

Articles about Ball and her work are: "The Work of Caroline Peddle Ball," *The Scrip: Notes on Art* 1 (July 1906):310-12; Mira Edson, "Caroline Peddle Ball: An Interpreter of Childhood," *Arts and Decoration* 1 (Oct. 1911): 484-85; and Elizabeth Lonergan, "America's Woman Sculptors," *Harpers Bazar* 45 (Aug. 1911):360-61. Ball is mentioned in William H. Gerdts, Jr., *Painting and Sculpture in New Jersey* (1964); and in Chris Petteys, *Dictionary of Women Artists* (1985). Obituaries appeared in the *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1938, and the *Westfield (NJ) Leader*, Oct. 6, 1938.

*Maggie Sullivan
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MARGARET BANCROFT, 1854-1912

Margaret Bancroft, educator and founder of the Bancroft Training School in Haddonfield, NJ, was born June 28, 1854, in Philadelphia, PA, the fourth of five children of Harvey and Rebecca (Haines) Bancroft. Her father, after emigrating to the United States from Garthgannon, Wales, built up a successful mercantile business. The family was Quaker and lived in the Germantown section of Philadelphia.

As a young woman, Bancroft studied at the Philadelphia Normal School and became a fifth-grade teacher in the Philadelphia public schools. When her father's business suffered financial reverses and failed, she became the primary support of her parents.

Bancroft's fervor and diligence as a teacher brought her to the attention of a school board member, Dr. W. W. Keen, a noted surgeon and professor of surgery at Jefferson Medical College. She frequently conferred with Keen about pupils with problems. Of particular interest to her were students who could not study successfully, and she began to classify the reasons for their academic problems, finding that some had poor vision, defective hearing, or were what she termed "mentally deficient."

Bancroft devoted much of her time and thought to these special children, adjusting her program to suit their individual needs and becoming known in the school system for her work. She consulted with Keen and Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, a noted neurologist who had worked with Keen as a surgeon during the Civil War. Eventually Keen suggested she devote full time to her special students by starting a school of her own. Denied leave from her teaching to try the plan, Bancroft resigned her teaching post and started what turned out to be her life's work.

Bancroft selected rural Haddonfield as the site for her school because her brother lived there and because of its proximity to Philadelphia, where she could continue to consult with the two doctors. She acquired a house with her parents and there in 1883 the Haddonfield School for

the Mentally Deficient and Peculiarly Backward was opened, with its first pupils referred to by Keen.

Using her drive, intelligence, experience, and determination, and perhaps most of all, her imagination, Bancroft evolved innovative ways of educating developmentally disabled children. At the time, little, if any, training was given such children. Most were institutionalized and, at best, given custodial care. The societal stigma was such that families were careful about hiding disabilities. Even Bancroft's private school protected the identities of its residents by not using students' surnames.

Bancroft created a specialized program for each student's physical, mental, and spiritual growth. Proper nutrition, personal hygiene, exercise and physiotherapy, daily prayers, lessons suited to mental age, tasks and projects for sensory and artistic development, as well as recreation and visits to circuses, theaters, concerts, and museums were all part of the program. Bancroft claimed that no student admitted to the school was hopeless. Sometimes she kept a child with her night and day for months on end to accomplish the progress she felt was possible. The school buildings and grounds were homelike and attractive.

Bancroft added to her staff teachers of physical culture and gymnastics, manual training, speech, and kindergarten skills, and soon the school's growth necessitated a move to a larger house on Chestnut Street. In 1888 Bancroft brought Jean Cox, an experienced kindergarten teacher, into the management of the school.

A major setback to Bancroft's work occurred in March 1892 when a fire caused by a defective chimney flue destroyed the house. The school family stayed in Atlantic City for several weeks while the search for new quarters went on. Ultimately Charles Lippincott of Philadelphia helped Bancroft purchase "the Lindens," a small estate in Haddonfield, in exchange for the lifetime care of his handicapped daughter.

In the early years of the school Bancroft sent her students home during the summer, but she later decided that their slow, painstaking progress should not be interrupted. In 1903 she took the financial risk of buying an old hotel in Owl's Head on the coast of Maine, and in the summer of 1904 the school family took its first trek to the summer quarters, a practice followed ever since. In 1904 the trip took a day and a half and involved traveling by ship and railroad.

In the same year that the summer program was initiated, Bancroft had the school formally chartered as the Bancroft-Cox Training School. Very soon, however, she and Jean Cox had a major falling out and Cox resigned, taking some of the school's students with her. The school was renamed the Bancroft Training School. In 1907 Bancroft hired Dr. Ernest A. Farrington as resident physician and psychologist, and he soon became her trusted coadministrator.

In addition to her life at the school, Bancroft participated in community life in Haddonfield. In 1894, with twelve friends, she organized the Haddon Fortnightly, a women's club that promoted its members' educational, literary, and social interests and is still active today.

Bancroft was widely known in her field and was active between 1892 and 1909, delivering her message to such groups as the Association of Medical Officers for American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons, the National Congress of Mothers, the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, the American Academy of Medicine, the Woman's Medical College of Philadelphia, and the National Education Department.

In an article written in 1904 Bancroft described her view of her students' disabilities: "I am with those who believe that which we commonly call 'the mind' is the soul-light working through and utilizing the bodily organs of sense. In a normal person the motor and sensory nervous systems act as the windows of the individual personality. . . . The broken, many-stained and pictorial windows through which the light is struggling under disadvantages to harmonize itself with the physical world at large are found in three classes of persons—the mentally deficient, the morally deficient, and the insane. In these, the light is there, but the images, as in a broken cathedral window, are more or less shattered and confused." (Bancroft, *Collected Papers*, 60-61)

In her other writings Bancroft advocated abandoning the use of terms with derogatory connotations such as "idiot" and "imbecile," preferring instead "mentally deficient" and later "mentally subnormal." She pleaded for awakening public awareness and understanding of special children, and she suggested the restructuring of public institutions giving specific guidelines for grouping children.

Bancroft died, at age 57, on January 3, 1912, of cerebral thrombosis. She was buried beside her parents in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia. Her will held detailed instructions for the perpetuation of her school, which today is a significant nonprofit institution with residential and day care, and an evaluation and treatment center. Owl's Head is now a year-round residential center.

The Bancroft School (Haddonfield, NJ) maintains material on Bancroft, including *Collected Papers of Margaret Bancroft on Mental Subnormality . . .* (n.d.). Emma Lewis, *Pioneer Women of Historic Haddonfield* (1973), has a brief biography of Bancroft. Claire Griese, director of Special Services at Bancroft School, was interviewed for this article.

Shirley M. Montgomery

MARY KATHARINE JONES BENNETT, 1864-1950

Mary Katharine (Jones) Bennett, born in Englewood

(Bergen County), NJ, on November 28, 1864, lived during the most crucial years in the advancement of the role of women in the Presbyterian Church, USA, a crusade to which she gave untiring leadership as a churchwoman and a spokeswoman for home mission and interdenominational work. The younger of two daughters born to Henry Jones, a builder, and Winifred (Davies) Jones, both natives of northern Wales, Bennett (who was known as Katharine) grew up in comfortable circumstances and was well educated, attending the Dwight School in Englewood and the Bordentown (NJ) Academy. She entered Elmira College in 1881, where she was an excellent student, and graduated with an A.B. in 1885.

After graduation, she returned home to teach for several years in both public and private schools in Englewood. But what was to become a lifelong zeal for social and religious work led her, in 1894, to take a position as national secretary of young people's work for the Woman's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, whose antecedent board, the Woman's Executive Committee, was the first national woman's organization in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Thus was launched a career in the church that began in one century and ended in another.

The context in which Bennett established the new direction of her life work was a post-Civil War commitment by American Protestant women to organize national and regional denominational societies to send money, supplies, and personnel to foreign and domestic mission fields. Churchwomen were concerned with women and children in need, such as prostitutes, widows, orphans, paupers, and the unchurched of the U.S. frontier and overseas, believing that "Christianity had awarded them favor and freedom compared to women of other lands and to the non-Christian of America, and they felt a responsibility to share this with others." (Boyd and Brackenridge, *Presbyterian Women in America*, 15) So, although Presbyterian women of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were barred from the pulpit and the halls of church government, they exerted a powerful influence through their mission boards. Bennett, reflecting on this influence, called "woman's work for women and children a vital asset in nation-building." ("The Past a Promise for the Future," *Home Mission Monthly*, March 1924, 106)

She was married on July 20, 1898, to Fred Smith Bennett, a resident of Englewood and a prosperous New York manufacturer and merchant. They had no children, and her husband was supportive of her religious work, so her career continued relatively uninterrupted by her marriage. She resigned from her paid employment with the Woman's Board, however, after her marriage, but she was elected a member of that board soon afterward. In 1909 she was chosen its third president and served in that office until the board's 1923 merger with the Presbyterian Board of National Missions.

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