

University of North Carolina Asheville

Character Building Projects:

Class and Clubs of the Asheville YWCA During the Depression

A Senior Thesis Submitted to  
The Faculty of the Department of History  
In Candidacy for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in History

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*The organization was very much needed in the community, as it is the only organization besides the churches working with and for girls. The fact that there are fewer teachers in the school this year, gives the teachers less time than usual for any of the problems of girls or of character building projects.<sup>1</sup>*

-Carrie Lee Weaver, September 17, 1930

This statement from the Asheville Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Girl Reserves secretary and YW Board member, Carrie Lee Weaver, in the 1930s reveals the thoughts of many during this time period. At the end of October 1929 the United States stock market had experienced a crash resulting in a Depression that lasted throughout the 1930's affecting much of the country. The Asheville YWCA was also affected by the Depression, but rather than closing their doors like many organizations in this time period the YWCA expanded and offered many new clubs. Through clubs and other activities offered through the YWCA white women of all ages were able to offer support to each other, as well as the surrounding community, even as they struggled through the Great Depression.

The goal of the clubs of the Asheville YWCA was to offer women the character building and support necessary for moral growth and development. White upper and middle class Christian women, like those on the Asheville YW Board of Directors, felt a commitment to working women and younger girls to guide them towards a Christian lifestyle. By giving their time and money to the Asheville YWCA clubs they successfully helped struggling women through the Great Depression. Though scholars have looked at the relationship between women of different classes within the YWCA, there is a lack of information on the specifics of

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors, Asheville Y.W.C.A., September 17, 1930, M99.1.03, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville NC (hereafter cited as Minutes, Asheville Y.W.C.A.).

involvement during the Great Depression, and scholars tend to overlook the history of the Asheville N.C. YWCA.

A number of scholars have studied the relationships of the women within the YWCA. While a few scholars examine the class structure of the YWCA, most focus on race relations in the latter part of the twentieth century. Sarah Heath is one of the few historians to look specifically at class structures in the early twentieth century in “Negotiating White Womanhood: The Cincinnati YWCA and White Wage-Earning Women, 1918-1929” published in 1997 in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City*. Heath argues that middle class women oversaw working class women through the programs in the YWCA in order to provide a “buffer” against “social evils,” and provide them with a place of religious influence and Christian morals. Although Heaths argument focuses on the Cincinnati YWCA prior to the Great Depression it provides important context of class relations that were similar to those happening in Asheville during the 1930’s.<sup>2</sup>

Marion Roydhouse in “Bridging Chasms: Community and the Southern YWCA,” found in *Visible Women* published in 1993, and Joanne Meyerowitz in *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* published in 1988 also examine the classes of women within the YW. Roydhouse looks at the similarities in the YWCA across Southern states and discusses class and the important role that upper class white women played in the forming of the YWCA, and their continued role within the organization. Her argument lacks greater detail on the clubs, activities and the impact the Great Depression had on the YW and overlooks

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<sup>2</sup> Sarah Heath, "Negotiating White Womanhood: The Cincinnati Y.W.C.A. and White Wage-Earning Women, 1918-1929," in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the Y.W.C.A. in the City*, eds. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 86-110.

Asheville.<sup>3</sup> Meyerowitz examines the fears that working class women would resort to vices not just for fun, but as a means to an end. She uses the YWCA to show programs that helped these women during their transition and keep them away from vices such as alcohol, premarital sex, and other immoral activities. She gives a general background of the YWCA in the context of helping women who could have possibly turned to vices if not for programs provided by upper class women. Meyerowitz however, focuses only on women in Chicago prior to the start of the Great Depression.<sup>4</sup>

Other historians who have focused on the YWCA have looked more at race relations such as Nancy Robertson in her book *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations and the YWCA, 1906-46* published in 2007 and Georgina Hickey's *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890-1940* published in 2003. Robertson and Hickey look at class structure and the importance that religion and morality played within the YWCA, but both focus on racial relations with the YW. Hickey studies working class women and their day to day lives including living, working, and experiencing life in Atlanta. She goes in depth on what working women did in their leisure time and the issues they had to overcome while living in Atlanta during urban sprawl. She also looks at the effects the Atlanta YW had on working class women, how it helped them find a secure job, and have a safe place to live while doing so.<sup>5</sup> Robertson offers an in-depth overview of the history of the YWCA up through desegregation. She examines the importance of having a women's organization that was progressive and willing to work with women from all walks of life. Robertson acknowledges the

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<sup>3</sup> Marion Roydhouse, "Bridging Chasms: Community and the Southern Y.W.C.A.," *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, eds. Nancy Hewitt and Suzanne Lebock (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 270-295.

<sup>4</sup> Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)

<sup>5</sup> Georgina Hickey, *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890-1940*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

importance of Christianity within the YWCA, as well as the roles that class can play within YW politics, but the connection to YW clubs and activities is not there.<sup>6</sup>

Asheville is often overlooked when it comes to the history of the YWCA, especially class and community during the Great Depression. Local historians who have studied the Asheville YW tend to focus on race relations. Recent works include “Fulfilling the One Imperative by Any Means Necessary: Desegregation and Race Politics at the Asheville YWCA,” by Sarah Judson, “Integration and the Asheville YWCA” by Daniel Maddalena; and “Eliminating Racism, Empowering Women: The Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the YWCA's Struggle to Advance the African American Community in Asheville, NC” by Heather Whisnant.<sup>7</sup> Each of these works focuses mainly on the latter half of the twentieth century in the context of desegregation within the Asheville YW.

While each of these contributes to the scholarship on the YWCA within the United States or the women’s movement, there are no scholars who have specifically looked at the Asheville YWCA prior to desegregation. Those scholars that do examine the class divides that occurred within the YWCA neglect Asheville and do not go so far as to argue that white upper and middle class Christian women were doing this as a duty to help younger and working class women. In Asheville, upper and middle class women played an important role in the lives of working class women from the YWCA’s founding and well into the years of the Great Depression.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century America experienced a mass movement of young women traveling to cities to find jobs, and ways to support themselves. Upon entering

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<sup>6</sup> Nancy Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the Y.W.C.A., 1906-46*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Judson, “Fulfilling the One Imperative by Any Means Necessary: Desegregation and Race Politics at the Asheville Y.W.C.A. (University of North Carolina at Asheville); Daniel Maddalena, “Integration and the Asheville Y.W.C.A.” (undergraduate thesis, University of North Carolina at Asheville, 2000); Heather Whisnant, “Eliminating Racism, Empowering Women: The Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the Y.W.C.A.'s Struggle to Advance the African American Community in Asheville, NC,” (undergraduate thesis, University of North Carolina at Asheville, 2006).

the city, many women found that securing work that could fully provide for them was nearly impossible and housing was scarce. A fear grew in society that women with more leisure time would start enjoying immoral, unchristian like vices such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and premarital sex. It was also believed that women short on money would turn to prostitution in order to support themselves in difficult times.<sup>8</sup> These women became known as “women adrift.”<sup>9</sup> As more women moved to the cities to secure work, the fear of “women adrift” grew considering that these women were “young, single, native born, and white.”<sup>10</sup> Many organizations emerged to offer support and an alternative to a life of poverty. One of the earliest of these organizations was the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA).<sup>11</sup> The first YWCA opened in 1855 when two separate organizations, the Prayer Union and the General Female Training Institute, combined in England. In 1858 the first American YWCA opened in New York City and the organization quickly spread across the United States. In 1894 the YWCA formed a World YWCA, followed by the YWCA of the U.S.A. in 1906.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly to the rest of the United States, Asheville North Carolina was seeing an influx of young women from surrounding rural areas in search of work. Many women who ended up in Asheville had a difficult time finding a place to live. Bishop J.M. Horner, concerned with the number of women seeking shelter, started working on a plan to address the housing needs of these women. Horner worked with those who would become the founding members of the Asheville YWCA.<sup>13</sup> The founding members of the Asheville YWCA included a large number of upper and middle class Christian women from the Asheville community who wanted to help

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<sup>8</sup> Heath “Negotiating White Womanhood,” 87.

<sup>9</sup> Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> IBID

<sup>11</sup> Heath, “Negotiating White Womanhood,” 87.

<sup>12</sup> Lee, “Supporting Working Women,” 5.

<sup>13</sup> “Sketch of Movement Leading to the Purchase of “the Henrietta”: A Boarding House Exclusively for Self-Supporting Women,” in Scrapbook 1907-1948, OS99.1.09 Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville NC.

improve the lives of working class women, and guide them towards a Christian lifestyle. In 1906 with the purchase of the Henrietta house, which would become a boarding house for young white women, the YWCA opened its doors.<sup>14</sup> In 1924 a community center on Grove Street opened offering new opportunities for women of all ages. The Grove Street building became the center of the Asheville YWCA for white women in the community. The building offered the space for an array of clubs, classes, recreation, entertainment, and other activities.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the 1910's and 1920's the branches of the YWCA continued to grow and add more members. Community support for the organization grew and more women were seeking help from the Y.<sup>16</sup> When the stock market crashed at the end of 1929 the need for such organizations grew as people lost their jobs and were forced from their homes. Women had just started their transition into work and now the vast majority of individuals in the country were forced into unemployment. Large numbers of those affected by the Depression turned to their community for support. Many working class women in Asheville found that the YWCA and a number of upper and middle class Christian women were willing to work with them through the entirety of the Depression.

Starting in the 1910's and 1920's working class women had begun establishing women only clubs on the national level.<sup>17</sup> Women involved with the YW Board of Directors and Board committees voted to add clubs that would help offer support for working class women. The YWCA offered women many opportunities to get involved through club participation. The

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<sup>14</sup> "The Henrietta Will Open its Doors Next Thursday: Inauguration of Young Women Christian Assn. Work in Asheville is Formal Opening of Boarding House for Self Supporting Women. Furnishing Requested," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, in Scrapbook 1907-1948.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah Judson and Helen Wykle "Where It All Began," Y.W.C.A. of Asheville, <http://www.Y.W.C.A.ofasheville.org/atf/cf/%7B6ADE2388-FCE3-4BD9-9F0A-E6EDD0B12576%7D/2Y.W.C.A.-Central-final%20smaller.pdf>, Accessed September 26, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Judson and Helen Wykle "Empowering Women," Y.W.C.A. of Asheville, <http://www.Y.W.C.A.ofasheville.org/atf/cf/%7B6ADE2388-FCE3-4BD9-9F0A-E6EDD0B12576%7D/8Y.W.C.A.-Women-final%20smaller.pdf>, Accessed September 26, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood*, 75.

Asheville YWCA Board of Directors started three clubs for working class women through the Business Girls Department: the Business Girls League, the Wise and Otherwise Club, and the Food, Friendship and Fun Club (F.F.F.). These Clubs met every Thursday offering a wide range of activities for working class girls to keep them entertained, and during the Depression each of these clubs thrived.<sup>18</sup> Later the Jolly Jobless Janes (J.J.J.) club was added for younger working class girls, and high school aged girls in the community had the Girl Reserves program. The women's clubs of the Asheville YWCA were very involved at the local, regional, and national level. They helped support the YW as well as the community through money raising and charity events, and many women and girls managed to attend Business Girl or Girl Reserve conferences throughout the years. In September 1936 the Business Girls League, the Wise and Otherwise Club and the F.F.F. decided that since their clubs did most of the same activities and had similar interests they would join together and begin working as one club. The three separate clubs continued to run independently, yet united to "promote a program of interest and worth for all."<sup>19</sup> This became a new way for Board members on the Business Girls committee to be involved with the large number of working class women who were now participating in club activities.

The Board of Directors started the clubs for a variety of reasons; they were a safe gathering place for working class women keeping them away from alcohol and other vices, and they established a gathering place for a community of white women from many different backgrounds. Clubs like the F.F.F. and J.J.J. focused on helping working class women. Upper and middle class women were involved on both a social and business level, "over two hundred women serve on committees, Board of Directors, teach classes or act as club advisors. Without

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<sup>18</sup> "I Am A Member -- Are You?", pamphlet, OS.99.1, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville NC.

<sup>19</sup> "Business Girls Form New Group: Department at Y.W.C.A. will hold meeting Tuesday," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, September 26, 1936, in Scrapbook 1934-1936, OS99.1.2.1.3, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville NC.

such splendid cooperation it would be impossible to accomplish all that the Asheville YWCA is doing.”<sup>20</sup> Women of the committees were in control of club activities; deciding which parties were to be had, who would go to conferences, how fundraising would be done, and how the money would be spent. Upper and middle class women were actively involved in the lives of working class women, providing them opportunities to maintain moral Christian lives. Working class women could find a niche in these clubs, learn new skills, socialize, and have the help and support from the community of YW women.

The Business Girls League was a national YW program for working women in middle management, teaching or clerical work.<sup>21</sup> The Business Girls League was started in 1929 and by 1930 the League of the Asheville YWCA was established and offered support for working class women, as well as the surrounding community.<sup>22</sup> The Business Girls League “widened horizons; through classes, discussion, forums and conferences,” allowed for a release of personality “through sharing of experience with other business girls and leisure groups,” as well as provided “recreation and social life: found in club suppers, dramatics, swimming pool, gym, and other activities.”<sup>23</sup>

The Wise and Otherwise Club of the Asheville YWCA was the oldest Club under the Business Girls Department starting in 1924.<sup>24</sup> The Wise and Otherwise Club established similar goals as the Business Girls League and they often worked together on community outreach and other activities. Though the clubs within the Business Girls Department were very similar they each reached out to a different group of working class women within the Asheville community.

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<sup>20</sup> “Y.W.C.A.: Youth: The World’s Future”, 1939, pamphlet.

<sup>21</sup> Robertson and Norris, “Without Documents, No History,” 275.

<sup>22</sup> “Business Girls League Observe Anniversary,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, February 22, 1931, in Scrapbook 1931-1932, OS99.1.1.1.2, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville NC.

<sup>23</sup> “Y.W.C.A.: Youth The World’s Future”, 1939, pamphlet.

<sup>24</sup> “Y.W.C.A Club Holds Birthday Celebration,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 27, 1930, in Scrapbook 1930-1930, OS.99.1.1.1.1, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville NC.

White working class women from a variety of businesses could find their place in the clubs of the Business Girls Department.

In 1930 the Business Girls began a new club branch, the Business Girls Council. The Council consisted of six members, three from the Wise and Otherwise Club, and three from the Business Girls League. The purpose of the council would be to make plans for the entirety of the Business Girls Department.<sup>25</sup> The Council became a way for working class women to work alongside Board Members. Rather than Business Girls committee members making all the decisions, the working class girls of the Council became partially responsible for making decisions for their peers. The Board of Directors and Business Girls Committee had held one semester of interest classes, so the first order of business for the newly established Business Girls Club was to decide if these classes would continue to be offered.<sup>26</sup> Members of the Business Girls Department could take the classes for free. The classes were also opened to anyone outside the YW interested in taking them for a small fee. The purpose of the classes was to provide the “business girls of the city an opportunity to pursue some subject of interest under the guidance of an instructor skilled in that particular line.”<sup>27</sup> The classes included subjects such as dramatics, home making, and literature.<sup>28</sup> Skilled instructors included women with good moral standing that would provide the proper type of influence over working class women. Interest classes provided working class women with a positive social setting where they could learn new skills that otherwise would not have been available to them.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “Business Girls League Holds Session,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 5, 1930, in Scrapbook 1930-1930.

<sup>26</sup> “Newly Elected Council Holds Meet at Y.W.C.A.,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 27, 1930 in Scrapbook 1930-1930.

<sup>27</sup> “Club: Business Girls to Begin New Interest Classes,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, January 11, 1931, in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

<sup>28</sup> IBID

<sup>29</sup> Heath, “Negotiating White Womanhood,” 92.

After the Depression started, the women of the Asheville YWCA Board of Directors continued to add clubs to aid working class women and provide them with a safe place for leisure and social activities. One of these clubs was the Food, Friendship and Fun Club. The F.F.F. Club was established under the Business Girls Department in 1931 for younger women in the Asheville area that worked as clerks in the local department stores.<sup>30</sup> The F.F.F. Club offered young, often high school aged working girls, a social hour and lessons on subjects such as dancing, handicraft and recreation.<sup>31</sup> The F.F.F. became a support system for young working girls in the community; rather than the possibility of these women turning to vices such as premarital sex or alcohol, the F.F.F. allowed for social gathering deemed worthy of a Christian lifestyle and a strong sense of community. The women of the F.F.F. could participate in activities surrounded by their peers, as well as find support from wealthier women involved in the clubs decision making processes. As part of the Business Girls Department they could also participate in Business Girls activities.

The YWCA also offered programs for high school aged girls. The national Girl Reserves of the YWCA was a student organization started in 1918 that was centralized around the Y. This Club was solely for high school aged girls within the Asheville community.<sup>32</sup> The Girl Reserves Club started in Asheville with the intention of guiding high school aged girls to maintain proper behavior, partake in community service projects, and have a “full Christian life.”<sup>33</sup> The Girl Reserves Clubs offered high school aged girls the ability to build character outside of a school setting. The YWCA was the only organization at the start of the 1930’s that was giving girls these types of opportunities. The Girl Reserves had individual Clubs in different high schools

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<sup>30</sup> “Younger Girls Will Have Club: Organization Planned Monday Night at Y.W.C.A. meet,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, March 29, 1930, in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

<sup>31</sup> “Various Clubs Make Y.W.C.A. Meeting Place: Becomes Headquarters for Numerous Organizations in City,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, April 16, 1931 in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

<sup>32</sup> Robertson and Norris, “Without Documents No History,” 275.

<sup>33</sup> Frances, S. Hull, Annual Association Report, 1930, Y.W.C.A. Collection.

around Asheville and since so few programs were available for school aged girls, many of the high schools in the area were interested in working with the YWCA to start a branch of the Girl Reserves in their schools. Often, all the high school clubs got together as a group and worked on projects.<sup>34</sup> By 1930 the Girl Reserves already had 700 members. With the addition of new Clubs in area high schools the membership continued to grow throughout the 30's. By 1934 the Girl Reserves of the Asheville Y.W. had 2736 girls attending activities, and by 1936 it and jumped to 9175.<sup>35</sup>

In 1932 the women and committees involved with the Girl Reserves endorsed a program that would greatly help young women struggling through the Great Depression without work. Starting on Thursday, December 1, 1932 the Asheville YWCA started offering free classes to unemployed women of all ages.<sup>36</sup> The first sessions of the classes were to be held once a week for a ten week period.<sup>37</sup> "Learn While You Do Not Earn" classes included an array of subjects from office work, childcare, getting and holding jobs to basketball, dancing, and gym games, among others.<sup>38</sup> The club was named the Jolly Jobless Janes (J.J.J.) and continued offering new sessions after the success of the first and a variety of classes were added to each new session.<sup>39</sup> Wealthy women of the committees started this club with the intention of keeping unemployed girls away from immoral activities while teaching skills that would help them find employment. Rather than working girls having vast amounts of leisure time, these upper and middle class

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<sup>34</sup> Minutes, September 17, 1930 Asheville Y.W.C.A

<sup>35</sup> Minutes, October 15, 1930, Asheville Y.W.C.A.; "Believe It Or Not. 1934 --- Facts," Y.W.C.A. Collection; "A Few Statistics for 1936," Y.W.C.A. Collection.

<sup>36</sup> "Classes for Unemployed at Y.W.C.A. Are Popular: 50 Girls Have Registered for Opening Sessions on Thursday," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 22, 1932 in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

<sup>37</sup> "Jobless Girls Start Classes: Nearly 50 Present for Initial Session at Y.W.C.A.," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, December 2, 1932, in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

<sup>38</sup> "Y.W. Plans Classes for Jobless Girls," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 19, 1932, in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

<sup>39</sup> "Jobless Girls to Close Work: New Term to be Started by Club Early in March," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, February 22, 1933, in Scrapbook 1932-1933, OS99.1.2.1.1, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville NC.

women believed that by offering interest classes they would keep them from slipping into a lifestyle full of vices all while providing them with useful life skills.

The Girl Reserves, F.F.F., J.J.J., Wise and Otherwise, and Business Girls clubs also took advantage of Camp Kenjocketee every summer. Camp Kenjocketee was a sleep-away camp in Arden, N.C. run by the YWCA. Camp Kenjocketee was opened in 1924, but this was one program that would not survive the Depression despite the Boards best efforts.<sup>40</sup> By 1932 the camp committee of the YW was discussing the difficulties the camp was beginning to experience, and cuts had to start being made.<sup>41</sup> Further financial strain was put on the camp due to broken and damaged facilities.<sup>42</sup> By June of 1933 it became clear that the camp could not be opened for the summer.<sup>43</sup> Fear grew among the Board of Directors that younger girls in the community would no longer have access to the programs provided by the camp.

In true form, however, the board members of the YW came up with an alternative program: the Stay-At-Home camp.<sup>44</sup> The Stay-At-Home camp was held at the main building of the YW on Grove Street. Camp Kenjocketee would be used only for weekend camping and trips for the clubs of the YW. The Stay-At-Home camp offered the girls who were on a break from the Girl Reserves for summer vacation the opportunity to continue doing similar programs done during the school year.<sup>45</sup> The first year of the Stay-At-Home camp was a success for the YW with many girls signing up for it, but plans to fully reopen Camp Kenjocketee remained.<sup>46</sup> 1934 offered no hope of the reopening of Camp Kenjocketee with funds being even tighter as the

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<sup>40</sup> History of Camp Kenjocketee, 1939, M99.1.7.4, Y.W.C.A. Collection.

<sup>41</sup> Minutes, May 18, 1932, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

<sup>42</sup> Minutes, August 24, 1932, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

<sup>43</sup> Minutes, June 1933, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

<sup>44</sup> "Camp Program to be Curtailed by Y.W.C.A. Here," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, June 21, 1933, in Scrapbook 1933-1934.

<sup>45</sup> "Will Operate Camp in City: Y.W.C.A. Recreational Center for Girls to Open July 10," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, June 26, 1933, in Scrapbook 1933-1934.

<sup>46</sup> "Many Enroll at Camp for Girls: Total 84 Register for Activities at Stay-At-Home Camp," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, July 10, 1933, in Scrapbook 1933-1934.

Depression worsened.<sup>47</sup> It became obvious that there was little chance of saving the camp and in July of 1934 it was decided that the camp would be dismantled and closed.<sup>48</sup> The Stay-At-Home camp remained popular and ran successfully through the remainder of the thirties with more activities being added in later years. Although Camp Kenjocketee did not last through the Depression it is a resounding example of the work the Board members did to keep programs and activities available to young Christian girls.

Summer camp was not the only activity that women could participate in. Women from the Business Girls Department and Girl Reserves attended conferences throughout the thirties on a regular basis. Due to the fact that the YWCA did not always have funding to pay for the women to attend conferences, club members took it upon themselves to raise money. Board members decided the best and most efficient way to raise money, and they worked with club members to do so by holding parties throughout the year so at least one or two women from the Business Girls could attend a conference. In 1930 the Business Girls started a bridge party at the YW in order to raise money, and bridge parties became one of the most popular ways for these women to make money for activities.<sup>49</sup>

The “All Carolinas Business Girls Mid-Winter” conferences were held annually in Greensboro, Charlotte, Greenville, or Asheville with Business Girls from thirteen cities in North and South Carolina present.<sup>50</sup> The conferences allowed Business Girls from many different areas to gather together for leisure time and recreation. Discussions on program planning, public relations, finance, and other issues that the Business Girls dealt with on a daily basis were also

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<sup>47</sup> Minutes, February 1934, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

<sup>48</sup> Minutes, July 18, 1934, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

<sup>49</sup> Minutes, June 3, 1930, Asheville Y.W.C.A.

<sup>50</sup> “Girls Will go to Conference: Y.W.C.A. Delegation Will Leave for Meeting in Greensboro, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, January 16, 1932, in Scrapbook 1931-1932; Minutes, March 24, 1937, Asheville Y.W.C.A.; Minutes, February 16, 1938 Asheville Y.W.C.A.

made available.<sup>51</sup> When funds were available at least one girl was sent to the Business Girls national conference, wherever it was being held each year.<sup>52</sup> The Business Girls League also had their individual camp, Camp Merriwood, to attend during the summer and each year the YW Business Girls committee tried to send an Asheville representative. Camp Merriwood was started separately from the Asheville YWCA, and was specifically a Business Girls conference camp located in Sapphire, NC.<sup>53</sup>

For women who participated in the Business Girls that could not afford to attend conferences, there was the nationwide Business Girls observation banquet. The banquet was held each March and was observed by Business Girls Clubs across the United States and Europe. Each club, no matter their location, would celebrate the banquet at the same time, in the same way. The same meal was served throughout the world and the same topic was discussed. Each year a new topic was chosen.<sup>54</sup> From 1930 and through the rest of the decade the women of the Asheville YWCA Business Girls Department and Business Girls Committee participated. The observation banquet was an important way to connect young women from Asheville with the outside world.

Like the Business Girls, the younger girls of the Girl Reserve Club also had conferences to attend. Women from the Girl Reserve committee worked with the girls to raise money to attend these conferences through benefit movies, puppet or marionette shows, benefit suppers and other types of parties.<sup>55</sup> Conferences attended most often by the Girl Reserves were the

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<sup>51</sup> "Business Girls are to Open Meet Here Today: Mid-Winter Conference Will be Held at Y.W.C.A.," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, February 11, 1933, in Scrapbook 1932-1933.

<sup>52</sup> "Minutes, April 1936, Asheville Y.W.C.A.

<sup>53</sup> Minutes, April 19, 1939, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

<sup>54</sup> "Business Girls Plan Exercise: Banquet Will be Held by Group at Y.W.C.A. on March 29," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, March 20, 1932, in Scrapbook 1932-1933.

<sup>55</sup> Minutes, May 24, 1933, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

North and South Carolina Girl Reserve Conference.<sup>56</sup> The Girl Reserves conference camp, Camp Sapphire, was located in Brevard, N.C.<sup>57</sup> Each summer the Girl Reserves committee of the Asheville YW Board of Directors decided what girls would attend the camp. The Girl Reserves Club was a way for girls from many different high schools to connect through the YW, and camp conferences were a way for many girls from surrounding areas to gather and share ideas.

The Girl Reserves took part in many charitable programs during the course of the Great Depression that aided many members of the Asheville community. An exceptional charitable program that the Asheville Girl Reserves sponsored every year with great success was the annual Toy Shop. The Toy Shop was opened each Christmas season in the lobby of the central Y. The concept for the Toy Shop was started in 1924 by the Girl Reserves secretary, and the director of adult elementary education, Carrie Lee Weaver and Elizabeth C. Morris.<sup>58</sup> Each year the Girl Reserves collected money for the Christmas Cheer fund which helped fund the Toy Shop and other Christmas charity events. The purpose of the Toy Shop was to collect old used toys and refurbish them to be donated to needy children in the community.<sup>59</sup> The Toy Shop relied largely on community support, whether through volunteering their time, donating toys, money, or goods needed to repair the toys.<sup>60</sup>

Starting in 1930, since the Toy Shop had seen so much success in earlier years, the Girl Reserves decided to expand their efforts and include even more activities. Along with the Toy Shop the Reserves also held a doll dressing contest, a used clothing collection, and a food drive. The doll dressing contest gave all school aged girls in the community the opportunity to pick up

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<sup>56</sup> Minutes, February 1934, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

<sup>57</sup> "Camp Sapphire Girls Are Here for Inspection," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, June 16, 1931, in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

<sup>58</sup> "Toy Shop Will be Operated by Girl Reserves: Scores of Toys Will be put in Good Shape at Y.W.C.A. building," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 26, 1930, in Scrapbook 1930-1930.

<sup>59</sup> "Girl Reserves Repair Toys So That Unfortunates May Have Gifts for Christmas," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, December 10, 1930, in Scrapbook 1930-1930.

<sup>60</sup> "Girl Reserves to Open Toy Shop Monday: Appeal to Public for Used Trinkets to be Mended for Poor Children," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 19, 1931, in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

a doll that had been repaired at the Toy Shop. They would take the doll home, dress it, and return it to be judged and later donated to a needy child. Girls with the best dressed dolls also received a prize. The Reserves started a used clothing collection in 1930 where women and children's clothing that had been donated to the Toy Shop was mended to be given to the needy around Asheville.<sup>61</sup> A food and toy drive was also held with the aid of the Asheville Imperial Theater. The theater held a matinee for children the Saturday morning before Christmas. Rather than have an admission price each child was expected to bring an item of food or a toy to be donated. Knowing that not every child in the community could afford to give a donation the theater urged wealthier children to bring multiple items, so those who could not donate a toy or food would still be able to enter free of charge.<sup>62</sup>

As the Great Depression continued the Girl Reserve's Christmas charities continued as well. From 1930 to 1939 the Girl Reserves opened the Toy Shop each Christmas season. In 1932 the Toy Shop was moved from the lobby of the YWCA main building on Grove Street. Space was offered to them in the Grove Arcade to cut down on the inconveniences caused by having it in the YW lobby. The Grove Arcade also provided more space for volunteers to work.<sup>63</sup> 1933 saw more changes in how the shop was run, rather than opening on the first day in December the Toy Shop opened at the end of October and ran to the end of November.<sup>64</sup> The doll dressing contest was also expanded to not just school age girls, but all girls and women within the Asheville community.<sup>65</sup> The matinee was held each year and by 1939 it was celebrating its

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<sup>61</sup> "Prizes Will Be Awarded Girls in Doll Contest," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, December 4, 1930, in Scrapbook 1930-1930.

<sup>62</sup> "Imperial Plans Charity Program: Food for Children to be Accepted Instead of Money Dec. 20," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, December 11, 1930, in Scrapbook 1930-1930.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes, July 20, 1932, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

<sup>64</sup> Minutes, October 18, 1933, Asheville Y.W.C.A..

<sup>65</sup> "Plan Contest in Dressing Dolls: Christmas Toy Repair Shop of the Y.W.C.A. to Sponsor Activity," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 9, 1933, in Scrapbook 1933-1934, OS99.1.2.1.2, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville NC.

successful running of its 13th annual toy drive, with thousands of toys collected for needy children every year despite the Great Depression.<sup>66</sup> In 1931 the Business Girls helped the younger girls of the Girl Reserves by volunteering at the annual Toy Shop, and from then on worked at the yearly Toy Shop.<sup>67</sup> The Wise and Otherwise Club and the Business Girls league also worked together to help needy families each Christmas. Each Club provided one family with food, clothing and gifts that would otherwise have gone without.<sup>68</sup>

The Toy Shop became an event not just for the Girls Reserves, or the YWCA, but for the entire Asheville community. The Toy Shop allowed women of many different backgrounds to work together to provide goods for lower class community members that would otherwise not have been able to afford to celebrate Christmas with their families. All women, no matter their class or age were able to help with the Toy Drive, improving the community for the good of others. Board members, such as Mrs. Weaver worked with high school aged women of the Girl Reserves, as well as the working class women of the other YW clubs. Without women from all classes and backgrounds willing to support the cause, the Toy Shop would not have been so successful throughout the years of the Great Depression. The Girl Reserves were also active in community outreach, politics and social activism.

Apart from the Toy Shop the Girl Reserves Club allowed for members to stage and participate in many social gatherings. One of the most popular of these was the Peace Forum that took place in April and May of 1932. The forum was a way to inform Asheville youth on what steps were being taken around the world “by other youth organizations in the interest of

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<sup>66</sup> “Annual Toy Matinee is Set for Next Saturday” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, October 15, 1939, in Scrapbook 1939-1940, OS99.1.3.1.2, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville NC.

<sup>67</sup> Minutes, December 1931, Asheville Y.W.C.A.

<sup>68</sup> “Needy Families Are to be Aided by 2 Clubs Here,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, December 21, 1931, in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

peace.”<sup>69</sup> The Girl Reserves organized and opened the forum to the public and invited representatives from other youth organizations in the area to participate.<sup>70</sup> The forum was a great success with seventy five representatives from the Asheville community attending the first meeting.<sup>71</sup> The forum met multiple times before ending in May.<sup>72</sup> The forum allowed for the Girl Reserves and other youth a way to make themselves known in the community and voice their concerns.

The Business Girls Department also took up the task of doing community work and fundraising for purposes outside of conference trips. The Wise and Otherwise Club acknowledged the hardship that the YW Club community would be facing when they threw a bridge party in 1930. The Great Depression did not stop the Club from continuing on with the values and interests they had been established with.

Like many in Asheville Wise and Otherwise Club finds itself without ready cash but like all of Asheville we’ve got plenty of courage to bank on, and we are too wise to do otherwise. We will carry on just the same ... Instead of refreshments at club expense, we will have our 25 cents supper at 6:30 o’clock ... We will play bridge just the same, and we will have prizes just the same ... If you have been hit harder than some of the rest and haven’t the quarter nor the towel, come just the same.<sup>73</sup>

Even with the hardship, the community support system of the Business Girls Department continued. Women in the Wise and Otherwise Club had acknowledged that many around the

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<sup>69</sup> “Peace forum to be Staged Here: Youth Organizations Asked to Take Part in Y Program,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, March 13, 1932, in Scrapbook 1932-1933.

<sup>70</sup> IBID

<sup>71</sup> “Youth Peace Efforts Get Impetus at Forum: Groups to Meet Again Next Week to Discuss Further Steps,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, April 1, 1932, in Scrapbook 1932-1933.

<sup>72</sup> “Peace Forum to Close Sessions: Final Discussion Will be Held Tuesday Night at Y.W.C.A.,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, May 8, 1932, in Scrapbook 1932-1933.

<sup>73</sup> “Wise and Otherwise to Have Bridge Party,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 23, 1930, in Scrapbook 1930-1930.

Asheville community had been experiencing difficulty due to the Great Depression. Through parties such as the bridge party the club allowed an escape for many women. The Wise and Otherwise Club was able to reach out to many women in the community, no matter their wealth, and invite them to socialize and relax, even if they were unable to afford the fees.

Parties were used not just to raise money but to offer girls opportunities to gather and have fun. The Great Depression was not forgotten even as clubs planned parties. In 1931 the Business Girls held a Depression themed party to make light of a situation that many around the country were experiencing.

The tables were laid with newspapers, and comic sheets cut into odd shapes were the centerpieces. Only candlelight was used, and the candles were placed in platters and old bottles. Antique kerosene lamps were placed on the tables, several vases of turning leaves composed the decorations. At the door each member bought a ticket which was revealed as a “fake” check. Place cards were pay envelopes, containing “fortune” suggestive of Hallowe’en. The favors wrapped in brown and tied with red ribbon proved to be chestnuts. Paper towels were used instead of napkins. Assorted plates, cups, and silverware were used, nearly everyone being forced to eat with a knife. The menu consisted of corned beef and cabbage, potatoes, cornbread and molasses, coffee, and gingerbread and cider.<sup>74</sup>

The party was organized by the social committee and attended by a number of members of the Business Girls as well as members of the committees and Board of Directors. Similarly in 1932 the F.F.F. held a poverty themed party. The party was held in place of a Valentine’s Day party, and women were encouraged to wear their oldest dresses “from the time of purchase.” A prize

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<sup>74</sup> “Business Girls’ League has Depression Party,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, October 21, 1931, in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

was given to the woman found to be wearing the oldest dress.<sup>75</sup> Women on the committees planned these parties as a way for the women of the clubs to gather for a fun activity. Working class women of the club, as well as wealthier women active on the Board of Directors attended club parties. These parties offered a gathering place for women from all classes, and strengthened the sense of community within the YWCA. The Depression and Poverty themed parties were a way for women to gather in a friendly setting, have fun, and make light of a situation that was affecting them all.

Whether they were attending parties, providing interest classes, or participating in other activities the YW provided women with an outlet during the tough years of the Great Depression. Through work done in the clubs of the Asheville YWCA, upper and middle class white women were able to reach out to working girls in the community, providing them with a safe community space with a strong moral compass and Christian values. New programs became available throughout the Great Depression that greatly changed the lives of the women in the Asheville community. White women of different classes and backgrounds were able to come together within the clubs of the YWCA. Even as programs were affected due to funding shortages, the working women of the clubs and the wealthy women of the Board of Directors were able to show their flexibility to work with one another in order to keep activities available throughout the Great Depression. They worked together through troubled times in order to offer support to others in the community, even as they may have struggled themselves.

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<sup>75</sup> "Poverty Party is Staged by F.F.F. Girls: Novel Program is enjoyed at Y.W.C.A. House on Grove Street," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, February 19, 1932, in Scrapbook 1931-1932.

### **Annotated Primary Source Bibliography**

Asheville Citizen-Times, Scrapbook 1907-1948, OS99.1.09, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville N.C.

A scrapbook collection done in 1948 that has the history of the Y.W.C.A. from the opening in 1907 through 1948 in newspaper articles. Many of these articles are repeats from other scrapbooks, but the information from 1907-1930 will be helpful in tracing the opening and history of the Y.W.C.A. prior to the Great Depression.

Asheville Citizen-Times, Scrapbook 1930-1930, OS.99.1.1.1.1, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville N.C.

A scrapbook done during the time period this scrapbook holds a collection of newspaper articles about the Y.W.C.A. and related topics in the later part of 1930. This covers many things includes; notes on meetings, pictures, information on clubs and activities, work being done by the Y.W.C.A., membership information, etc. It holds a lot of information on the start of clubs, and club activities.

Asheville Citizen-Times, Scrapbook 1931-1932, OS.99.1.1.1.2, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville N.C.

A scrapbook done during the time period this scrapbook holds a collection of newspaper articles about the Y.W.C.A. and related topics from the beginning of 1931 to the middle of 1932. This covers many things includes; notes on meetings, pictures, information on clubs and activities, work being done by the Y.W.C.A., membership information, etc. This holds information from the start of the F.F.F. club.

Asheville Citizen-Times, Scrapbook 1932-1933, OS.99.1.2.1.1, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville N.C.

A scrapbook done during the time period this scrapbook holds a collection of newspaper articles about the Y.W.C.A. and related topics from the end of 1932 to the middle of 1933. This covers many things includes; notes on meetings, pictures, information on clubs and activities, work being done by the Y.W.C.A., membership information, etc. This will be useful in showing the day to day proceedings happening at the Y.W.C.A. during the Depression years.

Asheville Citizen-Times, Scrapbook 1933-1934, OS.99.1.2.1.2, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville N.C.

A scrapbook done during the time period this scrapbook holds a collection of newspaper articles about the Y.W.C.A. and related topics from the end of 1933 to 1934. This covers many things including: notes on meetings, pictures, information on clubs and activities, work being done by the Y.W.C.A., membership information, etc. This will be useful in showing the day to day proceedings happening at the Y.W.C.A. during the Depression years.

Asheville Citizen-Times, Scrapbook 1934-1936, OS.99.1.2.1.3, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville N.C.

A scrapbook done during the time period this scrapbook holds a collection of newspaper articles about the Y.W.C.A. and related topics from the end of 1934, all of 1935 and the beginning of 1936. This covers many things includes; notes on meetings, pictures, information on clubs and activities, work being done by the Y.W.C.A., membership information, etc. This will be useful in showing the day to day proceedings happening at the Y.W.C.A. during the Depression years.

Asheville Citizen-Times, Scrapbook 1936-1937, OS.99.1.2.1.4, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville N.C.

A scrapbook done during the time period this scrapbook holds a collection of newspaper articles about the Y.W.C.A. and related topics from the end of 1936 to the end of 1937. This covers many things includes; notes on meetings, pictures, information on clubs and activities, work being done by the Y.W.C.A., membership information, etc. This will be useful in showing the day to day proceedings happening at the Y.W.C.A. during the Depression years.

Asheville Citizen-Times, Scrapbook 1938-1939, OS.99.1.3.1.1, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville N.C.

A scrapbook done during the time period this scrapbook holds a collection of newspaper articles about the Y.W.C.A. and related topics. This covers many things includes; notes on meetings, pictures, information on clubs and activities, work being done by the Y.W.C.A., membership information, etc. This will be useful in showing the day to day proceedings happening at the Y.W.C.A. during the Depression years.

Asheville Citizen-Times, Scrapbook 1939-1940, OS.99.1.3.1.2, Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville N.C.

A scrapbook done during the time period this scrapbook holds a collection of newspaper articles about the Y.W.C.A. and related topics. This covers many things includes; notes on meetings, pictures, information on clubs and activities, work being done by the Y.W.C.A., membership information, etc. This will be useful in showing the day to day proceedings happening at the Y.W.C.A. during the Depression years.

Monthly Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors, Asheville Y.W.C.A., 1930-1939, M99.1.03, Asheville Y.W.C.A. Collection, Special Collections, Ramsey Library, Asheville, NC.

These reports are the minutes from monthly meetings held by the board of directors. Most are less than a page typed of the work being done within the Asheville Y.W.C.A.. These will be useful in showing the inner workings of the club, and includes things that the public otherwise would not have heard of.

### **Annotated Secondary Source Bibliography**

Heath, Sarah. "Negotiating White Womanhood: The Cincinnati Y.W.C.A. and White Wage-

Earning Women, 1918-1929" in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the Y.W.C.A. in the City*. Ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt. New York. New York University Press. 1997.

This essay looks specifically at working class white women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and why they found the Y.W.C.A. to be such an important women's organization. The essay gives examples of the housing, work available, and other activities made available to working class women. This argument will be helpful in showing why middle and upper class women were willing to help working class women in their communities.

Hickey, Georgina. *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890-1940*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.

Hickey looks specifically at the working class women in Atlanta, and how these women lived, worked and played. She also gets into the Y.W.C.A. as an opportunity for women to find work, and have a safe environment for living in Atlanta. This source will be helpful in showing examining class structures within the Y.W.C.A.

Judson, Sarah and Helen Wykle, Y.W.C.A. of Asheville, History. Accessed September 22, 2013.

<http://www.ywcaofasheville.org/site/c.7oIEJQPxGeISF/b.8083977/k.C677/History.htm>

The Y.W.C.A. website that gives a brief history on the Asheville Y.W.C.A. The website will be helpful in finding information on the history of the opening of the Y.W. and information on programs prior to the start of the Great Depression.

Lee, Antoinette J. "Supporting Working Women: Y.W.C.A. Buildings in the National Register of Historic Places." *OAH Magazine of History*. no. 1 (1997): 5-6. <http://0-www.jstor.org.wncln.wncln.org/stable/25163183?&Search=yes&searchText=supporting&searchText=working&searchText=women&list=hide&searchUri=/action/doAdvancedSearch?q0=supporting+working+women&f0=ti&c1=AND&q1=&f1=all&acc=on&wc=on&fc=off&Search=Search&sd=&ed=&la=&pt=&isbn=&prevSearch=&item=1&ttl=1&returnArticleService=showFullText> (accessed September 22, 2013).

This is a very short article but it gives a very quick precise background of the Y.W.C.A. from the opening in Europe to the spread across the United States. It also gives good information on what the goals were of the Y.W.C.A. and the effects felt through the Depression.

Meyerowitz, Joanne J. *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Women Adrift gives important background on what women were experiencing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as they moved into the workforce. It gives a good background on why it was so important that the Y.W.C.A. opened in large cities as fears grew in society about what women would do.

Robertson, Nancy. *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the Y.W.C.A., 1906-46*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

This book gives the background information on the Y.W.C.A. starting with the opening of the first Y.W. in 1907. It gives a broad background on the start and success of the early Y.W.C.A., and talks about the idea of Christian sisterhood. This book will be helpful in getting background information on why the Y.W. was an important women's organization, and will be a great source for information on the community ideas of the early Y.W.

Roydhouse, Marion W. "Bridging Chasms: Community and the Southern Y.W.C.A." in *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*. Ed. Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock. Chicago. University of Chicago Press. 1993.

This essay looks at the Y.W.C.A. in the South and the need for working women to have an organization helping them in order to find shelter and work. This essay looks specifically at Southern Y.W.'s including Asheville's. This will be helpful in understanding the overall thoughts of the Y.W.C.A. and why it was important in communities.