

March 6, 2024

**Records of the Earnest Workers Circle
of the Kings Daughters and Sons**

A Finding Aid to the Collection in
the Bronxville History Center, Village of Bronxville,
at the Bronxville Public Library

Processed by
Raymond H. Geselbracht
2024

Administrative Information

Collection: Records of the Earnest Workers Circle of the Kings Daughters and Sons

Dates: 1891-1974

Size: 1.4 linear feet—about 2,500 pages

Access: Open

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Historical Sketch—The Earnest Workers Circle of the King's Daughters and Sons

The International Order of the King's Daughters was founded in 1886 ("and Sons" was added to the name in 1891) in New York City by Margaret McDonald Bottome and nine other women active in Episcopal, Methodist and Presbyterian churches in their area. It was a nonsectarian Christian organization devoted to the development of the individual's spiritual life and to charitable activities on behalf of people in need.

On May 28, 1886, about three years after the founding of the King's Daughters, a Bronxville chapter—or "circle" as the order called its regional units—was organized at the Bronxville home of Amie and Agnes Dusenberry. It was named the Earnest Workers Circle. The ten founding members were Amie Dusenberry, Agnes Dusenberry, Mary E. Latimer, Effie Masterton, Rosalie Bacon, Anna Bacon, Lois Plumb, Katherine E Smith, Victoria McCollum and Mrs. Samuel Stevenson. Membership grew to eighteen in 1896 and to about a hundred in the mid 1940s.

The minutes of the meetings of the Earnest Workers Circle in the early 1890s depict a strongly Christian group of women who opened their meetings with hymn singing, Bible readings and prayer. Their charitable activities, in early years quite small scale and often personal in character, included making clothing for the needy, particularly needy children, and raising modest amounts of money and donating it to the needy either directly or through area social service organizations. They had a close relationship with the Reformed Church—during the Circle's early years the only church in Bronxville—and did such things as sew a new altar cloth for the church and buy flowers for its Easter decorations, and they also donated money to the church's Parsonage Fund. The *Bronxville Press* reported in 1926 that the Circle had been since its founding "the main organization in Bronxville for carrying on local charitable work."

After the establishment in 1919 and 1932 by the King's Daughters and Sons of two homes for the aged, the Circle regularly contributed to their operation. It also contributed in different ways to Lawrence Hospital, and it gave money and handmade clothing items to various children's relief organizations in Westchester County.

In 1896, the Circle, in cooperation with the New York City Mission, brought a group of ten old women to Bronxville and treated them to a fine day in the country, with good food and entertainment. This remained one of the Circle's most important activities for almost fifty years. In later years, about twenty women were included in the groups, and two or three groups would be brought to Bronxville each summer.

Founding Circle member Agnes Dusenberry sent a letter that was read at the May 28, 1934, luncheon celebrating the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Earnest Workers Circle. "It hardly seems possible that forty five years have passed since you drew your first breath of life in the old Masterton Homestead," she wrote, "...a small company of ten with a determined desire to be something and do something worthwhile for our King. And out of that desire has grown this mighty army of workers doing whatever your hands found to do with the same longing desire and what a joy to look back upon—so many sad hearts comforted, so many weak hands strengthened by the loving thoughts of interest and help."

At what was probably the final meeting of the Earnest Workers Circle on January 4, 1967, no one of the fourteen members present was willing to take the office of president for the coming year, and they instead passed a resolution asking the Circle's auxiliary to take full responsibility for the organization. The Circle was formally disbanded in about 1974. In 1985, its remaining funds, \$1,319.75, were given to the Senior Citizens of Bronxville.

Collection Description

The minutes of meetings, which record the Earnest Workers Circle's activities for seventy-seven of their eighty-eight years of existence, are the collection's most important series. The subject file includes some good early hand-written material—correspondence and draft reports, including several drafts written by Mary E. Latimer and Agnes Dusenberry's important "Birthday Greetings" letter that was read aloud at the Circle's 45th anniversary luncheon in 1934. A ledger recording receipts and disbursements for the years 1906-1925 provides an excellent view of the Circle's finances during these years.

Series Description

Box Nos. Series

1-2 *Minutes of Meetings, 1891-1894, 1897-1932, 1939-1948, 1950-1967*

Handwritten minutes of meetings in ledgers.

3-4 *Subject File, 1895-1974*

Correspondence, printed material, reports, an accounts ledger, financial reports, invoices, scrap books, photographs.

Folder Title List

Minutes of Meetings, 1891-1967

Box 1

- Minutes of Meetings, 1891-1894
- Minutes of Meetings, 1897-1902
- Minutes of Meetings, 1902-1912
- Minutes of Meetings, 1912-1922
- Minutes of Meetings, 1922-1932

Box 2

- Minutes of Meetings, 1939-1948, 1950
- Minutes of Meetings, 1951-1962
- Minutes of Meetings, 1963-1967

Subject File, 1895-1974

Box 3

- The Aged, 1931 and Undated
- Brandt, Ida M., 1924, 1928
- Correspondence Received, 1905, 1907-1909, 1918-1921, 1950-1951, 1971, 1974

- Correspondence Received on the Occasion of the Forty-fifth Anniversary of the Earnest Workers Circles, 1934
- Eastchester Neighborhood Association
- Financial Reports, 1904, 1906, 1925, 1928, 1932 and Undated
- Invoices, 1904, 1914 and Undated
- Latimer, Mary E., 1895 and Undated
- Membership, 1969-1970 and Undated
- Miscellaneous
- Photographs
- Printed Material—Issues of *The Silver Cross*, 1923, 1966, 1969-1971
- Printed Material, 1900s-1930s
- Printed Material, 1940s-1960s
- Printed Material, Undated
- Receipts and Disbursements, 1906-1925

Box 4

- Reports, 1896, 1918, 1925
- Report Drafts, 1917-1918 and Undated
- Scrapbook, 1933-1935
- Scrapbook, 1946-1965