfield Including Batesville, 1925* (1925); *The Haddonfield Directory, 1929* (1929).