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Women at Berkeley, the First Hundred Years

Part 2

WWI through the 1920s

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Chapter Four

WWI, the Flu Pandemic, and Origins of 1920s Student Peer Culture

The year 1920 marked the end of an era at UC as Benjamin Ide Wheeler's twenty-year university presidency came to a close. Although his incumbency was disrupted in its last years by mobilization for the war in Europe and the 1918 influenza epidemic, Wheeler left a campus transformed by a program of building and landscaping that Phoebe Apperson Hearst had begun planning and providing for in the late 1890s. By the time Hearst died of the flu in 1919, she was reputed to have spent twice as much as the State on campus buildings (Douglas, 106).



1. Satirical *Life* magazine reflection on the changing image of women in 1926.

1920 also marks the beginning of the era when Victorian sexual attitudes were finally declared moribund. Early in the decade, movies, novels, and newspapers showcased young women defying nineteenth-century standards of behavior. Though many were no doubt exaggerated, such sensational pictures of the habits of “jazz-age” youth did register an actual cultural rift between the generations. The gulf had been widening since the late 1910s but was still news in 1920 because the crises of war and influenza pandemic had deflected the nation’s attention. When those emergencies ended, though, it became apparent that young women and men were interacting in new ways. They mixed more easily and unrestrictedly than past generations had. They were going out on dates unchaperoned, dancing to jazz music, smoking cigarettes together, forming intimate emotional bonds, and even engaging in the limited form of sexual experimentation known as “petting”. None of this conduct would have been respectable in their parents’ generation, so its rise seemed to indicate a sudden revolution in gender relations.

College students, according to historian Paula Fass, did not just follow the new trends; they invented them (Fass, 1977, 261-290). It was primarily university students in the decade after WWI, she argues, who created the first youth-oriented peer culture, which would dominate campus life for decades, become common to young people throughout society, and fundamentally reorganize gender relations. The alterations, moreover, were especially noticeable at large and expanding coeducational public universities, like UC Berkeley (Fass, 129-159; Horowitz, 193-219).

To get a better idea of how the transformation came about locally, this essay will look first at the crucial events leading up to 1920s, exploring how the war years accelerated changes in social relations, especially those between the sexes, at Berkeley. The second part of the essay will ask to what extent Berkeley’s undergraduate women participated in and benefited from the 1920s peer culture.

Wartime conditions accelerated gender change on campus

The combined crises of WWI and the 1918-19 flu epidemic catalyzed the changes in gender relations. Superficially it may be hard to see how those hazardous and somber events are connected to the atmosphere of youthful self-indulgence that followed. The crises, after all, called for collective self-sacrifice and unstinting service from the students. A closer look at campus life in 1917-19 can perhaps give us a better understanding of how the disruptions in university routines relaxed and sometimes suspended the previous rules of engagement between men and women.



2. WWI flying fleet 500, 1919 *Blue and Gold* photo.

First, we must keep in mind that the university in those years was overrun by servicemen. In total nearly 1,000 male students volunteered or were drafted, and yet there were soon more men on campus than ever before, both as students and as military men. The grounds, buildings, and equipment had been placed at the disposal of the War Department, which put up numerous barracks and converted playing fields into training grounds. There were men in every kind of uniform, for the campus contained an Army Training Center, a Naval Unit, and an Ambulance Corps, to say

nothing of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), established in 1916, which absorbed the university's earlier Cadet Corps. The largest wartime program, the School of Military Aeronautics (in above picture), gave pre-flight training to over 2,000 pilots, with a peak enrollment of 1,500. Another 1,900 men came to Berkeley through the Student Army Training Center. Hence, despite an initial drop in male enrollments, the gender balance on campus itself was heavily tipped toward the masculine. Moreover, we should keep in mind that thousands of other college-age men were stationed or training in the San Francisco bay area, which added to the temporary demographic imbalance (Stadtman, 193-5).

Second, in addition to being constantly surrounded by military men, the women students were energetically recruited into the university's war effort; it was seen as a way to give them both new career goals and service opportunities. The university went so far as to divert the curriculum itself into wartime channels. Dean of Women Lucy Stebbins's exhaustive description of the university's war-related initiatives designed specifically for women stresses an array of new programs and courses: a curriculum for nurses; a course in "First Aid and Home Care of the Sick" to free the trained nurses in every community . . . for the critical needs of war time"; Home Economics courses that "(1) inform all college women of the food problems created by the war, (2) train women in food conservation and the use of substitutes in the household, and (3) and equip specially qualified women to become community leaders in food conservation". Over a thousand undergraduate women registered for the new courses in the first semester, and as the war went on, they became an obligatory part of every woman's course list. In addition, the university offered to "refocus" women's college work through "short intensive

training . . . in the special application of their previous education and experience” to war work: “Women who have been trained in physical education may become reconstruction aides . . . Those trained in manual arts and design may become teachers of occupational therapy and assist in the first stages of the reeducation of the wounded man for work. Women trained in scientific work may become laboratory technicians. Others with fundamental training in agriculture may become leaders of groups of women working on farms or in orchards and assist in meeting the shortage of farm labor.” (*Annual Report*, 1918, 186).



3. Red Cross Poster recruiting women for the war effort.

The women’s extracurriculum—that complex of student government, sports, and other organized activities that occupy students’ time outside of the classroom—came in for equally radical changes (Horowitz, *passim*). At Berkeley, the extracurriculum was, as we’ve seen, the arena in which women had made noticeable progress in the 1910s by building an elaborate complex of women-only organizations and activities. Their efforts had the enthusiastic support and encouragement of the university president, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, who sought to harness student activities to his interconnected goals of self-government, character-building, and public service. He had intertwined the women’s undertakings especially with a continual round of fundraising for various campus projects. When the war started, the women’s activities were turned almost exclusively in patriotic directions. They were expected to volunteer in the local campaign for

food conservation, raise funds for War Relief and ambulance teams, and plant vegetable gardens. As the Dean of Women reported, “In the work rooms in Hearst Hall, knitted garments, hospital garments, children’s clothing and surgical dressings were made by the students under the supervision of faculty women who have given generously of their time” (*Annual Report*, 1918, 187). Students were also encouraged to volunteer at the Berkeley Chapter of the American Red Cross to learn nursing skills. In many ways the war-course work and the extracurricular activities overlapped.

Some women apparently felt emboldened enough by their “war work” to use it in protesting against campus symbols of male privilege, such as the Senior Men’s Bench at the southeast corner of South Hall. Even though the bench had lost its strategic placement when Wheeler Hall opened in 1917, a group of women dared to sit on it and knit garments for war relief in 1918 while another group invaded the men-only campus lunch counter (Gordon, 81). The men swiftly took back their territory, but the changing physical and social shape of the campus in the 1920s would soon render such symbols irrelevant.

Most changes in those years would come about in less confrontational ways, through the adoption of different modes of socializing with members of the opposite sex. Universities provide three levels of interaction among students: the curricular, the semi-official extracurricular, and a third social level: “the basic friendship, living, and dating associations that consumed the largest part of the leisure time of . . . students” (Fass, 1977, 133). In 1917-19 at

Berkeley, this social level, too, was dominated by the war. We are lucky to have an unusually vivid and personal account of how the military atmosphere affected the social lives of women students. In weekly letters, Agnes Edwards, a freshman in 1917, described the details of her new Berkeley life to her parents on the family farm in the Imperial Valley. Agnes Edwards was far from an average undergraduate; she insisted on grasping every opportunity the university offered, whether financial, scholastic, recreational, or social. Her atypical ambition allows her letters to reveal a set of interconnected changes that the war made in women's college life. We learn about her struggles to support herself while keeping her grades at competitive scholarship levels and about her career ambitions. Most importantly for our purposes here, though, she constantly reports on an endless stream of social engagements with young men—mainly cousins and relatives of hometown neighbors—already connected to her family.

Just weeks into her college life, the parental networks had put her in touch with numerous young men from all parts of the West Coast who were stationed in the San Francisco bay area. Entertaining them is clearly the part of familial social obligations she enjoys most:



4. Agnes Edwards with an aviation cadet in 1918.

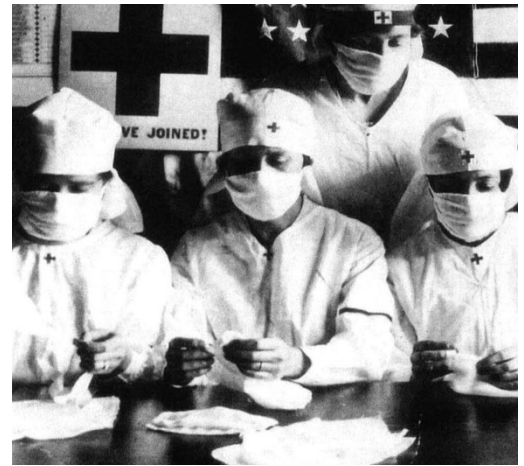
I sent Mrs. Swain a card & she wrote right away saying Russell Graham [her nephew] was here in Berkeley at the School of Aeronautics, & gave me his address. Also gave me Frank's address [Kittie's son]—he was held over to the 2nd camp. I wrote both of them notes, & Russell came up last night to see me. He will only be here one week more, then has a week's leave [and] . . . will come back here to wait for orders. He is very nice indeed—doesn't act much like a lawyer. I'm going to the movies with him tonight—it's Sunday too—& then some night next week we are going down to a big hotel for dinner. Gee—I'm afraid I won't know what to do. Garrett is coming up here . . . soon, & Gerald may come later in the winter. A regular epidemic of cousins. Frank Swain is coming the first chance he gets . . . (Partin, 18).

In addition to the familial alibi, the wartime call to support the troops also kept her social calendar crowded and relaxed some of the usual rules governing the relations between young women and men. When cousin Russell arrived to take her to San Francisco for their movie date, Agnes and her landlady agreed that cousins do not need chaperones and that Agnes is, after all, an unusually mature girl (Partin, 19). After longer acquaintance with the aviators (this picture shows her with one), she admits that some of them are “regular flirts”, but they nevertheless get a pass: “I think they're rather spoiled because everyone entertains them so much. There are dances every week & they're in on all the college affairs”. The abundance of men in uniform even prompts Agnes to adopt a tone of superior depreciation toward mere college boys: “Yes we had a peach of a time when the aviators were over. The fellows were very nice & the swellest dancers. Best time I've had for ages, because they were all so wide awake & are real men. These college fellows mostly act bored to death all the time” (Partin, 80). Between trips to the Presidio for dances at the Army Officers' Training Camp and boat rides to “Goat Island” (Yerba Buena), where the naval officers trained, Agnes debated which “war courses” to take, tried to find time to knit socks for the cousins once they move to other bases, made and boxed up candy for them. And she reports on all kinds of university events—Charter Day, graduation, pep rallies, football games—that invariably turn into war rallies. The war

reorganized university routines for women in ways that wove the previously separate strands of academic, extracurricular, and social life into a more uniform pattern, with patriotic sentiment at its center. Agnes's letters let us see just how deeply wartime university life immersed women students in collective experiences that allowed for relatively unconstrained association and close emotional ties with members of the opposite sex.

Campus Women: The Unsung Heroes of the Influenza Pandemic

In the midst of this hyper-charged swirl of activity, in October of 1918, the flu epidemic arrived on campus, putting a near stop to the already diverted campus routines. The flu was first brought by aviators barracked on campus. The women students' activities were consequently redirected yet again; they were pressed into service as nurses and makers of the gauze masks that all citizens were required to wear. According to the *University Chronicle* for January 1919, over 1,000 students made masks in their spare time. The crisis, though, also required the services of hundreds of women volunteers doing more perilous work, for over 1,400 students and servicemen living on and around campus eventually needed treatment for the flu. The size and rapidity of the onslaught immediately overwhelmed the small infirmary, which had approximately fifty beds. Several of the larger barracks and the gymnasium were quickly converted into hospitals, but only for men. "To have men living in crowded boarding houses, fraternities and clubs at this time when infection was everywhere, was out of the question," Dr. Legge, the University Infirmary's director, explained in his annual report for 1919 (*Annual Report*, 1919, 98).



5. Like these Red Cross volunteers in 1918, campus women made tens of thousands of masks.

And yet, his report went on to admit, the suffering women students were simply left in their overcrowded housing. Many of them were recruited to care for the sick, but when they themselves fell ill, the university's very few beds were already full:

During the period of the epidemic the women students were inadequately provided for, as but a limited section of the Infirmary could be reserved for their use. A service department was instituted by Drs. Lillian Moore, Romilda Meads and Ruby Cunningham of the Infirmary and these, with the cooperation of the Dean of Women, and student helpers, ministered to the women who were ill in sororities and club houses. Their services were crowned with success and without their help it would have been impossible to have provided adequate medical and nursing service to our college women. The Berkeley Chapter of the American Red Cross was our great angel of mercy." (*Annual Report*, 1919, 99).

As one historian explained, "The unsung heroines of the 1918 influenza epidemic at Berkeley were the university women" (Adams, 55). Three hundred and twenty students did maintenance work and nursing in sick rooms. Four campus women died nursing the sick: two professional nurses and "two unselfish and devoted" women students, Elizabeth Webster and Charlotte

Norton”. As Dr. Legge reported, they fell “in the service of their brothers in arms.” In his report’s closing peroration, Dr. Legge expresses a sentiment that was often heard when the crisis ended: “The memory of these four women should shine as an inspiration to all of what American women did for humanity when the call was sounded (*Annual Report*, 1919, 99).”

As Dr. Legge’s description of the students dying “in the service of their brothers in arms” indicates, the pandemic deaths transformed these women into fallen heroes. Such patriotic sacrifices became yet another argument in favor of giving women equal civil and political rights. In his appeal to the U.S. Senate to pass the Nineteenth Amendment, for example, President Woodrow Wilson drew on the same sentiment: “We have made partners of the women in this war. Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right?” (Wilson, 406). Nationwide, the confluence of the two crises thus seems to have raised the status of women as citizens and even to have removed some of the opposition to their political equality.

Berkeley’s Undergraduate Women and the 1920s Peer Culture

We’ve been tracing wartime trends—the greater freedom of association between the sexes in the social realm and the boost in political status for women—that might have prepared the way for the 1920s peer culture on college campuses. The next part of this essay will look at the effects of that peer culture itself on Berkeley’s undergraduates with special attention to women students.

Let’s first take a quick look at changes in the student body’s size and gender composition from prewar to postwar. In 1916, enrollments stood at 5659, with 44% (2412) women; in 1920 they jumped to 9,689, with 45% women, before settling into a 1920s average of around 9,000 at mid-decade. Women accounted for a substantial share of the growth; in 1926, they made up 47% (4246) of the 9,036 undergraduates. Taken together with the enrollments at the newly founded UCLA, the increases indicate that a higher proportion high-school graduates were heading to UC campuses in almost equal numbers of male and female. With college becoming a more normal destination for middle- and upper middle-class California teen-agers, its social functions were bound to change.

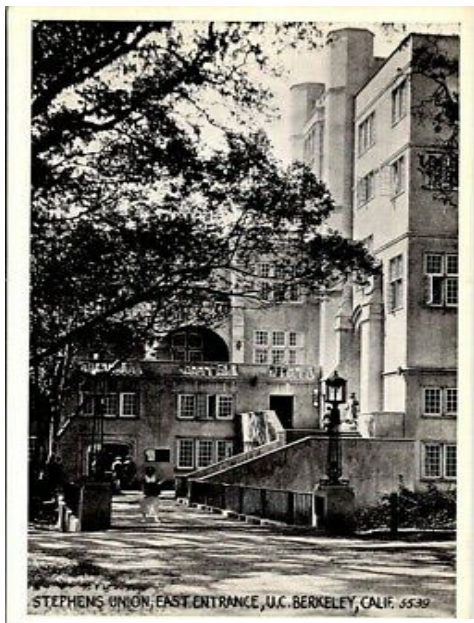
Some important changes in parity between male and female students did come about quickly after the campus returned to normal. The all-male ASUC and the all-female AWS, for example, merged in the early 1920s, and women were thus no longer excluded from the primary student governing body. The event was a milestone of sorts: the first time a previously exclusionary male student organization opened itself to women’s full participation. Construction also began on a large new ASUC building (Stephens Hall), which was planned before the war and opened in 1923. Men and women thus shared not only an organization but also facilities that had previously been denied to women, the most important of which was a restaurant where they could finally buy lunch on campus for the first time. The old ASUC lunch counter had been men-only. The disappearance of such

blatant exclusions made the campus a friendlier and more convenient place for the women, so the extension of the new ASUC's campus presence can be counted as a contribution to sexual equality.

When recalling this merger five decades later in an interview with the Oral History Center, former Prytanean member Ruth Norton Donnelly, who would later be an Assistant Dean of Women, ('25) makes it sound like a decision that was entirely up to the women:

“We reorganized the A.S.U.C., and abolished the Associated Women's organization, on the theory that if we were a coeducational institution, we should have a student body organization that included both men and women. Obviously, we felt that women no longer needed to band together for protection. I shall not debate the matter of whether or not we were right” (Prytanean, 145).

There is a strong sense here of the 1920s marking the beginning of a new era for women students, which was no doubt an important part of the students' consciousness of their break with the past. Norton Donnelly indicates that women in the twenties saw themselves as pioneers primarily of a new social regime in which the sexes would associate more freely. Her description emphasizes the new social mixing rather than the more equal sharing of campus political power. The social and political changes were, of course, compatible, but the stress on social life reflects a broader trend toward the elevation of “popularity” as the measure of an individual's campus status.



6. Postcard showing the Stephens Union, headquarters of the new, gender-integrated ASUC.

Another sign of growing gender equivalence that started in the early 1920s was the appointment of a Dean of Men in 1923. Women had had a Dean of their own since 1904, but men, as the unmarked majority of student body members, had not been perceived as needing special attention from the administration. Suddenly, it seems, they had become more problematic. Thus, although it was a continuation of separatism, the creation of a Dean of Men at least put the sexes on an even administrative plain. It also indicated the changing nature of student government: in the old regime, senior men maintained discipline and meted out justice for various kinds of student infractions in partnership with the faculty. But in the early twenties, when student tribunals became more lenient, the faculty dissociated itself from the process, turned its role over to the administration, and the new deanship was soon created. The ASUC still played a role, but it was directly overseen by the administration (Stadtman, 282-3), as student leadership focused less on discipline and more on stimulating and

coordinating leisure-time activities.

The gender integration of the ASUC thus coincided with changes in the size and functions of student organizations and activities: they assumed new social roles, had greater campus centrality, and encouraged students to devote more time and energy to the extracurriculum. As historian Verne Stadtman points out, the Associated Students not only controlled “the bookstores, athletics, almost all special-interest activities, and many student services” (Stadtman, 282) but also concentrated power in the hands of the students with the largest amount of spare time because the majority of seats on its legislative council were for activities representatives. Its leaders were thus the people with the longest lists of extracurricular pastimes: “the glee clubs, bands, debate teams, athletic squads, class committees, spirit organizations, and publications” (Stadtman, 282). Such students were often affiliated with fraternities and sororities, which both populated the organized activities and mustered votes for winning ASUC elections. The Wheeler-era “moral overtones” of student activities were muted as they became increasingly bound up with the social lives of the campus’s leisure class.

The structure of Berkeley’s student government thereby gave disproportionate weight to organizations and activities run by undergraduates who came from the highest social-economic ranks. The resulting student culture marginalized or ignored the large number of students, male and female, who had little spare time for such activities: those who did not have wealthy parents supporting them and were working their way through college; those commuting from their parents’ homes; or those who were carrying an inordinately heavy academic load in order to graduate early. The outsized power of fraternities and sororities in the system not only stratified the student body by class but also often denied membership on ethnic, religious, and racial grounds, compounding the problem of housing discrimination already rife in the town. The interdependence of Berkeley’s student social structure with its student government in the 1920s might be said to have created and rigidified new categories of campus outsiders and insiders.

7. *Blue and Gold*, 1923, p. 109

The question under debate was: “Resolved, That college activities as now conducted are detrimental to the higher interests of the University.” Parliament upheld the affirmative with a team composed of May McLaughlin ’22, Fay Perry ’22, and Marion Harron ’24. Senate was represented by Charles Dorr ’22, Miles Hammond ’22, and William Onions ’22.

Judges of the contest were Morris Ankrum of the economics department, and E. Z. Rowell and Ray Vandervoort of the public speaking department.



It’s little wonder, then, that the concentration on student activities and certain aspects of the new modes of socializing were viewed by some as negative forces in student life. When the women’s debating team in 1922 beat the men’s debating team, as reported in the *Blue and Gold*, the topic was the campus’s preoccupation with extracurricular activities. The women argued that “College

activities as now conducted are detrimental to the higher interests of the University”, and they won.

We also find a contrasting pair of complaints in the annual reports of the Deans of Men and Women in 1924, which sheds light on the gender implications of the student culture. The Dean of Men blamed “the excessive attention given to undergraduate activities and to social affairs among student organizations” (*Annual Report*, 1924, 30) for both the rise in disciplinary problems (primarily drunken carousing among fraternity men) and the students’ mediocre grades. Dean of Women Lucy Stebbins, however, complained that too many of the current activities failed to engage the students (*Annual Report*, 1924, 35). She recommended establishing additional student organizations to increase community spirit and cohesion in the female student body. It is striking that the two deans, looking at the same phenomenon of the campus culture, come to such opposite conclusions. The Dean of Men saw the problems it made for those at its center, who were distracted and sometimes corrupted by it, whereas the Dean of Women saw the problems for those on the margins, who felt dispersed and disengaged. Why, in a decade known for integrating the genders, would these opposite perspectives still prevail?

Dean Stebbins’s report indicates that the youth culture taking root at Berkeley may have integrated some women into its higher echelons—especially since fraternities and sororities served as filters for identifying plausible mates—while leaving many on the sidelines. Looking into the reasons for the women’s disconnection, the dean points to the university’s refusal to provide housing. Stebbins had long claimed that the lack of university-built dormitories disproportionately affected women, who often could not find affordable, safe, and sanitary accommodations. She warned in 1919 that the university’s policy would limit its geographic draw: female students would increasingly be living with their families, she predicted. Her 1924 survey shows her forecasts had come true: women students were primarily local. Of 3852 women registered (up 1404 in five years, over a 50% increase from 1919), a majority of the women (1989) were “living at home” (*Annual Report*, 1924, 34). Most commuted from towns in the Bay Area, and 974 of them resided with their families in the city of Berkeley itself. Stebbins notes that some families felt obliged to move to Berkeley because of the lack of available student housing. “Sororities and clubs”, on the other hand, served quite a small proportion of the women, only 13%, but had accrued great significance because the housing shortage had given them increasing desirability and selectivity. She frankly labels these trends “divisive”.

Paula Fass has shown that the youthful peer culture in 1920s America developed fastest at coeducational *residential* universities where most students lived on campus, whereas commuter campuses like UCLA had modified versions. Berkeley, however, seems not to have fit either model but rather to have been a residential university for men but not for the majority of women. Just what the local consequences of this gendered pattern were for the absorption rate of the new youth culture would require more research, but Fass’s generalizations about students who lived at home in the 1920s might give us some indications (Fass, 135-6). They tended to be only moderately involved in the extracurriculum, to be at least partially self-supporting, and to be more critical of the social hierarchy. They also tended to have above-average grades, and there is evidence that Berkeley’s undergraduate women excelled academically: in the years 1922-24, for example, two-thirds of the seniors elected to Phi Beta Kappa were women (*Blue & Gold*,

1922, 298; 1923, 304; 1924, 364). Odds are that at Berkeley, as elsewhere, living at home served as a counterweight to the peer culture.

Counterweights, though, are also important for cultural transitions. As Fass notes, the women were the most active leaders in the social life of the students: “Men dominated the activities, women the social functions” (Fass, 1977, 200). To create freer manners and morals, they needed to set new standards for acceptable behavior as well as overturn the old ones. Sororities and boarding houses, for example, accepted the housemothers who functioned as chaperones, and all approved women’s living quarters had parietal rules governing visits with men as well as curfews. And as couples spent more time together privately, limits on sexual behavior also had to be enforced through more informal methods of gossip and reputation assessment. Such unwritten rules might have been easier to keep in a place where over half of the women still lived with their parents. Indeed, the oral histories (conducted in the seventies) of women who had been active in the twenties stress their lack of rebelliousness: “As for parallels to the student rebellions of the 60’s, I think we had none of that. We were completely in sympathy with our professors We attended social events with them, and we felt very close to the controlling elements in the government of our university” (Prytanean, 135). The university women of the twenties seem to have sought greater social freedom and respect without disruption or rebellion.

Diffusing unobtrusively through the student body, the peer culture at Berkeley came to permeate even the groups most obviously excluded from its mainstream organizations. It spread, moreover, through a process similar to that undergone by the first generations of women students in earlier decades: in response to exclusion, they built compensatory parallel institutions and thereby expanded the reach of the extracurriculum. Correspondingly, the groups barred from fraternities and sororities on racial and religious grounds followed the exclusion-expansion pattern by founding their own Greek-letter societies. In later generations students would protest against the racist bigotry of the Hellenic system, but in the twenties the proscribed groups on campus duplicated and extended it. In 1923, Alpha Epsilon Phi, the first sorority for Jewish women, for example, was founded at Berkeley and was allowed to join the Panhellenic alliance.

In 1921, two chapters of African American sororities, Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Kappa Alpha, were established at Berkeley, and AKA was included in the Women’s Council, where representatives of women’s groups assembled. In her memoir, the chapter founder, Ida Louise Jackson, describes the qualifications for becoming a bonafide campus group: the members needed to qualify scholastically, to apply to the Dean’s office for approval, and to have a regular meeting place (Jackson’s house in north Oakland). Once approved, Jackson became their representative on the Women’s Council, and “we began to feel we were a part of things” (*There Was Light*, 255). Despite meeting all of the necessary criteria, the African



8. Berkeley's Alpha Kappa Alpha chapter.

American sororities (and fraternities) went unrecognized by Berkeley's Panhellenic or Interfraternity Conferences. Moreover, when the AKA paid for a page in the *Blue and Gold* for a photograph of the membership, the page was cut at the last minute. Asian American Greek-letter groups like Pi Alpha Phi, founded in 1926, were also not accepted among the white fraternities and sororities. In short, the white peer culture pretended these groups did not exist, and yet the excluded groups established organizations on the same pattern because the need for peer-group recognition and respect extended far beyond the campus elite. The Jewish and African American organizations, moreover, were affiliates of national fraternal networks, and the African American groups especially were becoming important symbols of identity for what one historian has called "black counterpublics" (Whaley). Their arrival on the West Coast demonstrates that college life in the twenties was remarkably uniform throughout the country.

The attraction of sororities, fraternities, and other house clubs was their generational autonomy; the students collectively controlled their properties instead of merely renting rooms in someone else's house. Joining one, though, entailed submission to the relentless scrutiny and assessment of one's peer group, which is why they have come to symbolize the overarching phenomenon of peer influence and conformity. There is no better indication of the predominance of that general impulse to adhere to peer standards than the diversification of Greek-letter organizations at Berkeley. It illustrates not that the excluded groups were mistaken in their response but that the peer culture of the twenties had such strong magnetism that it attracted even those it simultaneously kept at the margins.

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3. Red Cross poster by W. T. Benda. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca40832>.
4. Photo of saluting Agnes Edwards. From *Student Life at the University of California, Berkeley, During and After World War I; the Letters of Agnes Edwards Partin, 1917-1921*. Ed. Grace E. Moremen. Edwin Mellen Press, 2006. Plate 9.
5. Photo of masked mask makers. From “Photos: How the 1918 Flu and COVID-19 Pandemics Compare”, by Radhika Chalasani, *ABC News*, 19 Sept., 2021.
6. Postcard of the new Stephens Union, 1926. From CardCow.com.
7. Report of the debate between the men’s and women’s debating teams over extracurricular activities. From *Blue and Gold*, 1923, p. 109.
8. Photo of the first UC Berkeley members of Alpha Kappa Alpha. From Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc..

Chapter Five

The First Cohort of Women on the Faculty

Although women have been an important part of Berkeley's history for 150 years, professional academic women came on the scene in significant numbers only about a century ago, in the late 1910s. At first they were often excluded or marginalized by their male counterparts, just as the women students had been earlier by the undergraduate men. And they reacted in the same ways the students had: they built exclusively or predominantly women's organizations and pioneered women-friendly academic disciplines. Knowing what fields they came from and what departments and schools they entered and developed can help us to see their early challenges and the direction of their campaign for acceptance. Moreover, the early history reveals the ways in which women faculty would fundamentally change the university.

Prelude to the first wave: Ritter, Sprague



1 Mary Bennett Ritter

In an earlier essay, we briefly described Dr. Mary Ritter's path to teaching at Berkeley. She was a local physician who became the women students' medical examiner on a voluntary basis in 1891, when they needed medical certification in order to use the only gymnasium on campus for a few hours a week. Ritter was later given a salary, paid for by Regent Phoebe Apperson Hearst, which allowed her to take time from her private practice to give medical attention and advice to women students as well as to teach them "hygiene" and "domestic sanitation". She also played the role of sanitary inspector, issuing or withholding certificates of University approval for every boarding house in the city that rented to the women, and she worked with Hearst to raise funds for students to build their own cooperative houses. Even after her resignation for health reasons in 1904, she continued to advocate and raise money for women's student housing through the 1930s. Moreover, when her husband, zoology professor William Emerson Ritter, established UC's Marine Biology Station near San Diego (which later became the Scripps Institute), Dr. Ritter became the field station's de facto manager and research associate. The couple's management of the research facility seems to have been especially inviting for women graduate students, and five of UC's first fifteen female PhDs did their dissertation research there (Merritt, 5-6). In short, Dr. Ritter was a combination Home Economics & Sex Education teacher, as well as a public health worker, student counselor, unofficial dean of women, and unpaid research field-station manager. As she later explained, "I was the 'crank' that turned over the machinery for several innovations in the lives of the women students (Ritter, 201; 201-217).

Ritter was not a regular faculty member, but her UC career foreshadowed some typical traits of the teaching lives of the first wave of faculty women. Their courses, like hers, were often on the margins of normal academic fields. As Ritter put it, hygiene was in the "fringe of the orthodox curriculum" (Ritter, 206). And yet the women's courses were also highly innovative. Ritter's, for example, taught women to understand their own bodies and experiences through a modern, scientific lens; her domestic sanitation course introduced them to the idea of scientifically-informed household planning. Indeed, the subjects she taught remind us of the educational emphasis Jeanne Carr favored for women in the 1870s (see Chapter One), while they also point forward to the 1920s and 30s curricula in health sciences and home economics. Ritter was proud of her role as an innovator, later noting that her courses, were "the wedge which opened the way for the grafting of several strong branches onto the old university tree" (Ritter, 204). In addition to being unorthodox and productive of new university subjects, the academic disciplines pioneered by other early women faculty were often connected to areas of knowledge and occupations that had long been associated with women's unremunerated, volunteer community work. The arrival of women on the faculty was part of a much larger trend toward the professionalization of middle-class women's traditional social roles and functions. Both the change and the continuity were typified by Dr. Ritter, an M.D. whose mother had been a self-taught nurse and mid-wife.

Ritter's employment at UC ended in 1904, and very little progress in hiring faculty women was made during the rest of the new century's first decade. Using the UC Cliometric History Project's online data, we found that by 1910, eleven women were listed in the course records, but most of them were physical education instructors or assistants in others' courses (UC Cliometric). Only two qualify as faculty: Assistant Professors Lucy Sprague in English and Jessica Peixotto in Economics, hired in 1904 and 1906, respectively, both appointed by Benjamin Ide Wheeler. Of those two, it was Sprague who took on some of Ritter's responsibilities. Her faculty status, like Ritter's, was questionable, for, as we saw in an earlier essay, she'd been appointed by President Wheeler to serve as Dean of Women. As she later told the story, he asked her simply, "to do something with the women students at the University; that vague statement expresses fairly accurately his state of mind" (Mitchell, 133). She even found herself teaching hygiene, later recalling, "Of all the queer things I was called upon to become at Berkeley at the age of twenty-seven, I think becoming a specialist on sex diseases was the queerest" (Mitchell, 200). Her English faculty appointment was an afterthought, and without even a Master's degree, she acutely felt her lack of academic credentials. She did teach some courses, but her primary roles were to give the women a spokesperson in the administration, improve their morale, facilitate their efforts at organizing themselves in extra-curricular groups and activities, and expand their career horizons beyond the default choice of school-teaching. By the time she left in 1912, she had definitely made the women's lives better, increased their stature on campus, but her role was that of an administrator, mentor, advisor, and inspirational presence.

New Women in New Fields

Thus, despite Lucy Sprague's honorific title of Assistant Professor, it's fair to say that Jessica Peixotto was the only woman hired by the university deliberately to serve on the faculty during the first four decades of its existence. And Peixotto's role in setting the stage for the arrival of the first groups of faculty women can hardly be exaggerated. I say "groups of women" because most of Berkeley's earliest academic women arrived in clusters in particular fields, and understanding the fortunes of the fields will help us to understand the successes they achieved and the limitations they faced.



2 Jessica Peixotto

One of the clusters was Peixotto's invention: a wing of the Economics Department she called "Social Economics". According to historian Mary Ann Dzuback, the program oriented its research toward problems that concerned laborers, the poor, the unemployed, children, women," and other groups "who faced uncertain economic and social change" (Dzuback, 155-56). Because it studied the causes and remedies of such problems, it could be viewed by some as an academic extension of the charitable and philanthropic work often undertaken voluntarily by middle-class and wealthy women. President Benjamin Ide Wheeler was a supporter of the program and justified it to the Regents as "the field of constructive and preventive philanthropy" (*Annual Report*, 1912, 35). Indeed, Peixotto was herself active in charitable organizations. She was a friend and associate of Phoebe Hearst and first came to the attention of Wheeler in that context.

But there was nothing of the amateur about Jessica Peixotto. She published widely, so she had a strong national scholarly reputation as well as a prominent place in California's social policy discussions. During WWI, she was appointed to the National Council of Defense, Committee on Children. In 1918, she was promoted to full professor, the first woman in Berkeley's history to reach that rank, and she retired in 1935. In short, during her almost thirty-year career on the faculty, she was one of the campus's most influential social thinkers.

Peixotto's contributions to UC, moreover, went far beyond her own research, for she was a persistent institution-builder, whose academic program produced other prominent faculty women. Barbara Nachtrieb Armstrong, for example, who was the first woman to join the faculty of the Berkeley Law School and played a major role in the federal Social Security legislation of the 1930s, was Peixotto's student when she earned both a BA (1919) and a PhD (1928) in Social Economics. Another of Peixotto's students, Emily Huntington, returned to the Economics Department in 1928 after completing her doctorate at Harvard/Radcliffe, and remained until her retirement in 1961. Yet another Social Economics student, Lucy Stebbins, became the Dean of Women and built that position into an important branch of the administration. These core faculty

women (whose careers we'll return to in later chapters) were joined in Social Economics by a number of women doctoral students and visiting women researchers. They actively disseminated their research to local, state, and federal government agencies, and were well known for creating the first clinical program for social welfare in the state, a forerunner of the School of Social Welfare.

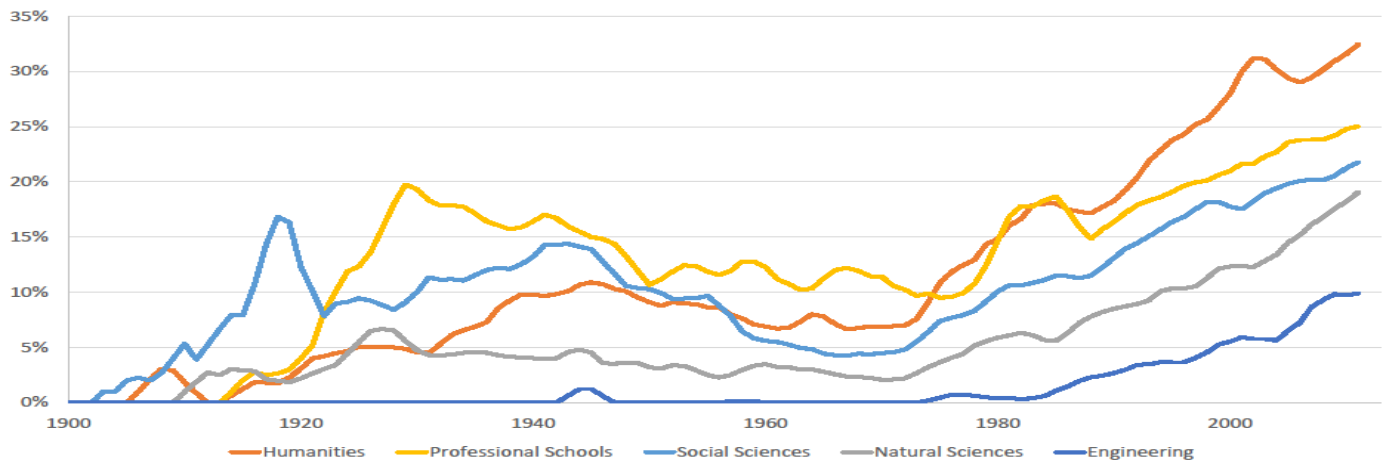
Moreover, in the 1910s she was an important advisor to President Wheeler, who loaded her with campus service responsibilities. He charged her with the task of chairing a faculty committee to determine the function and organization of a Home Economics program at Berkeley (Nerad, 51-63). The job was difficult, time-consuming, and controversial, but it eventually led to the founding of two new programs with predominantly female faculties: Home Economics Science and Home Economics Arts, originally combined as a single Department inside the College of Letters and Science (Nerad, 67-71).

Thus, partly because of Peixotto's strenuous efforts, the next decade saw relatively strong progress in hiring faculty women. By 1920 (UC Cliometric), sixty-three women are listed as teaching. The majority were still in the "teaching assistant", "lecturer" and "instructor" categories, but many of those had master's degrees. Moreover, the number of women holding assistant and associate professorships had jumped to twenty-two. Although not all with professorial titles held doctorates, some of the women holding instructorships and lectureships did. In all, there were twenty female PhDs and two medical doctors on the faculty in 1919-1920. Adding those holding professorial appointments to those PhDs teaching with other titles, we count twenty-eight.

Granted, this is a small group of women, less than 5% of the total faculty, but they were the core around which a women's faculty would form. And when we look at their disciplinary distribution, we can see that many were appointed in a constellation of biological and social sciences that were just coming into their own at the end of the 1910s. The course lists from 1919-20 show a few women teaching in academic departments that were quite stable, like mathematics and foreign languages. The majority, though, were appointed in emerging fields that were just beginning to differentiate and define themselves. The department of Hygiene, for example, would go on to become Public Health; the Social Economics curriculum would spawn a graduate program in Social Services; Mental Development, which was then in Philosophy, would soon become the new Department of Psychology. Hygiene brought faculty from medical schools and the biological sciences together with statisticians and sanitation experts. Pedagogy, a forerunner of the Department of Education, drew from numerous disciplines. Perhaps most important for hiring women was the new Home Economics Department, which had two branches: Home Economics Sciences (primarily PhDs in Chemistry and Physiology) and Home Economics Arts (led by landscape and textile specialists). Many women faculty thus first appeared in specialties that were separating from older academic departments and recombining

in new formations. They were in the process of creating new university homes.

Proportion of Female Faculty by Year and Area at UC Berkeley



3 Chart by Zachary Bleemer

This chart by economic historian Zachary Bleemer, which traces the percentage of the faculty that was female throughout Berkeley's history, shows the shifting distribution. Between 1915 and 1919, the female percentage of the social science faculty rose from 7% to 16%, the highest proportion in any division. The rise probably reflects the founding of Home Economics and its original placement in the College of Letters (now Letters and Science). As we've seen, the growth of Social Economics inside the Economics Department also contributed several social sciences women in these years. Then, as professional programs and schools were formed in the 1920s, some women faculty seem to have migrated to those units. Home Economics Science became an independent department in 1920, still in L&S, and was then moved to the College of Agriculture in 1938. The percentage of women in social sciences dropped sharply between 1920 and 1929 (from 19% to 9%); concomitantly, the percentage of women in the professional school faculty rose from 4% in 1920 to 20% in 1930, reflecting larger changes in the number of such programs and the fields of professional training. In short, the chart records not a rise and decline of different faculty in two areas, but the arrival of many women faculty in the years leading up to 1920 and then their reclassification in the subsequent decade. It's a picture of the disciplinary and institutional flux surrounding the first cohort of faculty women.



4 Olga Louise Bridgman

An example of the disciplinary elasticity of these early women academics can be seen in the career path of Dr. Olga Bridgman, a pioneer in child and developmental psychology. Since the field had not yet come into existence, Bridgman combined several different kinds of training. She came to California in 1913, two years after getting her M.D. from the University of Michigan. At Berkeley she earned a master's and a doctorate, and in 1920, we find her listed as an Assistant Professor of Philosophy teaching "Abnormal Psychology". Concurrently, she taught Pediatrics at UCSF. Only in 1922 did she find a more appropriate home in the newly created Psychology Department. She continued researching and teaching at both UCSF and Berkeley for forty years ("Olga Louise Bridgman").

For all of their variety, though, the new disciplines shared one thing: they emerged in the context of the socialization, professionalization, and increasing governmental oversight of activities that had belonged to women in earlier generations: community healthcare and hygiene; charity and community relief; childcare and education; nutrition, and household production and management. Through churches, women's clubs, and private charities, women had tried to solve such pressing social and medical problems as educating slum children, feeding, and clothing families, caring for orphans, establishing clinics and infirmities, and combating urban delinquency and rural poverty. Then in the early decades of the twentieth century, the scale of the problems became too large for private charities and volunteer organizations. Government resources were needed, which came with state oversight and certification, leading universities throughout the country to offer professional training in new academic programs (Solomon, 83-90; 137-140).



5 Katharine Felton

The professionalization of these sectors in California created the need for academic preparation and eventually the formation of either new departments or special schools and programs at the university. We can see this private-to-public dynamic at work, for example, in the career of alumna, and later Lecturer, Katharine Felton, who graduated from Berkeley in 1895, received graduate training in Political Economy at the University of Chicago, and was made the Director of the Associated Charities of San Francisco in 1901. That position brought her to prominence as a chief organizer and administrator of the coordinated federal, state, and city emergency relief efforts following the 1906 earthquake and fire. Her influence on San Francisco's social services continued for decades; she reorganized the care of orphans in the city, pioneering the move to foster homes from impersonal orphanages (Leiby, 174-180; Mitchell, 198-99).

In the twenties, the work Felton had initiated and coordinated through private charities was taken over by public agencies, and she smoothly transitioned to a public administrative role, which made her especially interested in the training and qualifications of the many young women who joined the new profession of social worker. Planning for their education kept her connected to her *alma mater*, where she not only helped develop the Curriculum in Social Service, initiated by Peixotto in the Social Economics program, but also taught as a Lecturer in the Department of Social Welfare from 1926 to 1940 (Burton; “Katharine C. Felton”).

The Example of Home Economics

Perhaps the best known—and most controversial—example of women’s work becoming an academic discipline, though, was the creation of Home Economics departments throughout the country in the first decades of the century. Members of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae at first disapproved, fearing Home Economics would downgrade women’s college education by reducing it to household training, which would merely channel women back into homemaking. But others saw Home Economics as an opening for women in the sciences; they thought it would make “household management, scientific cookery, and sanitary science legitimate areas of scientific inquiry” (Nerad, 34). Many hoped that university programs in the subject would raise the status of women’s work generally while opening more faculty positions to women (Solomon, 85-88). The debate may have been short-circuited by the requirement of home economics in public high schools, which forced colleges to train teachers in the subject. Nevertheless, ambivalence about its effect on the status of women faculty continued.

Berkeley’s experience with a Home Economics Department illustrated that both sides of the debate were right: the department both quickly raised the number of women on the faculty and also marginalized them. As historian Maresi Nerad explains, Home Economics had the full support of President Benjamin Ide Wheeler, who initiated its departmentalization in 1916 and thought the unit would provide vocational training for homemakers. The women faculty, however, viewed themselves not just as teachers but also as researchers seeking new evidence about daily life that might ultimately yield fundamental scientific insights. Because the university in general had such a limited view of the field, though, the women it recruited had to struggle constantly for space, meager resources, academic legitimacy, and recognition of their accomplishments (Nerad, 17-71;).

A few new faculty women brought into the university through Home Economics, like the



6 Agnes Fay Morgan, 1930

nutritionist and department chair Agnes Fay Morgan, managed to carry on crucial research and make important discoveries within its confines. A person of unusual focus and determination, Morgan put off motherhood until after her promotion to full professor in 1923, even then keeping the fact under wraps. As one colleague recalled, “her research was in chemistry, and so she usually wore a long smock, and when her son arrived on the scene, everybody was startled because nobody knew that he was on his way” (Nerad, 77). She studied the biochemistry of vitamins and the nutritional value of foods, while shaping the entire department and building one of the most important programs in human nutrition in the country.

Nevertheless, her research was repeatedly thwarted by lack of money and inadequate facilities. Underfunded by the university, she sought money from California’s food industries for analyzing such topics as the effects of canning on the vitamins in tomatoes. For that unapproved initiative, the university cut her research budget even further. After many such travails, she eventually gained recognition as a scientist: the American Chemical Society awarded her its Garvan Medal in 1949, and the Berkeley Academic Senate chose her to be the first woman Faculty Research Lecturer in 1951. In 1962, after her division of Home Economics had been rechristened the Department of Nutritional Sciences, the building housing it was renamed Morgan Hall.

Despite the hard-won eminence ultimately achieved by Morgan and a few of her colleagues, the devaluation of the Home Economics sciences as women’s vocational education kept the junior faculty from finding space and money to undertake their own research. The department thus had trouble retaining the younger women it recruited. Finally, in the early 1960s, when high schools stopped requiring home economics courses, it was disbanded. The program in Nutrition stayed at Berkeley, and other divisions of Home Economics moved to the Davis campus. As we’ll see in a later chapter, the reorganization led to the disappearance of dozens of faculty women.

Home Economics is an extreme example of both the perils and promises of the growth in feminized fields in the early twentieth century. The new fields created areas of interdisciplinary inquiry, were encouraged and sometimes even mandated by the era’s growing public service sector, and they made women university teachers and researchers much more common. But because they were consigned to the periphery of academic interests, the status and tenure of the women who entered them remained insecure.

New Women in Old Fields

There were also, to be sure, academic women teaching in more traditional academic departments in 1919-20. What can be learned from comparing a few of their career paths with those of the women in the new fields?



7 Rosalind Wulzen

One department with four faculty, Physiology, included two women, Rosalind Wulzen and Lillian Moore, as Instructors. Both women had received their PhDs from Berkeley within the previous six years. As historian Karen Merritt has discovered, Berkeley's early female PhDs, unlike those from other American universities, were predominantly in science and mathematics: "While the largest numbers of women who earned Ph.D.'s at American universities in the late 1800's were in the fields of English, Latin/Greek and Pedagogy (Education), only one woman each received a UC Ph.D. in English and Pedagogy before 1916. Instead, ten of the first fifteen completed their doctorates in the sciences and mathematics" (Merritt, 2). Moreover, seven of those ten were in the biological sciences, in marked contrast to the first fifteen Berkeley PhDs awarded to men, all of which were in science and math but none in the life sciences (Merritt, 5). Given what seems to have been a gender-related preference among women for the biological sciences in post-graduate study, the presence of two women on the four-person Physiology faculty looks less surprising.

"Instructor" was a common entry-level title for both men and women at the time, but the difference in status between the genders in Physiology appeared in their rate of promotion. Wulzen held the Instructor title for fourteen years, from 1914 until 1928, while her male colleagues went up through the professorial ranks. She finally resigned to take an assistant professorship at the University of Oregon. Her departure from Berkeley was described by Nello Pace as part of an "upgrade" for a stagnating and overly inbred department (Pace, 12). And yet in Oregon, where she found support for her research, she made the important discovery of a compound in molasses and unpasteurized cream—which was named the Wulzen factor after her—that could protect the joints of mammals against calcification. She taught at both the University of Oregon's Eugene campus and at Oregon State in Corvallis, finally settling into the Zoology Department there and retiring as a full professor in 1954 ("[Rosalind Wulzen](#)"). The year after Wulzen moved to Oregon, Lillian Moore (who had been promoted to Assistant Professor) died suddenly of a rare blood cell disorder. Except for a one-year stint by Dr. Evelyn Anderson Haymaker (later a professor at UCSF), the Department of Physiology appears not to

have employed anymore faculty women until the 1950s, when the unit was merged with Anatomy (Pace, 12-16).

Wulzen's career pattern of very slow or even non-existent progress into and through the professorial ranks, was common for faculty women in this period. Annie Biddle, for example, was the first woman to be awarded a PhD by the Berkeley Mathematics Department in 1911. After marrying in 1914, she began teaching, holding titles usually given to graduate students: teaching fellow, assistant, associate. The titles may indicate that she preferred part-time teaching because she'd started a family. Finally, she was made Instructor in 1924, a decade after earning her PhD. But when the economic depression hit and the department was forced to reduce its size, she was laid off on the grounds that she was a married woman whose husband could support her (Greene and LaDuke, "Andrews, Annie Dale Biddle"). This pattern became prevalent in the following decades, when married women were repeatedly told that men needed their jobs. Wulzen's and Biddle's experience might also indicate that women who entered departments where they'd earned their doctorates had a difficult time overcoming their previous status as graduate students; it might have looked as though they were hired partly because they were readily available.

Even women coming from other prestigious graduate programs often made slow progress through the ranks and retired without tenure. Alice Post Tabor came to the German Department with a PhD from Chicago in 1916. For sixteen years, she taught as an Instructor at every level—including graduate seminars in German Literature—until she was finally given an Assistant Professorship in 1932 ("Alice Post Tabor, German: Berkeley"). Looking at the Department course lists in 1920, we see three PhDs with Instructorships, two men and Tabor. In 1930, only one, Tabor, had not been moved to the professorial ladder. In 1948 when Tabor retired as an Assistant Professor, both the men had long held tenured professorships. It appears that women did not necessarily benefit by coming from outside the institution. Nor did they have an easier time in longer established or more stable and traditional departments. Where they were competing with more men, they faced different kinds of challenges from those encountered in the feminized fields.

* * *

This first generation of pioneering academic women made contributions of time and energy to the university and the public good that were disproportionate to their numbers. And although they were underfunded and usually underappreciated, they often expressed genuine gratitude for the opportunities the university gave them to live stimulating intellectual lives with a keen sense of purpose. They were not, to be sure, completely insensitive to their unequal treatment. For example, in 1917, when Jessica Peixotto's Social Economics program was attracting hundreds of new students, she complained to President Wheeler that the Economics Department stymied her progress: "When it is a question of promotions in our department, I am invariably the last to get any evidence of merit. Later comers get first place" (quoted in Nerad,

40). And yet her consciousness of discrimination did not interfere with her unremitting dedication to the university and the public service she was sure it provided. As we celebrate their accomplishments in 2020, we may wonder how much more these women might have done if they'd received the full support and acceptance of their male peers. From their historical perspective, though, they clearly perceived that they were a newly privileged female intellectual elite, harbingers of a brighter future for women in higher education.

They had, moreover, an acute consciousness of their roles as test cases for the viability of women faculty in general, believing that if they, in the first significant cohort, proved their worth, women faculty would gradually gain acceptance. Consequently, they felt responsible for promoting the interests of women as a group and building organizations that would make the lives of their own peers and of future faculty women more sociable, comfortable, and productive. Our next perspective on their activities will examine their foresight and leadership in establishing institutions to promote women's collegiality and public presence at Berkeley.

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Chapter Six

Why Did Berkeley Women Need to Create Their Own Faculty Club?



1 Front entrance of the Women's Faculty Club

The independent (but university sanctioned) establishment calling itself “The Faculty Club” refused to admit women as members. Some were occasionally allowed to attend functions as guests, but they were not eligible for membership. The club’s sexual restriction might not have been noticed in 1902, when it was built as a one-room clubhouse, since no women were then on the faculty. However, by the close of the 1910s, the clubhouse had been greatly expanded and over a score of new women had been added to the faculty, so the continued bar on their membership seemed unjustifiable. Still, we might wonder what was so important about having a club.

The women were, after all, voting members of their departments as well as members of the principal faculty organization, the Academic Senate, whose power was then increasing. Indeed, the women’s desire for a club coincided exactly with the chapter in UC history known as the “Revolt of the Faculty”, in which that group as a whole took a decisive step toward enhancing their own standing in relation to the administration, especially in the matter of professorial appointments and promotions (Stadtman, 239-56). In Benjamin Ide Wheeler’s day those powers belonged to the President, with the consent of the Regents. With his resignation in 1919, the Academic Senate began campaigning for the system of shared governance that Berkeley has practiced ever since.

The simultaneity of the campaign for a Women’s Faculty Club and the general expansion of collective faculty power raises the question of possible links between the two efforts. We can’t say for sure that there was a direct connection, but what’s known about the circumstances prompts the speculation that the women leaders, whose programs had often received Wheeler’s support, might have been wondering how to proceed as the balance of power shifted toward the faculty. They thus might have been especially alert to signs of disrespect from their male colleagues, and yet they were also no doubt eager to claim their share of the faculty’s growing

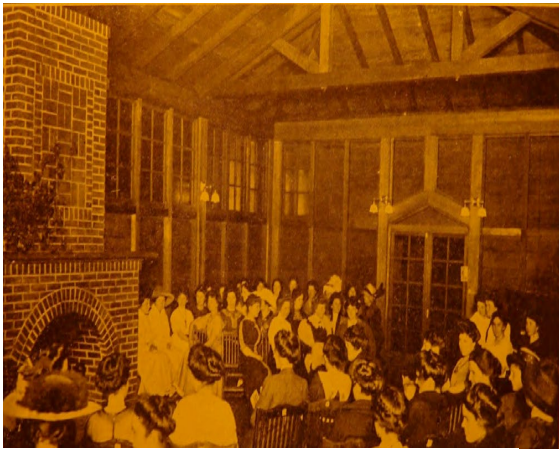
authority. Within this broad context of organizational change, there were many other reasons, both practical and symbolic, that made a Women's Faculty Club seem indispensable.

The Practical Reasons for a Club

To begin at the simplest level, the exclusion was not only insulting but also a significant impediment to leading a comfortable and sociable campus life; it even interfered with simply having lunch. A place for all to purchase meals conveniently may sound like an obvious requirement for a growing public university, but in the late teens, the campus was still a complete food desert for women. Thus, at the simplest and most literal level, exclusion by men from the only faculty club was a bread-and-butter issue.

The university, as we've noticed several times in these essays, had a policy against providing living or eating facilities, so all such places had to be created by independent associations, like the ASUC and the Faculty Club, both of which were exclusively male in 1919. Thus, as an early member of the Women's Faculty Club explained, all women on campus "who did not live close enough to walk home for lunch either carried it or went to a public restaurant off campus". The men, in contrast, had provided themselves with two places: the ASUC lunch counter in the basement of North Hall "was sacred to the men students"; and the male faculty had their club (*The Women's Faculty Club*, 82). The eating restrictions illustrate once again how the university's refusal to provide services made life particularly hard for women. They were not only constant reminders of their second-class citizenship but also sources of discomfort and inconvenience, costing them time and energy.

The faculty women thus keenly felt the need for a place to meet one another, enjoy



2 Meeting at Girton (Senior Women's) Hall, c. 1913

relaxed conversation with peers, engage in social activities, hold meetings, give parties, have meals, and even find housing. And in providing one for themselves, they were following a pattern already well established at Berkeley: when women were excluded, they built separate, parallel institutions. Indeed, they had the recent example of the establishment of Senior Women's Hall by the students in 1911. The senior men's leadership organization, the Order of the Golden Bear, had built Senior Men's Hall in 1905-6 as a place to hold private, informal discussions with alumni, faculty, and administrators. Not allowed to enter

that hall at any time, women students soon began raising money for a clubhouse of their own. Like all the clubs, it was built on land given by the Regents and with the approval of the administration (*Girton Hall*, 7-8), and architect Julia Morgan donated her labor (Darnall, 60). Throughout the 1910s, Senior Women's Hall was the primary assembly place for female students on campus. It did not have dining facilities but, fittingly, did have a small kitchen.

Although partly following this earlier pattern, the building of the Women's Faculty Club in other ways departed from it. Like earlier club builders, the women faculty sought the approval of the administration and asked the Regents to allow them to build on university land. They raised money from the sale of bonds, took out a mortgage, and they asked John Galen Howard, the primary university architect, to design the building. But the Women's Faculty Club was a much bigger and more expensive project, built not only for meals, assembly, and recreation, but also residential purposes. It took four years to plan and build, and the leading lights of the women's faculty (incorporated as the Building Committee) were personally involved in all stages of the process (*Women's Faculty Club HSR*, 42-52). The sheer extent of their dedicated efforts indicates how much more than mere lunch was at stake in their enterprise.

The Symbolic Need: Public Recognition of Faculty Status

The exclusion of women from membership in the Faculty Club was tantamount to a denial of their faculty status. And in response, the faculty women did something unprecedented: they took an action on their own behalf that differed from their earlier behavior. Previously when campus women had organized (combining with donors, alumnae, and faculty wives) they had done so for the benefit of women students. Even the first appointment of a woman to the faculty, Lucy Sprague, was supported on the grounds that the students needed an older mentor and spokeswoman. But in response to the faculty club's exclusion, the academic women publicly banded together for the first time to advance their own interests. The 1919-20 foundation of the Women's Faculty Club was thus a turning point in the history of women at Berkeley because it showed the rise of a new collective identity, that of women academic professionals, and it manifested a new collective determination to advance their welfare, careers, and campus status. To be sure, it also promoted the cause of gender equality, but it was specifically focused on applying that principle inside the ranks of professional academics.

The number of women on the faculty, however, was still too small (under 5% of the total faculty) to be an adequate membership base for a substantial club housed in a building of its own. Thus, according to this 1920 description of the founding event, the plan was always to include women beyond the faculty: "On September 29, 1919, Miss Lucy Ward Stebbins, Dean of Women, called together the women of the University of California in a meeting which resulted in the organization of the Women's Faculty Club whose active members are the women of the faculty and of the administrative staff of the University, and whose associate members are chosen from professional women and women in public service in this community, and which has for its purpose the forwarding of the professional and social interests of these groups." (Club records, quoted in *Women's Faculty Club HSR*, 29). Thus even in looking outside the faculty for members, the planners emphasized that the club was to promote women's *professional* interests.

A note among the minutes of a 1920s meeting of the members further indicates that the founders were fully conscious of how different their own organization was from the many women's clubs springing up at that time, which were dedicated to philanthropy and civic

improvement programs. Discussing the possibility that a general “college women’s club” might be in the offing, they decided that “since the college women’s club is to promote social ideals and interests of a social and educational nature, while the Women’s Faculty Club is more professional, a club for contacts rather than programs, it seemed hardly possible that any duplication of effort or interest could occur” (Quoted in *Women’s Faculty Club HSR*, 32). This was to be a club devoted to providing professional benefits to its own members; it was not to be a service organization assisting others. Its rationale thus marks a break from the altruistic, service-oriented reasons normally given for women’s organizations. And it represents a step, like several noted in the last essay, from women’s occupational volunteerism to fully fledged professionalism.

Professionalism, as this note indicates, gave the club a way to expand without becoming simply another women’s club. But, of course, it also entailed exclusions and even occasionally created a sense of internal hierarchy. One later member, who came up through the administrative ranks, for example, reported that she’d perceived the academics as “snobby” and believed they had only offered membership to women in managerial jobs out of economic necessity (*Women’s Faculty Club*, p. 5). Such comments in the club’s oral histories might seem to indicate mere matters of personal attitude or behavior, but they point to a structural paradox going far beyond individual intentions and failings. Obviously, the WFC’s assertion of its members’ professional status ruled out membership for most of the campus’s women employees, and the emphasis on professionalism had socially variable implications even inside the club. The very name of the place indicates the original primacy of the academic women’s need for professional recognition, and yet the club’s survival has always depended on a much wider constituency. It was inevitable that different groups of members would sometimes see the professionalism issue from conflicting angles. Seeking the same status privilege as their male counterparts looked egalitarian to the academic members, but to others it could seem elitist.

Another layer of complexity is added by the fact that the academics who were most deeply involved in founding the club were also those most engaged in socially and politically progressive research. The growth in female faculty numbers by 1920, as noted in the last essay, had been greatest at the points in the curriculum where the academy intersected with public service: e. g., health, nutrition, family and child welfare, education. WWI intensified these activities, and in the 1920s and 30s, the list would grow. The faculty found themselves not only educating women for new professions but also giving expert advice and serving on committees and commissions at various government levels. Thus, the more interested a faculty member was in bringing about change beyond campus, the more she would want to display her professional credentials.

Statistician Elizabeth Scott recalled how humiliating it could be for a woman to participate at such meetings in the men’s Faculty Club even as late as the 1950s. While advising a state agricultural group at the men’s club, she explained, “We hardly made any progress at all

when in came a man called Mr. Smith who was a desk, a counter employee. He ordered me to leave. Because I wasn't a member, therefore, I could not be eating in this room, only members were allowed to eat in that room” (Scott, in *Women’s Faculty Club*, 158). Everyone at that meeting left in protest, but the incident nevertheless illustrates why being able to hold meetings and host contacts in a respectful environment seemed a necessity.

It is little wonder, then, that the club’s early leadership contained many women whose academic work entailed extensive contacts and experience in public service. They had broad university administrative experience, which gave them an overview of the general condition of women on campus, and they were also widely respected and influential beyond the campus. The founders were convened by the Dean of Women, Lucy Stebbins, while the campus was returning to normal in the wake of WWI. She had taken over from the first Dean, Lucy Sprague, who departed in 1912, and like her predecessor was a graduate of Radcliffe. Stebbins had been a social worker in Massachusetts before returning to her home state of California. She served as Sprague’s assistant for two years in addition to playing an active role in the early years of the Social Economics program. By 1919, she was an assistant professor and had proved her administrative worth by guiding the women students through the crisis of the war years and the deadly influenza epidemic. Each year, Stebbins drafted a full report on every aspect of women’s lives at Berkeley. Moreover, she’d become central to the efforts to increase curricular offerings and recruit more women faculty when President Wheeler sent her to the east coast to find candidates for jobs in the new Home Economics Department, whose leaders she recruited (Nerad, 65). No doubt her role in hiring such key women faculty strongly motivated her to look after their interests once they had arrived.



3 Lucy Stebbins

Stebbins enlisted the help of Jessica Peixotto, with whom she had earlier worked in the Social Economics program inside the Economics Department. According to historian Mary Ann Dzuback, the program had a clear policy orientation toward research concerned with “laborers, the poor, the unemployed, children, women, and the living conditions of middle-class families and citizens of California, who faced uncertain economic and social change” (Dzuback, 155-56). In 1918, Peixotto had been the first woman promoted to full professor at Berkeley. Widely published, she had a strong national scholarly reputation and a prominent place in policy discussions. During the war, she’d been called to advise the National Council of Defense’s Committee on Children. In short, her credentials and scholarly respectability were unquestionable. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter Five, she was an important advisor to President Wheeler, who had given her the responsibility of chairing the committee to create the home economics programs, just as he’d given Stebbins the job of recruiting their personnel. Like Stebbins, Peixotto had a



4. Jessica Peixotto

comprehensive knowledge of the faculty women, a strong investment in their collective welfare, and a desire for a convenient place in which to maintain and enlarge her network of connections.



5 Barbara Nachtrieb (later Armstrong) in 1915

Stebbins and Peixotto thus took the lead, and they recruited a rapidly rising young female faculty star, Barbara Nachtrieb Grimes (later Armstrong) who had also been hired in Social Economics in 1919. She had graduated from Berkeley in 1913, received her law degree in 1915, and served as executive secretary of the California Social Insurance Commission until 1919 while working on an Economics PhD (completed in 1921). She was then given a joint appointment in Economics and Law, the first woman to have a faculty appointment at the law school of a major American university. Later in her career, she published a ground-breaking study of social insurance programs (1932), was summoned to Washington D.C., and became an influential consultant in the drafting of the Social Security Act of 1935 (Buck, n.p.).

Many other early members of the WFC worked at the intersection of academic research and social and governmental policy. There was Margaret Beattie, in the Hygiene Department (later Public Health) whose WWI service in a field laboratory of an American Expeditionary Forces hospital in France had led to a career of reforming medical laboratory procedures. Sophia Levy, in Mathematics, became Director of Mathematics Instruction for the Army Specialized Training Program during WWII, which resulted in a book about artillery. And the redoubtable Agnes Faye Morgan's professional public service ranged from reforming the food service at San Quentin Prison to serving on the Governor's Committee on Agricultural Chemicals. The number of Women's Faculty Club founders whose professional work relied on networks beyond the university allows us to see the overlapping practical and symbolic importance of the club.

There were also, to be sure, important WFC leaders whose service remained more campus oriented, like Pauline Sperry in Mathematics and Alice Tabor in German, "who handled the finances that were done most successfully, and were responsible for the short time before our club was all ours and the mortgage cleared", according to Lucy Stebbins's assistant, Margaret Murdock (*Women's Faculty Club*, 30). Even though their work brought fewer nonacademic professional contacts, though, Sperry and Tabor practiced an ardent political and social activism in accord with the concerns of the principal founders ("Sperry", Greene and LaDuke, 2-3).

The careers of the Women's Faculty Club founders display the characteristic opportunities and dilemmas of women academics as they developed toward professional parity. They brought a strong consciousness of the social problems of their day as well as a progressive belief in government's ability to ameliorate them. They added confidence in their own ability to point the way, through research and scientific methods of analysis, toward the solutions. Their

ambitions, in other words, don't seem far from those of earlier intellectual women, but their faculty status gave them the additional need for professional authority, which replaced the earlier desire for mere moral influence. The consequences of the transition from influence to authority were multiple. With their growing opportunities to exercise power in the outside world came anxiety about campus practices that undercut the professional basis for that authority. Thus, they continued to need a separate enclave of operations, and the two faculty clubs did not find a viable mode of blending their memberships until the mid-1970s. And finally, the professional insistence of the women faculty unintentionally opened a status gulf, small at first but not soon to be bridged, between the career academics and other campus women.

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