Carrie Chapman Catt Returns to Iowa State College

Clara Jordan

Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker

Part of the Home Economics Commons

Recommended Citation

Jordan, Clara (1921) "Carrie Chapman Catt Returns to Iowa State College," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 1 : No. 3 , Article 2.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol1/iss3/2
Carrie Chapman Catt Returns to Iowa State College

By CLARA JORDAN

"If anyone had told the tall, blue-eyed, fun-loving young graduate of Iowa State during her first year of teaching at Sigourney, Iowa, that she would some day return to her Alma Mater to deliver the senior commencement address, she most likely would have enjoyed a good laugh at their expense. But fate entered and romantically into the life of Carrie Lane that she is no longer the teacher of Sigourney but is the world famous Carrie Chapman Catt, the international leader in the woman's movement.

Carrie Lane first beheld the light of day at Ripon, Wis. She spent most of her early childhood in the Badger state and enjoyed her elementary education in the Ripon schools. Even as a child, she displayed keen wit and unusual executive ability. She was always the center of fun to the girls to whom she played, but nevertheless the responsibility seemed to rest upon her shoulders and she was often called from her play to settle disputes over the number of marbles or which mud pie was the nicest or whose turn it was to be "it."

The Lane family then moved to Iowa and thus it was that when Carrie was a suitable age, Iowa State College was chosen as the school for her college work. With the money she had earned teaching in her home district, she came to Ames with all the enthusiasm and activity of a healthy, happy girl and seemed to make an imprint on the school and its members from the very first. Miss Carrie believed in the doctrine of working very hard when one works and playing equally hard when one plays. For this reason she was known on every part of the campus, both in a scholastic and a social sense.

Miss Carrie's experience as a public speaker was gained from the college literary society, the Crescent. It was the custom in this society to call members to their feet, then give them a subject and require them to speak three minutes on that subject. It taught them to think upon their feet and to think quickly. Before her time, the girls in the society had left oratory to the boys and had contented themselves with writing essays and giving recitations, but Carrie Lane defied traditions and delivered a successful oration. This innovation caused much comment among the men students, which was nothing to the excitement which ensued when she announced her intention of forming a debating club. Its purpose was to give the girls a chance to debate among themselves against the boys and to gain self-confidence to combat the abler sex. In carrying out her plan the young feminist leader met difficulty in finding a time in the already crowded schedule when the girls might meet. The only available period was Saturday afternoon, which time was traditionnally reserved for the "walk." For an hour and a half late Saturday afternoon Miss Carrie walked together on the campus. It was the social occasion of the week, the one time set aside for social activities. The boys and girls availed themselves of the opportunity to dress up in their best and it was a very precious hour to those couples who were interested in each other.

The proposal of Miss Lane's to break up the "walk" was hailed by the boys as an outrage and many became so angry they refused to speak to the debator who had really formed the club in all innocence of the disturbance it would create. But, surprisingly, the "walk" continued and the girls of the college learned to debate in public.

After her graduation from Iowa State in 1880, Carrie Lane took a special course in law and then entered upon her career as a teacher. Her first pedagogic experience was gained at Sigourney, Iowa, where she was known as an excellent teacher and a wholesome girl with a sense of humor and a keen enjoyment for fun. From Sigourney she went to Mason City, Iowa, where she was soon made principal of the high school and later superintendent of all the schools in the city. She learned to think quickly. Before the opening of a new term Carrie Lane kept her eyes on women's activities in the political world and foresaw possibilities for the advancement of the suffrage question.

While in Mason City, she met Mr. L. C. Chapman, the editor of the Mason City Republican, and upon her marriage to him in 1884, she became joint owner and editor with him. It was at about this time she undertook her first active suffrage lecture tour, stumping the state of South Dakota one summer. She learned much that summer, for she watched the women work in the fields with their husbands, in addition to doing their household work and taking care of their children, and she saw the part that pioneer women were taking in the opening of a new country.

After a few years Mr. Chapman sold his newspaper and the two moved to San Francisco where Mr. Chapman died suddenly. Thrown upon her own resources, Mrs. Chapman decided to earn her own living and take on a position as advertising solicitor on a trade paper. Only one other woman had ever been employed before her on a San Francisco newspaper, which gave abundant proof of her unusual ability.

Going day after day among working men of all classes gave Mrs. Chapman something more than her daily bread. Often the men with whom she came in contact were rude and insulted her in a manner which she failed to understand, until it dawned upon her that she was placed in an environment far removed from any she had ever known, where she lacked the backing of family, friends or school board. Now she was placed in an atmosphere which she seemed poor, friendless and alone, and she was treated with little or no respect.

These experiences, and one that was especially disagreeable, waked her to the realization that she was only one of millions of women thrown on their own resources who needed protection and she made up her mind that whatever other weapons women might need, education, business training and the ballot especially should be placed in their hands. She determined to work for the ballot for women "not because of any good which they may presumably do with it but because they need every possible power that they may reside in it for their own protection."

In 1890 Mrs. Chapman married Mr. George W. Catt, president of the Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific Company, engineers and contractors. Mr. Catt was an old college friend and in full sympathy with his wife's work. As long as he lived he added every possible power that they may reside in it for their protection."

In 1893, when Colorado enfranchised its women, Mrs. Catt was the only person who stumped the whole state in the interests of suffrage. She became president of the National Suffrage Association which actively helped the state organization. Three years later she was manager of the campaign which resulted in a suffrage law for Idaho. She was the first chairman of the organization committee of the National association, the first woman to try definitely to organize the movement in every state in the Union. It was natural, then, when in 1900, Miss Susan B. Anthony was obliged to resign the presidency of the National Woman's Suffrage Association on account of her advanced age, Mrs. Catt should be elected her successor. Two years later she inaugurated her plan for a world league for suffrage and was made secretary of the temporary committee which formed and organized the first world suffrage convention which was held in Berlin in 1904.

Nearly twenty years have elapsed since that first world suffrage convention and for several years Mrs. Catt has held the responsible position of National and International president of the Suffrage Alliance. With her characteristic persistence and diplomacy she has guided and led all women in their efforts for suffrage and there must have been a peculiar little feeling of satisfaction steal over her.
THE IOWA HOMEMAKER

On last election day when she realized that hundreds and thousands of women were going to the polls for the first time to take their part in managing the affairs of the nation.

Altho Mrs. Catt has not been a resident of Iowa for many years she has manifested a keen interest in the suffrage of the state and did much in the beginning to organize women of the state for their initial campaigns. In her heavy schedule of lectures which took her not only to all parts of the United States but to Europe as well, she has found time to squeeze in lectures to Iowa women.

On June 15, when Iowa State College is closing its collegiate year and granting to successful seniors their diplomas, Carrie Chapman Catt will return to her Alma Mater and deliver the commencement address. She is the first woman who has ever addressed Iowa State on such an occasion, but who than she has a better right to be the first? She is one of Iowa State’s old graduates. She has labored over the same difficulties this year’s seniors are facing and she has loved the school as they are learning to love it on the eve of their departure. More than this she, a daughter of Iowa State has gone out into the world and made a name and a record for herself that she may well be proud to claim. She is returning to whom the hammering and driving have been done. The fun loving girl who went out from Ames years ago to be a teacher is now returning, not as a teacher but as the wonderful woman who has done more than any other one in promoting the women’s movements. Carrie Chapman Catt.

A Neighborhood Playground

By JANUITA BEARD

WE WISH to introduce you to a strange creature. It resists classification and analysis. It has a tousled mat of indifferent colored hair surmounting a defiant freckled face. Water it abours except in ponds full. When it comes into the house, it topples over chairs and bric-a-brac. Its limbs are too short for its body and its clothes too short for its limbs. When it tries to talk its voice sometimes goes up and sometimes down. Taken all together, it is not ornamental nor particularly useful. The abode of civilization is no place for it. Its natural occupation is hunting, fishing or fighting; its habitation is the fields and woods. It imagines itself an Indian and belongs to a tribe who go on expeditions against its enemies.

A year ago this wild animal was a well-behaved studious boy, a model in the school and home; now we don’t know what to call him.

How often have you seen this dejected figure, slouching against a corner lamp post, defiantly watching a gang of workmen erect a skyscraper on the site which as a vacant lot had been his own playground! Now there is no yard. If he plays ball in the streets, he is promptly chased off. No wonder he turns and demands his rights. If he is not furnished with a playground adequate for his needs he will make a playground of the streets and lawns of the neighborhood.

“We have no sense of responsibility in regard to the pleasures of young people and continually forget that amusement is stronger than vice and that it alone can stifle the lust for it. We see all about us much vices which is merely a love for pleasure gone wrong, the illicit expression of what might have been not only normal and recreative pleasure, but an instrument in the advance of higher social morality.”

Such a statement, from a woman as vitally concerned with human welfare as Jane Adams, makes us think more seriously of the provisions needed for wholesome play.

What provisions along this line has your community made? Do you have a playground and if so what mental pictures do you have of it. Is it not a hard sunbaked lot filled with disorderly children hanging on teeter-totters, whirling dangerously on the flying Dutchman, and washing picnic dishes and muddy feet in the hideous green enameled fountain? Compare this picture with a playground placed in a place filled with mechanical apparatus for physical play alone, but a place with inducement for mental play as well.

Surely you could secure a few acres of attractive land, perhaps with a creek winding through it. Here, besides the large flat open spaces necessary for games, the children might have a play garden where they could give vent to their creative instincts. Gardening is a correlative factor in the play movement. The soil idea is one of the first ideas coupled with play. As you all know, little children love to dig in dirt. And in gardening the child grasps the idea of life from watching his own plants grow.

An enclosed playground has a psychological value, as it transforms the playground from the vacant lot to a definite unit, and gives something which the children belong to, so that the maintenance of discipline is much easier. A vine-covered wire fence is the most economical, and can be made very attractive. Morning glory, moonvine and wisteria can be used in the northern states, honeysuckle and clematis in the southern states.

Trees will not grow as quickly as vines but the whole playground or even the community could be replanted with trees inside of three years by the proper organization of school children, who would plant the seed and then transplant the seedlings in the place where they are to grow. The Massachusetts Board of Forestry is attempting to introduce the study of trees into the public schools. An organization of “Forest Crusaders” might be formed. The little bits of plots could be “dryads” and plant the seeds. The larger ones could be “elves” and transplant the little trees. The boys and girls seven to eleven could be “rangers” and take care of the small trees. The big boys could be “foresters” and could range the woods and fields collecting seeds. For you who are interested in this, the forest planting leaflets of Massachusetts Forestry Department, and the following books might be of some help:

How to Make School Gardens—F. D. Hemenway.

Children’s Gardens—Louise Klien Miller.

Agriculture Through the Laboratory and School Garden—Dougery and Jackson.

In the general planting of playgrounds, grass and shade trees are essential, a double row of trees around each division.