

# Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

## Documents Online

**Title:** "The Civic Movement Among Women," by Alice M. Clarkson

**Date:** 1908

**Location:** Essays-General-1908-C613c

### Contact:

Archives & Special Collections  
Waidner-Spahr Library  
Dickinson College  
P.O. Box 1773  
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

[archives@dickinson.edu](mailto:archives@dickinson.edu)

*The Civic Movement among Women.*

CIVIC

*Alice M. Clarkson.*  
May

class 1908

9p

"Unquestionably the most potent single factor in the present movement for civic improvement is the influence of women.

They are the natural domestic housekeepers, and what more proper than that they should become civic housekeepers? They abate nuisances in the household. Why not in the city? They make the home a place of beauty, a joy to the eye. Why not the city? Moreover, patience and persistence more frequently characterize their efforts than those of men. These qualities combine to make them effective as a factor when they apply themselves to the work of civic improvement, and frequently while they may remain content with a devotion to the less conspicuous phases of the movement, we must not overlook

the fact that the price of success is patient and persistent attention to detail. Women are willing to pay this price in domestic matters, and to an increasing extent they are willing to pay it in civic matters. Hence the growing list of successes to be credited to their account."

Among the first questions discussed by women who have undertaken civic work is that of cleanliness. "How can we get our streets cleaned?" "How clean the vacant lots?" "How get the back yards and alleys put in order?" In all this work there must be cooperation. Sometimes the city, or town, officials aid the clubs by passing ordinances forbidding the throwing of paper and refuse on the streets and by appropriating sums

of money for the furtherance of the work. School children are appealed to. Civic work is frequently taught even in the lowest grades of the public schools and has proven a great success. The children become very much interested in the work. Prizes are offered to those pupils who shall raise the finest tree, vines, or flowers, or to the school keeping the school grounds and building the cleanest. Seeds are distributed gratis either for the pupil to take home and plant or to be used in window boxes and grounds about the school building. To increase the child's love for art, copies of famous paintings and pieces of sculpture are presented to the different schools. The women of the improvement clubs have discovered that

more can be accomplished through the  
coöperation of the public school children  
than in any other way.

Not only do the women of the improve-  
ment clubs strive for clean cities and towns,  
for trees, grass, and shrubbery about private  
homes and public buildings but also for  
parks, where, on a hot summer day, people  
may go for rest and where children may  
play in the pure fresh air; for fountains  
and springs of clear cold water; play-  
grounds; out door gymnasiums; reading  
rooms; and numerous other things  
which make life pleasanter for those who  
live in the poorer districts of cities and towns.

Woman's realm is her home and  
the improvement clubs are trying to

impress this fact upon the minds of the women of the poorer classes and upon the daughters of such women. Not only is this work carried on in classes but women, experienced in the work, go right into the homes, teaching wholesome cooking, the proper sanitary conditions of a home and the care of small children and infants. What a marvelous work these women are doing! Many are the illustrations which could be given, but time forbids.

It need not go outside of Carlisle for proofs of the good results of the civic movement among women. It is nine years since the civic club organized with a membership numbering thirty-four. Before six months had passed one hundred and

fifty members had been enrolled. The first step taken by the club was the cleaning of the "dirty streets." This was done; first, by enlisting the aid of the newspapers, then by asking housekeepers and janitors of churches and public buildings to set an example of individual street cleaning. Printed appeals were sent to occupants of business stands and renters of market stalls, and the passage by council of an ordinance restraining the distribution of handbills was secured, and of a second, forbidding the throwing of litter into the streets. Thirty-one receptacles for waste paper were then placed on the streets; and a street-sprinkler was purchased, both of which have proven their practicality.



But perhaps the most practical benefit that has been secured is the development of a savings fund, patterned after the "Penny Provident Saving System" of New York City, and the Mc Cormick System of Harrisburg, and having a central and four sub-stations for receiving deposits.

An early effort was made to establish in the public schools a "Childrens' League of Good Citizenship" which proved successful. Each school is visited once a month for half an hour at which time a talk on civic, patriotic, local historical, or biographical topics, trees, flowers, birds, and cruelty to animals is given, keeping the home town uppermost at all times.

Pictures, carefully selected for their

artistic or educational value, whose framing has been a matter of much consideration, have been presented to the public schools; flower seeds have been distributed among the school children, from whom a report of the result of the planting is required. Several public picture exhibitions and annual flower shows have been held, the latter being made possible by the "kindness and generosity of two public-spirited townsmen who are owners of large private greenhouses, and through the cordial coöperation of the professional florists."

These are not all of the splendid results attained by the civic club of Carlisle. We ourselves have seen many

results of the efforts of the organization.  
It is a work which deserves the  
heartest cooperation of the general  
public.

Let us then hope for a "more  
beautiful America" and let us aid  
in the fulfilling of our hopes to the  
best of our ability.