

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection



Processed by
Elizabeth Abbott
and
Joan Cannon

MEMPHIS AND SHELBY COUNTY ROOM

Memphis/Shelby County Public Library & Information Center
3030 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, TN 38311
2004

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection

Papers and Photographs

Scope and Provenance

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection was given to the library some years ago. Susanne Conlan Scruggs, the wife of Judge Thomas Murphy Scruggs, was active in the Progressive Movement in Memphis, especially in working for children to have safe places to play, quality education, and legal representation through a juvenile court system rather than through the adult court system.

The collection contains two photograph albums, newspaper clippings, correspondence, photographs, and other documents that detail Scruggs' efforts in behalf of children. The albums include a variety of photographs which show children playing in unsafe parks, dilapidated housing, and other settings that had a negative effect on young children. The correspondence includes letters Scruggs wrote to educators, doctors and others involved in the health and welfare of children.

The collection provides insight into the type of work that was done for children in the early part of the twentieth century.

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection

Papers and Photographs

Biographical Profile

Susanne Conlan was born in Boston, Massachusetts in August 1863. She came to Memphis in 1889 following her marriage to Thomas Murphy Scruggs, a prominent Memphis attorney who later became a judge. Their wedding took place on August 23, 1889 at the Catholic Cathedral in Boston, Massachusetts. They had four sons and two daughters: Thomas M. Scruggs, Jr., Susanne C. Scruggs, James Scruggs, Elizabeth Scruggs, Marshall B. Scruggs, and John F. Scruggs.

Susanne Scruggs was active in many clubs and organizations. She was a charter member of the Nineteenth Century Club. Her activities in the Nineteenth Century Club helped to provide books for Cossitt Library.

The majority of Susanne Scruggs' activities were directed towards improving life for the children of Memphis. She organized the Memphis Woman's Public School Association. This organization helped to provide free school books to children who could not afford them, and organized school lunch programs. Scruggs was active in the formation of several Parent-Teacher Associations, and she was president of the Central High PTA. She also founded the Playground Association and was instrumental in the organization of the Juvenile Court system. She served as an officer of the Juvenile Court.

Susanne Scruggs was the first president of the Children's Protective Union. She found adoptive homes for many children through this organization. Scruggs was also in charge of the "Friendly Visitor" program. She and other volunteers made visits to the homes of the poor to see if the children had proper care. Her activities helped to establish the first children's ward in the City of Memphis Hospital and an adequate tuberculosis hospital.

Susanne Conlan Scruggs died on January 29, 1945. Her funeral took place at St. Peter's Catholic Church, where she was a member. Born in the midst of the Civil War, she lived almost to the end of World War II. The mother of six children, she made the orphan, the helpless, the needy her concern. Her life was marked by a strong and unwavering commitment to improving the health and welfare of Memphis children.

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection

Papers and Photographs

BOX I

Folder	Description
1	FRIENDLY VISITOR REPORTS Folder contains Friendly Visitor Reports. These reports describe the conditions found in the homes of poor families that Susanne Scruggs visited. The Friendly Visitor Program was the forerunner of Social Services Programs. Because information in some reports is sensitive in nature, these reports may be seen only with permission of the History Department Manager.

BOX II

Folder	Description
1	ASSOCIATED CHARITIES Folder contains organizational information, including the Constitution and the Minutes of the meetings. The Constitution was adopted in March 1909. Associated Charities was reorganized in December 1911.
2	CENSUS INFORMATION Folder contains the 1900 U. S. Census for Shelby County with the listing for the Scruggs family. It provides information on each family member.
3	CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL Folder contains information about children in Memphis who were sick. There is much information about the Christie family who was suffering from tuberculosis. There was no children's hospital in Memphis at this time and the content of this folder shows the need for one.

4

CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE UNION

Folder contains information about the lives of children in poor families, as well as information about child welfare conferences that were held in Memphis. Folder also contains information concerning a court case that was brought against Scruggs. A family accused Scruggs of illegally restraining their son.

5

CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE UNION—Articles

Folder contains information about programs of the Children's Protective Union. Many of the documents in this folder are rough drafts of articles that Scruggs later sent to newspapers.

6

CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE UNION—Charter

Folder contains the charter for the Children's Protective Union. The date on the charter is April 23, 1911.

7

CORRESPONDENCE—Associated Charities (1908-1909)

Folder contains correspondence pertaining to the work of Associated Charities in 1908 and 1909. Most of the correspondence is addressed to Susanne Scruggs.

8

CORRESPONDENCE—Associated Charities (1910-1917)

Folder contains correspondence to and from Scruggs. There are many specific charity cases that are discussed in the letters.

9

CORRESPONDENCE—From Charities and The Commons

Folder contains correspondence from a charitable organization that was located in New York City. The letters contain suggestions about the organization and the fieldwork of Associated Charities. Susanne Scruggs sought information from Charities and The Commons (Boston) when establishing Associated Charities.

10

CORRESPONDENCE—Children's Protective Union (1908-1910)

Folder contains information about families who sought to adopt children. Also includes letters from poor families unable to work because of illness and who requested assistance for their children.

11 CORRESPONDENCE—Children's Protective Union (January 1911-March 1911)

Folders contain correspondence from people who wanted to help disadvantaged children through donations of time and money. Also includes letters from families who needed assistance.

12 CORRESPONDENCE—Children's Protective Union (April 1911-December 1911)

Folder contains correspondence from families who wanted to adopt children. Also includes letters and notes in which people sent contributions to the Children's Protective Union. Susanne Scruggs had heard that United Charities had closed and she wanted information regarding its closing.

13 CORRESPONDENCE—Children's Protective Union (1912)

Folder contains correspondence from families wanting to adopt children and letters from Scruggs inquiring about children who had been adopted. Also includes letters to Scruggs from Senator K. D. McKellar. He inquired about a young boy who was placed in an orphanage.

14 CORRESPONDENCE—Children's Protective Union (1913)

Folder contains correspondence from a woman inquiring about her son who had been placed in the care of a friend. The child was later placed in an orphanage. Also includes correspondence and an application from a family who wanted to adopt a child. There are also letters of recommendation from friends of that family.

15 CORRESPONDENCE—Children's Protective Union (1914-1915)

Folder contains correspondence and applications from families wanting to adopt children. Also includes letters from a woman who wanted to regain custody of a child that she had previously given up.

BOX III

Folder	Description
1	CORRESPONDENCE—Children's Protective Union (1916-1922) Folder contains correspondence from families who are inquiring about their children. Also includes a document from a man surrendering custody of his children.
2	CORRESPONDENCE—Children's Protective Union [1908-1915] Folder contains correspondence from a family that needed assistance. The father was in the asylum at Bolivar, Tennessee, and the mother did not have much income. Also includes a letter from Bishop Thomas Gailor informing Scruggs about a decision made at a meeting he attended.
3	CORRESPONDENCE—Cooksey Family Folder contains an application and letters from a family who adopted a young girl from the Children's Protective Union.
4	CORRESPONDENCE—To and From E. H. Crump Folder contains letters written to Mayor E. H. Crump and letters from Mayor Crump to Susanne Scruggs. The correspondence discusses a report of the School Board. The School Board members discussed how tax money should be spent on the schools.
5	CORRESPONDENCE—Bernard Flexner Folder contains correspondence from Bernard Flexner, an attorney in Louisville, Kentucky. He was Chairman of the Committee of the National Probation Officers Association. He was active in assisting Scruggs in organizing the Memphis Juvenile Court System.
6	CORRESPONDENCE—The Home of the Good Shepherd Folder contains correspondence to Scruggs about some work that she did to help The Home of the Good Shepherd, a facility which cared for young women who were pregnant or in need of special assistance.

7 CORRESPONDENCE—Jenkins Family (January 1915-August 1915)

Folder contains an application and correspondence from the Jenkins family who wanted to adopt a baby. They had previously adopted another child. Also includes letters of recommendation from friends of the Jenkins family.

8 CORRESPONDENCE—Jenkins Family (September 1915-November 1915)

Folder contains correspondence from the Jenkins family who wanted to adopt a baby. They were able to adopt the child. Also includes information about how they were to finalize the adoption.

9 CORRESPONDENCE—Juvenile Court (1906-1909)

Folder contains information about the establishment of the Juvenile Court System which became a branch of the Playground Association. Also includes correspondence from Bishop Thomas Gailor. One letter shows the damaging effects of insects and time on documents.

10 CORRESPONDENCE—Juvenile Court (1910)

Folder contains letters which discuss the activities of the Juvenile Court. Includes a letter from Reverend A. M. Hildebrand of the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee, which gives the Juvenile Court some helpful suggestions in caring for the children who end up in Juvenile Detention. Also includes a letter from Judge Ben B. Lindsey of the Juvenile Court in Denver, Colorado. He was a native of West Tennessee and provided helpful suggestions for Scruggs' work.

11 CORRESPONDENCE—Juvenile Court (1911-1918)

Folder contains correspondence to Scruggs about legislation that John Faxon tried to get passed. He wanted wayward girls taken out of the Juvenile Court system and placed in the care of women. Also includes correspondence about a lecture that Judge Lindsey was to give in February 1912.

12 CORRESPONDENCE—Juvenile Court [1905-1915]

Folder contains correspondence from Scruggs to City Commissioners. She was displeased with the amount of money they allotted to the Juvenile Court, and asked for more. Also includes a list of the probation officers.

**13 CORRESPONDENCE—Medical Inspection of School Children
(January 1906-November 1906)**

Folder contains correspondence that discusses the need for free medical inspection and assistance to Memphis school children whose families could not afford proper care for their children. Scruggs explains in her correspondence to doctors that many children are behind in their education because of poor eyesight and illnesses. Scruggs also states that many cities had implemented such programs and that Memphis should not be behind them in this important work.

**14 CORRESPONDENCE—Medical Inspection of School Children
(December 1906-1908)**

Folder contains correspondence from health departments in cities such as Washington, D.C. and Boston, Massachusetts. Scruggs wanted to learn how other cities conducted medical inspections in schools and whether they were successful. Also includes correspondence from *The Ziegler Magazine of the Blind* which discussed establishing a workshop for the blind in Memphis.

15 CORRESPONDENCE—Memphis University

Folder contains correspondence which dates from 1906-1909 and notes the importance of a university in Memphis.

16 CORRESPONDENCE—Miscellaneous Letters and Notes (1910-1915)

Folder contains various correspondence ranging from notes in which people sent contribution to Scruggs to correspondence from a woman who visited an asylum and was concerned about the conditions there. Also includes correspondence from the United States Department of Agriculture. They sent Scruggs flower and vegetable seeds.

17 CORRESPONDENCE—Parent-Teacher Association (1911-1913)

Folder contains correspondence pertaining to a meeting of the Mothers' Congress that was to be held in February of 1912. Also includes letters that discuss the establishment of different Parent-Teacher Associations in Memphis and meetings that were to be held.

18 CORRESPONDENCE—Parent-Teacher Association (1914-1917)

Folder contains correspondence which let members of the Parent-Teacher Association know about upcoming meetings. Also includes a letter to the Board of Education about the unsanitary conditions at the Maury School.

19 CORRESPONDENCE—Pellagra Hospital

Folder contains correspondence to and from Scruggs about the conditions at the Pellagra Hospital. The nurses and the hospital were inadequate and the conditions were unsanitary. Also includes information about plans for a new pellagra hospital. Pellagra was a disorder caused by a Vitamin B deficiency and was prevalent among poor families in the South whose diets lacked vegetables and whole grains.

BOX IV

Folder

Description

1 CORRESPONDENCE—Playground Association (1903-July 1908)

Folder contains correspondence pertaining to the establishment of the Playground Association. Also includes a letter to Scruggs that invites her to a lecture by Lee F. Hanmer, field secretary of the Playground Association of America.

2 CORRESPONDENCE—Playground Association (August 1908)

Folder contains correspondence that discusses the establishment of the Playground Association and the building of playgrounds.

3 CORRESPONDENCE—Playground Association (September 1908-December 1908)

Folder contains information about building playgrounds and the establishment of different departments in the Playground Association. Also includes information about the annual Lawyers and Doctors Benefit Baseball Game. The proceeds went to support the Playground Association.

4 CORRESPONDENCE—Playground Association (January 1909-June 1909)

Folder contains information about the Playground Association purchasing the Gayoso Bayou between Poplar Avenue and Washington Avenue. The Bayou was considered hazardous because several children had drowned in it during rainstorms and when the water was low, it was a breeding source for mosquitoes that carried disease. There were plans to build a concrete culvert over the bayou. Also includes information about the annual Lawyers and Doctors Benefit Game.

5 CORRESPONDENCE—Playground Association (July 1909-December 1909)

Folder contains information about the improvement of the area of Gayoso Bayou. Also includes notes in which people sent contributions to the Playground Association. There is information about unruly teenage boys who were causing problems at Brinkley Park.

6 CORRESPONDENCE—Playground Association (1910-1912)

Folder contains information regarding the building of the culvert over the Gayoso Bayou. Also includes information about plans for building a playground for African-American children.

7 CORRESPONDENCE—Playground Association (1913-1923)

Folder contains information regarding the building of the culvert over the Gayoso Bayous. Also includes a list of new Playground Association Directors who were chosen in 1916.

8 CORRESPONDENCE—Public Education Association (1904-1907)

Folder contains suggestions from Scruggs to the School Board to help the students pass each grade in a timely fashion. Other recommendations include needed work such as better lighting and better school buildings.

9 CORRESPONDENCE—Public Education Association (1908-1914)

Folder contains information regarding public schools in other U. S. cities and how Memphis compared to the other cities. Also includes letters regarding the need for Tennessee to enact compulsory education laws.

10 CORRESPONDENCE—Public Education Association [1905-1915]

Folder contains information regarding school improvements. There were several Memphis schools which needed larger or new buildings.

11 CORRESPONDENCE—Kate C. Robertson

Folder contains information regarding the National Congress of Mothers. Kate Robertson was active in the Jackson, Tennessee branch of the Congress. Also includes information regarding the lecture that Judge Ben Lindsey was to give in February 1912.

12 CORRESPONDENCE—Russell Sage Foundation

Folder contains correspondence from the Russell Sage Foundation which was located in New York City. The field secretary, Lee D. Hanmer, offered assistance in the creation of the Playground Association.

13 CORRESPONDENCE—Sacco Family

Folder contains information about Peter Sacco, who was dying from tuberculosis. His last wish was that his brother, Carl Sacco, of Long Branch, New Jersey get custody of his children. Also includes letters between Scruggs and Carl Sacco discussing how the children are to be transported from Memphis to New Jersey.

14 CORRESPONDENCE—School Book Program

Folder contains information about a program that the Woman's Public School Association implemented. The program obtained school books for children who could not afford them.

15 CORRESPONDENCE—School Lunch Program

Folder contains information about the poor quality of the school lunches in the Memphis Public Schools. Also includes a diet list that was submitted to schools after the condition was discovered.

16 CORRESPONDENCE—Tennessee Congress of Mothers

Folder contains correspondence about organizing the Tennessee Congress of Mothers. The Tennessee Congress of Mothers was organized in January 1911. Also includes guidelines for the Juvenile Court to follow such as the criteria for selecting probation officers.

17 CORRESPONDENCE—Woman's Public School Association

Folder contains information about the establishment of the association and the officers who were elected. The association was established to investigate the needs of the public schools in Memphis.

BOX V

Folder	Description
---------------	--------------------

1	COSSITT LIBRARY
----------	------------------------

Folder contains information about the Nineteenth Century Club and the efforts of the Woman's Local Council in raising money to buy books for the Cossitt Library.

2	THE HOME OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
----------	--------------------------------------

Folder contains information about the Home of the Good Shepherd, which was a home for wayward young women. The home was conducted by the Sisters of the Catholic Church. Also includes a pamphlet that Scruggs wrote telling of the work the home performed.

3	HOSPITAL—Tuberculosis
----------	------------------------------

Folder contains information about the conditions of the tuberculosis hospital in Memphis. A summary of the terrible conditions was written by Scruggs. She said that a new hospital needed to be established, a hospital in which people received proper treatment for tuberculosis.

4	INSANE ASYLUM
----------	----------------------

Folder contains information about the Insane Asylum in Bolivar, Tennessee. Also includes information about a young woman who Scruggs had arranged to have admitted to the asylum.

5	JUVENILE COURTS
----------	------------------------

Folder contains organizational information including the selection of probation officers. Also includes a bill requiring dependent and delinquent children to remain in the care and custody of parents or guardians until age 21.

6 MEDICAL INSPECTION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL

Folder contains information about the free medical examination of children in public schools. This was a program designed to help the children whose parents could not afford medical care. Some of these children suffered from poor eyesight and other medical problems which made learning difficult.

7 MEMORIALS

Folder contains memorial to Scruggs. Also includes information about a tree in Magnolia Circle that was to be dedicated to Scruggs.

8 MEMPHIS FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS

Folder contains the constitution and by-laws of the Memphis Federation of Women's Clubs. This organization was established to provide a means of communication between the various women's clubs in Memphis.

9 MEMPHIS POPULATION

Folder contains information about the population of Memphis in 1910, which was 150,451.

10 MEMPHIS VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION

The Visiting Nurse Association was established by Lena A. Warner. These nurses went to the homes of people in much the same fashion that Home Health Nurses do today. The Folder contains information regarding the purpose of the association.

11 NATIONAL CONGRESS OF MOTHERS

The Tennessee branch of the National Congress of Mothers was organized in January 1911. Folder contains information about the American Child Welfare Campaign which was designed to let the whole nation know of its duties and responsibilities to children.

12 NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Associated Charities

13 NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Children's Hospital

14 NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Children's Protective Union

15 NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Good Shepherd Home

- 16 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Hospitals**
- 17 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Juvenile Court**
- 18 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Parent-Teacher Association**
- 19 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Playground Association**
- 20 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Public Schools [1906-1913]**
- 21 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Public Schools [1910-1915]**
- 22 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Safe and Sane Fourth of July**
- 23 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—School Book Program**
- 24 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—School Lunch Program**
- 25 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Schools-Medical Inspection**
- 26 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Technical School**
- 27 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—The Tennessee Club**
- 28 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Tennessee Congress of Mothers**
- 29 **NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS—Woman's Public School Association**
- 30 **OBITUARY—Susanne Conlan Scruggs**

Folder contains information about the death of Susanne Scruggs which occurred on January 29, 1945. Her funeral took place at St. Peter's Catholic Church on January 31, 1945. She was buried in Elmwood Cemetery.

- 31 **OBITUARY—Thomas Murphy Scruggs**

Folder contains the obituary of Thomas Murphy Scruggs, husband of Susanne C. Scruggs. Judge Thomas M. Scruggs died June 6, 1920 of a heart attack. His funeral took place at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church on June 7, 1920. He was buried in Elmwood Cemetery. He was a prominent member of the Memphis Bar Association.

- 32 **PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION—Constitution and By-Laws**

33

PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION REPORTS [1905-1910]

Folder contains the general plan that the Parent-Teacher Association meetings should follow. Also includes a plan for establishing music education classes in the public schools. One document discusses the fact that the teachers' salaries would be cut during the summer and how the morning session for summer classes would be cut.

34

PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION REPORTS [1905-1915]

Folder contains reports of what was discussed at the meetings. One document discusses a plan to obtain more publicity for the Parent-Teacher movement and provide information that would assist in establishing a PTA in each school district.

BOX VI

Folder

Description

1

PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION REPORTS [1909-1915]

Folder contains a summary of the work being done at the McMillan School, which was only a year old at the time the document was written. Also includes the Minutes of a School Board meeting. Vacation schools were discussed. Includes the documentation on the establishment of several Parent-Teacher Associations.

2

PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION—Maury School

Folder contains the constitution of the Maury Parent Teacher Association. Also includes a document that was sent to the School Board. The Association requested that unhealthy foods be taken out of the school.

3

PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION (1906-1908)

Folder contains the Constitution and By-laws of the Association. Also includes the Minutes from the meetings. One document also discusses the purchase of the Gayoso Bayou and how much it would cost to build a culvert over it.

4 PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION (1909-1911)

Folder contains the report of a meeting which discusses the election of a new secretary and the purchase of the Gayoso Bayou. Also includes a document that discusses what the association needed to do about the Bayou.

5 PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION [1905-1915]

Folder contains documents that deal with the Gayoso Bayou. There is a document transferring ownership of the Bayou from Walter F. Yates and Grace I. Yates to the Playground Association. Also includes the blueprints for the culvert.

6 PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION [1910-1911]

Folder contains documents that deal with the Gayoso Bayou. Also includes a document that discusses how the people of Memphis are more heavily taxed than cities with better educational and recreational facilities.

7 PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION OF MEMPHIS—Charter

Folder contains the Charter for the Playground Association. The date on the charter is September 14, 1908. Bishop Thomas F. Gailor, Rabbi Max Samfield, Z. N. Estes, Elizabeth Messick, Susanne C. Scruggs, and E. H. Crump are among the names listed of those who formed the Playground Association.

8 PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION—Night Watchman

Folder contains information about a night watchman for Brinkley park that Scruggs obtained. The park contained valuable playground equipment and Scruggs feared that the equipment would be vandalized during the night.

9 PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSOCIATION—Reports [1905-1909]

Folder contains information about how many children in the State of Tennessee were attending schools in 1905. The statistics state that only half of the school aged-children in Tennessee were attending school. Also includes information about the school bond issue.

10 PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSOCIATION—Reports [1905-1911]

Folder contains information about the failure rate in the Madison Heights School. Also includes the draft of "When the World Comes to Memphis," which was later printed in the newspapers. Also there is a list of the rules and regulations of the Memphis schools.

11 PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSOCIATION—Charter

Folder contains the Charter for the Public School Association. The date on the charter is April 23, 1907. R. B. Maury, J. L. Minor, Susanne C. Scruggs, Bishop Thomas Gailor, Marcus Haase, and Elizabeth Messick were among the names listed of those who formed the association.

12 SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS

Folder contains information about a new lunch program that was to be started in the public schools. This new program was designed to replace unhealthy food with nutritious food.

13 SOCIAL RELIEF COMMITTEE

Folder contains information about several young prostitutes who Scruggs wanted to help. Many of the young women and teenagers were orphans and they felt they had no other choice but to become prostitutes. Some of the young women also were addicted to drugs. The drugs provided relief from diseases.

14 TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Folder contains information about an Industrial and Technical High School in Memphis. The purpose of this school was for teenage boys to learn a trade so they could become active workers in the community.

15 TENNESSEE CONGRESS OF MOTHERS—Minutes and Programs

Folder contains information about the Tennessee Congress of Mothers which was organized in 1911. The organization was divided into three sections, West, Middle, and East. Also includes Minutes from the meetings which occurred once a year.

16 WINCHESTER CEMETERY

Folder contains information about Winchester Cemetery. The City of Memphis turned Winchester Cemetery into a playground after moving any marked graves to Elmwood Cemetery. Also includes a newspaper clipping which shows interesting sites at Winchester Cemetery.

17 WOMAN'S PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSOCIATION—Articles and Reports

Folder contains information about improvements that needed to be made in the Memphis Schools. Also includes information about school books that were provided for children whose families did not have enough money to pay for them

18 WOMAN'S PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSOCIATION—Constitution

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection

Photographs

The Scruggs Collection includes a large number of photographs that Scruggs took or had taken to support her efforts in behalf of improving the health and living conditions of children. While most are small, they nevertheless bear testimony to conditions in Memphis in the early years of the 20th century. Lack of adequate nutrition, basic health care, sanitation, education and decent housing were some of the major problems Scruggs addressed. Many of the children who suffered from these adverse conditions were children of immigrant families, while others were children of impoverished rural families who had moved to the city seeking a better life.

Among her major accomplishments was the establishment of the Playground Association, through which public playgrounds were developed. Playgrounds provided safe, wholesome places for children to play and got them off dirty streets and alleys. A major focus of Scruggs' efforts, and one that shows up in many photographs, was her work to cover Gayoso Bayou, a large, open and unsanitary water way that ran through the downtown area and was just yards from the (public) High School located at Lauderdale and Poplar. In addition to being a nasty, open cesspool and breeding ground for mosquitoes, several children had drowned in the bayou during times of flooding from torrential rains.

Susanne Scruggs also took an active role in finding adoptive homes for orphaned or abandoned children, and a number of the photographs are pictures of children in whom she had taken a special interest. Some photographs show children with physical deformities or suffering from various kinds of disease that were common at that time.

Scruggs was also a principal organizer of the Juvenile Court System which separated children from the adult criminal court system. Often children were taken to the jail for adult offenders when the child was sent on a misdemeanor charge or simply because the child was an orphan. Several photographs show children with a juvenile court matron; a few depict the home for Black children. One of Scruggs associates in the work of the Juvenile Court was Julia B. Hooks, a prominent member of the city's African American community.

The early years of the 20th century saw the beginning of the Progressive Era, in which, on a national basis, efforts were made to address social ills at a time when there were few or no safety nets that provided care for widows, orphans, handicapped, unemployed, sick, and homeless. Scruggs enlisted the support of leading physicians in Memphis to secure basic health care through the public schools. Pellagra, a disease caused by a Vitamin B deficiency, was prevalent among the poor, and along with tuberculosis, was a leading cause of childhood illness in the Memphis area. She also had an interest in the temporary pellagra hospital shown in some of the photographs.

The small photographs and negatives have been organized in two albums. Several of the negatives have been reprinted in a larger size and are sleeved next to the small print. Other photographs have been individually mounted and are listed by folders on the following pages. Most of these images, which date largely from 1908 to 1912, depict life in Memphis in the early 20th century and provide supporting documentation for the extensive correspondence and investigative reports in the Scruggs Collection. A woman of boundless energy and vision, Susanne Conlan Scruggs' commitment to the care and welfare of children places her among the outstanding activists of the Progressive Era.

Album One

Album contains 53 pages of negatives and photographs. The majority of the photographs are of children. Some of the children pictured were taken to the St. Peter Catholic Orphanage. Also includes photographs of the Christie family who were all suffering from tuberculosis.

Album Two

Album contains 45 pages of negatives and photographs. The photographs show children playing in parks, the Gayoso Bayou, and unsafe and dilapidated housing. Also includes photographs of the Cossitt Library, as well as businesses in Memphis.

The Susanne Conlan Scruggs Collection

Photographs

BOX 7

12, 4" X 3 1/4", glass negatives covering the playground, orphanage, Gayoso Bayou, housing, Board of Education

BOX 8

FOLDER 1 8 photographs, 8 negatives

Unidentified children and adults

FOLDER 2 5 photographs, 5 negatives

Unidentified children

FOLDER 3 6 photographs

Unidentified children

FOLDER 4 10 photographs, 10 negatives

Board of Education, Gayoso Bayou, housing, and street flooding

FOLDER 5 8 photographs, 8 negatives

Playground and housing

FOLDER 6 8 photographs, 7 negatives

Playground and housing

BOX 9

FOLDER 1 17 photographs

**Housing, Gayoso Bayou, Board of Education, playground, and the St.
Peter Catholic Orphanage**

FODLER 2 5 photographs, 5 negatives

Gayoso Bayou

FOLDER 3 5 photographs, 5 negatives

Gayoso Bayou, City Hospital, and street scenes

FOLDER 4 3 photographs

Gayoso Bayou and Board of Education