

# Practical Diversions and Educational Amusements: Evangelia House and the Advent of Canada's Settlement Movement, 1902–09

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One Saturday evening stands out distinctly in my memory. The reading-room, the club-room and the gymnasium are thrown open and the young people of the district flock in, wooed from the false glitter and objectionable companions of East Queen Street by the cosy brightness and good-fellowship within Evangelia House. On the lawn, the boys play roco by the light of flaring torches and their laughter and the jangle of the bell come floating through the open windows. In the gymnasium, one resident-worker referees basket-ball, while another is 'hostess' in the reading-room thronged by droppers-in who glance at the magazines, change libraries, or chat with friends. At half-past nine the men disappear into the club-room for the business meeting. A suspicion is abroad, strengthened by the earnestness with which a discussion is being carried on, that it has to do with baseball.<sup>1</sup>

In 1902 Sara Libby Carson, an American settlement worker and YWCA secretary, established Evangelia House in a storefront building in Riverdale, a working-class neighbourhood of Toronto. Evangelia's establishment was a significant event in the history of social reform in Canada, heralding the entrance of Canadians into the settlement house movement, already popular in Britain and the United States. Yet Evangelia House, and the movement it introduced into Canada, has gone largely unnoticed.<sup>2</sup>

The inauguration of Canada's settlement house movement should compel the interest of Canadian historians, and especially of historians of education. At the height of its popularity, from about 1910 to 1930, the movement engaged the talents of hundreds of Canadian women, many of whom were among the first to gain access to tertiary-level education. Although the majority of these women ended their participation in the settlements when they left their training school,

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<sup>1</sup>A.S. Bastedo, "Fortnight at Evangelina [sic] House," *The Varsity* 26, no. 2 (October 11, 1906): 21.

<sup>2</sup>One notable exception is Sara Z. Burke, *Seeking the Highest Good: Gender and Social Service at the University of Toronto, 1888–1937* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). See also Allan Irving, Harriet Parsons and Donald Bellamy, *Neighbours: Three Social Settlements in Downtown Toronto* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1995).

college, or university, others found that volunteer settlement work led to positions in the developing fields of social work or the public service, or helped further careers in the established professions. Moreover, settlement work added a new dimension to the formal educational experience of university women. As one volunteer later recollected, in her student days at the university it was customary for coeds at her college to volunteer at Evangelia for a few hours every week, and to live at the settlement for a week or two each year, "just," she noted, "as part of the privilege that the settlement gave us in return for our services through the year."<sup>3</sup> Providing a context in which university students could connect with the poor was an essential element of Evangelia's mandate.

In North America the settlement movement emphasized the instruction of non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants, together with members of the Anglo-Celtic working class, in the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship in a capitalist democracy. In Canadian settlements citizenship education meant not only instructing prospective voters in the workings of Parliament and the laws of the land, but also the fostering of a hegemony of middle-class ideals, values, and culture.<sup>4</sup> The settlement movement made educational innovation a central element of its mandate.<sup>5</sup> Jane Addams, one of the movement's best-known leaders, argued that in a democratic society the only way to secure a higher civic, political, and cultural life was to offer it to "the masses of the people" through education. The cultural and educational advantages of the few had to be extended to all; democracy had to be "socialized." But given the growing complexity and heterogeneity of Western society, Addams noted, conventional educational institutions were unequal to the task. Rather, the best agency to promote the advantages of culture and education to the masses was the settlement house. "It is needless to say," Addams declared,

that a Settlement is a protest against a restricted view of education, and makes it possible for every educated man or woman with a teaching faculty to find out those who are ready to be taught. The social and educational activities of a Settlement are but differing manifestations of the attempt to socialize democracy, as is the existence of the settlement itself.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>University of Toronto Archives (UTA), B74-0020, Mossie May Waddington Kirkwood, transcript of her interview with Elizabeth Wilson, March 27, 1973, 57.

<sup>4</sup>See Cathy L. James, "Gender, Class and Ethnicity in the Organization of Neighbourhood and Nation: The Role of Toronto's Settlement Houses in the Formation of the Canadian State, 1902 to 1914" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1997). See also Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 58-89.

<sup>5</sup>See Jane Addams, "Chapter 6," *Democracy and Social Ethics*, (New York: Macmillan, 1902).

<sup>6</sup>Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," *Philanthropy and Social Progress* (1893; repr., Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 7-10. Quotation on 10.

Her colleagues in Britain, the United States, and Canada concurred.<sup>7</sup> This article will explore the ways in which these ideas were put into practice in Evangelia House.

## BACKGROUND OF THE SETTLEMENT MOVEMENT

WHAT CONSTITUTES A SETTLEMENT? A Settlement might be started in any place by one, two, or more persons, choosing to form themselves into a family and going in residence in some part of a city or town, taking for their object the betterment of the neighborhood reaching out from the Settlement, which from choice has become their home-center, to the home-centers of their neighbors—expecting to give and receive.<sup>8</sup>

Settlements resist definition, partly because of their insistence on remaining responsive to the needs of their local clientele. Generally speaking, the settlement was part middle-class residence, part social welfare agency, part recreation centre, and part cultural outpost in the slums. The residential aspect of the settlement house was its most unique characteristic; movement leaders insisted that at least some “settlers” had actually to live in or near the premises in order for an institution to be considered a settlement. Settlement workers had to be neighbours, not merely visitors, in “neglected” districts.<sup>9</sup>

Also unique was the movement’s attitude toward religion. Although many settlement houses drew some or most of their funding from ecclesiastical sources, and most settlement workers reported that they were in some way religiously motivated,<sup>10</sup> American and later Canadian national settlement associations required their members to remain non-denominational and to avoid active evangelism among their clientele.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>See, for example, Standish Meacham, *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform, 1880–1914: The Search for Community* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 34; and Edith Elwood, “The Social Settlement,” Twelfth Canadian Conference of Charities and Correction *Proceedings* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 32.

<sup>8</sup>Mary Bell, “Settlement Work: As I Have Thought of It and Seen It, and Lived It,” *Dominion* *Tie* II, 12 (December 1903): 331.

<sup>9</sup>There are important parallels to Western imperialist colonization of Africa, Asia, and the Americas, see Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). I thank Shirley Tillotson for suggesting this reference. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>10</sup>See Eleanor J. Stebner, *The Women of Hull House: A Study in Spirituality, Vocation, and Friendship* (Albany: SUNY, 1997), and Ruth Crocker, *Social Work and Social Order: The Settlement Movement in Two Industrial Cities, 1889–1930* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 211–13.

<sup>11</sup>Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn argues these restrictions were intended to exclude from the American Federation of Settlements settlements catering to African-Americans. See her

Evangelia House was largely modelled on London's Toynbee Hall, the first settlement house, established in Whitechapel in 1884. Inspired by the British Idealist school of thought, proponents of Toynbee Hall argued that the social regeneration of industrial society could be best accomplished if members of the middle class resided for a time in working-class neighbourhoods, providing the urban poor with friendship, practical assistance, and dynamic illustrations of a "better" way of life. They maintained that such 'social settlements,' or settlement houses, were ideal sites from which to research the causes of poverty and to test schemes aimed at promoting the general welfare of the poor.<sup>12</sup> The preeminent concern was to reunite rich and poor by interpreting the needs and aspirations of each group for the other, and by reawakening each to its bond with the other. Settlement advocates sought to recreate, on a national scale and particularly in the industrial city, the cooperative community they thought characterized the English-speaking world before the industrial revolution.

The settlement idea which Toynbee Hall articulated quickly spread throughout England and to North America. By 1911 there were 46 settlement houses in Britain and over 400 in the United States.<sup>13</sup> Many were informally associated with universities or alumnae associations. Canada, with a much smaller urban population base than either Britain or the United States and possessing far fewer tertiary-level educational institutions or students, could still claim 13 settlement houses, six in Toronto alone, by the onset of World War One. Evangelia House was the first.

#### EVANGELIA'S ESTABLISHMENT

Evangelia's founder, Sara Libby Carson, created Evangelia House with the help of her friend Mary Bell and the backing of the Toronto and the Dominion Young Women's Christian Associations (YWCA's). We know little of Sara Carson's early life, but by all accounts she embodied characteristics of settlement activists in Canada, Britain, and the United States. Although a devout Christian, she belonged to no church. She was a member of the generation of women that first gained access to tertiary-level education, although she, like many of her peers, acquired no degree. Like a growing number of women of her generation

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*Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

<sup>12</sup>Standish Meacham, *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform 1880-1914: The Search for Community* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987), 34. See also Addams, "The Subjective Necessity."

<sup>13</sup>Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement 1890-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 8; Woods and Kennedy, *Handbook*, vi. See also Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), ch. 6.

and class, she was able to carve an independent career for herself outside the confines of marriage, while conforming to appropriate boundaries of femininity as contemporaries defined them.<sup>14</sup>

Carson first came to Toronto in February of 1897 as an organizer for the (American) National Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and at the behest of the Toronto YWCA, which invited her to lead a series of ten evangelical meetings exclusively aimed at young working women.<sup>15</sup> According to YWCA and local newspaper accounts, the meetings were successful and aroused much interest among "the girls."<sup>16</sup> The executive committee was so pleased with Carson's work that in November of the same year they invited her for another series of meetings for working "girls," and soon Caroline Macdonald informed the Toronto YWCA executive that not only was membership still increasing in the Bible club that Carson had inspired, but "one member had gone to New York to assist Miss Carson in her work."<sup>17</sup>

This "work" was Sara Carson's first foray into the settlement movement. In May 1897, shortly after Carson's visit to Toronto, she and Christina McColl, a YWCA colleague, established the Christadora settlement house in New York's Lower East Side.<sup>18</sup> In keeping with its founders' YWCA orientation, Christadora

<sup>14</sup>See S54, History of Canadian Settlements, Book B, Notes – Evangelia in the Baldwin Room (BR) of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library for reminiscences of Evangelia's former members and staff. See also Ethel Dodds Parker, "St. Christopher House: Stories of My Time," (TMS, 1962), United Church Library. Some of Carson's co-workers maintained she was a graduate of Wellesley college, but her name does not appear in Wellesley's student records. It is possible that she attended Mount Holyoke, for she maintained strong ties to that institution, which lost many of its student records in a fire in 1896. See David F. Allmendinger, Jr., "Mount Holyoke Students Encounter the Need for Life Planning, 1837–1850," *History of Education Quarterly* (Spring 1979): 42, note 8. Or she may, like Jane Addams, have attended one of the small ladies' academies typical of the period.

<sup>15</sup>Provincial Archives of Ontario (PAO) PAO-A-MU3518, Toronto YWCA Minutes, January 7 and February 4, 1897; "On Dit," *The Daily Mail and Empire*, Saturday February 20, 1897, 7. On the International YWCA, see Diana L. Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, 1870–1920: A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need" (PhD diss., Carleton, 1987).

<sup>16</sup>See Diana Pedersen, "'Keeping Our Good Girls Good': The YWCA and the 'Girl Problem,' 1870–1930," *Canadian Woman Studies/ Les cahiers de la femme* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 21, for a discussion of the YWCA's clientele.

<sup>17</sup>PAO-A-MU3518, YWCA Minutes, November 4, 1897 and January 6, 1898.

<sup>18</sup>"Young Women's Settlement: Only a Year Old, but a Bright Spot in the Densely Crowded East Side of New York" *The Commons* 3, no. 1(May 1898): 7. Although Carson and McColl sought support for Christadora House from a wide variety of sources, according to this article in the *Commons* they ultimately drew much of their sponsorship from the students, faculty and alumnae of Mount Holyoke College.

House initially catered exclusively to young women. Carson and McColl launched their settlement in a small, sparsely equipped flat behind a delicatessen, in a working-class district populated mainly by German, Italian, and Jewish immigrants. The two women quickly expanded on these Spartan foundations, largely through their YWCA and alumnae links to women's colleges and solicitations to individual philanthropists. Within four years Christadora House had moved into its own five-storey building and employed several resident workers, including a physician. Its mandate had expanded to include services for boys, young men, and parents as well as girls and young women from the local district.<sup>19</sup>

Once Christadora was firmly established, Carson resumed YWCA work, returning to Toronto at the end of January 1901 to conduct more evangelical meetings.<sup>20</sup> The newly formed Dominion Council of YWCAs then hired her as their City Department Secretary. Just over a year later Carson and Mary Lawson Bell persuaded Carson's employers to help them create Evangelia House.<sup>21</sup>

Mary Lawson Bell's antecedents are even more difficult to trace than those of Sara Carson. She acted as Evangelia's first headworker from 1902 to 1906, taking responsibility for the settlement's day-to-day operations while Carson concentrated on securing funding and volunteer workers for the settlement.<sup>22</sup>

Carson and Bell had great hopes of duplicating the success of Christadora House. They established Evangelia in a three-storey storefront at 716 Queen St. East. Lower floors accommodated settlement clubs and classes, while settlement residents lived together in the apartment above. Membership grew so quickly that within eight months they had to find a larger space, and a year later Evangelia moved to 643 Queen St. East, where it stayed until 1907. At its second location the settlement occupied three big storefronts—one fitted up as the library and

<sup>19</sup>"Young Women's Settlement"; and Frieda E. Lippert, "Christadora House Settlement," *The Commons* 6, no. 64 (Nov 1901): 11-12.

<sup>20</sup>PAO-A-MU3518, YWCA Minutes, Dec. 6, 1900.

<sup>21</sup>PAO-A-MU3518 Toronto YWCA Minutes, April 3, 1902 and May 19, 1902; *The Story of the YWCA in Canada: National Work 1893-1933* (pamphlet), (Toronto: Bryant Press Ltd., 1933), 7, discusses the organization of the Dominion Council, and its close association with the Toronto YWCA executive. See also Mary Quayle Innis *Unfold the Years: A History of the Young Women's Christian Association in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1949) 64; *Dominion Tie* 1, no. 7 (September 1902), inside cover; and United Church Archives (UCA) 90.135V, YWCA Minutes, March 13, 1902. For further discussion of the Toronto and the Dominion YWCAs see Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association."

<sup>22</sup>Bell left the settlement in 1906, reportedly due to ill health. She did not, however, leave settlement work altogether; in 1911 she reappeared as headworker of the Ottawa Settlement. See Woods and Kennedy, *Handbook of Settlements*, 305. See also Baldwin Room, Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library (BR) S54, History of Canadian Settlements, Book B, Notes, "Mrs. Jacques, Reminiscences," and *Dominion Tie*, I, no. 7 (September 1902): inside cover.

reading room, another as the gymnasium, and the third as the assembly hall/clubroom. Again, settlement workers resided in the upper floors. Membership numbered 600 in 1903, with an average daily attendance of 110.<sup>23</sup>

#### EVANGELIA'S CLIENTELE

Like Christadora House, Evangelia began by serving young women between six and twenty years of age. Most, including those who had left school to join the workforce, lived with parents and siblings, and those who worked for pay would have been expected to contribute most or all of their wages to family upkeep.<sup>24</sup> This was a group about which social reformers in early twentieth-century Toronto were increasingly alarmed, especially as young women evinced a growing preference for factory or "pink-collar" work over domestic service. Without the close supervision of leisure time common among women servants, many of these girls enjoyed the commercial amusements available to them and engaged in what were, to middle-class observers, questionable or risky behaviours. Ostensibly without sober parental guidance, reformers worried that this cohort of young women was in danger of becoming socially, morally, and intellectually degraded.<sup>25</sup> As one Evangelia volunteer reported to *The Varsity*,

[i]f, at fourteen or fifteen, a girl enters a factory or a department store, it is almost surely a good-bye to her education .... unconsciously, they sink into the slough of sordid toil and foolish pleasure.<sup>26</sup>

The deeper concern was that "sordid toil and foolish pleasure" might have serious moral consequences for the future of these young women as mothers.<sup>27</sup>

Yet young women in search of recreation in Toronto had few options. As Mary Bell noted, "Toronto, a city of homes, has not many social attractions for the business girl or woman, outside of the church social, theatre or vaudeville."<sup>28</sup> Evangelia House became one of the few institutions in the city to offer respectable, secular recreation to working-class women.

<sup>23</sup>Mary Bell, "Settlement Work," 332.

<sup>24</sup>See Craig Heron, "The High School and the Household Economy in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890-1940," *Historical Studies in Education* 7, 2(Fall 1995): 217-59; Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 33; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

<sup>25</sup>See Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

<sup>26</sup>A[ilberta] S. Bastedo, "A Visit to Evangelia House," *The Varsity*, 25, no. 3 (October 19, 1905): 43.

<sup>27</sup>BR, M.S. files, "Evangelia House - Dear \_\_\_\_\_," 1905, (E.B. Osler, W.A. Charlton, B.E. Walker, and F.W. Strathy, appeal written on behalf of Evangelia House).

<sup>28</sup>Bell, "Settlement Work," 333.

## EVANGELIA'S PROGRAMME

The aim of the settlement is to provide social life, physical exercise, education in the domestic arts and the elements of an ordinary education, especially such as will assist a young woman who enters a business establishment for a livelihood. It should be regarded as a combined college and club for working girls and those who as yet are too young to work, the members of which contribute in money for each benefit received and thus retain their much prized feeling of independence.<sup>29</sup>

As in all settlements, Evangelia's central organizational and educational device was the social club. Although not all settlement members belonged to a club, most "regulars" did. Sara Carson and Mary Bell initially established a half-dozen clubs, graded according to members' ages and given names like the Victoria, the Primrose, or the Loyalty Club. Each had approximately fifty members under a volunteer leader, who was usually a university student.<sup>30</sup> Each club had its own song (composed by Mary Bell) and club colours to encourage a sense of pride in belonging.

To Evangelia's organizers one of the most important aspects of the social clubs was that the members elected their own executives, and thus the clubs were considered self-governing. Carson and Bell insisted these executives rotate amongst the members a few times a year in order to give each girl an opportunity to lead the group. They also insisted on weekly business meetings chaired by the club president and run according to strict parliamentary procedure. The *Varsity's* Alberta Bastedo described one such meeting:

The business meeting generally comes first, and to hear the diminutive President of the Primrose Club call the meeting to order and rattle off with scarcely a pause for breath: 'Ready for the question. All in favor pleath saye [sic] aye. Oppothed [sic] no. It is carried,' and to see the five-year-old Treasurer demand the 'dues' is certainly a privilege.<sup>31</sup>

More soberly, Bastedo went on to note that

[I]t all has its very serious side. Lives that would otherwise know no law are, for a few hours a day at least, brought within the compass of system and of order, of justice and of fair-dealing. In the games which follow, whether croquet or basketball or French tag, a resident worker is always present to umpire—to control, just as she always sits upon the platform during a business meeting. The home training does not make for a peaceable settling of disputes....<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, Bastedo assumed that children of "the masses" lived lives of passion and disorder and therefore needed a controlling, middle-class presence. Evangelia's workers maintained that the social clubs encouraged their members to internalize

<sup>29</sup>BR, M.S. files, "Evangelia House - Dear \_\_\_\_\_," 1905.

<sup>30</sup>P[hoebe]. A. Magee, "The College Girl" *Varsity* 24, no. 8(Dec. 1904): 131.

<sup>31</sup>Bastedo, "Fortnight," 21.

<sup>32</sup>Bastedo, "Fortnight," 21.



the self-discipline they saw modelled by their volunteer leaders. By insisting on orderly, peer-regulated conduct within the club, settlers hoped to curb any tendencies to lawlessness or emotional excess among their clientele when they were outside the settlement as well.<sup>33</sup>

Active games like tag, stories, songs and skits, and snacks of cocoa and biscuits or buns were regular features of club meetings and these too served an educational purpose. As Alberta Bastedo claimed, "in their play, almost more than in their work, the girls unconsciously receive lessons in self-sacrifice and self-control."<sup>34</sup> Through these supervised recreational activities Evangelia's leaders hoped to teach their members to follow rules and to cooperate with each other.

After club meeting and recreation time, members separated into various classes. Evangelia House initially offered thirty-four "industrial and educational" classes each week. For schoolgirls, Mary Bell noted,

[i]t is the policy of Evangelia House to, as far as possible, supplement and in no way duplicate school work. The class work provided for school-girls is very practical and tends to help them prepare for their larger place in the world when older.<sup>35</sup>

Sara Carson and Mary Bell anticipated that schoolgirls' "larger place in the world" would not mean paid work outside the home. Thus the youngest girls were offered lessons in table-setting and kitchen-management, known as "kitchen gardening," and older school-aged girls received instruction in subjects like plain sewing, embroidery, and cooking. In addition, schoolgirls could get help with their homework. One of Evangelia's chief objectives was to keep its clientele in school and away from the morally perilous world of paid employment for as long as possible. As Bastedo explained:

[c]hildren who are backward or bright at study, are given tuition in whatever subjects they desire, in order that they may find school work a pleasure, and that they may be tided over the stage of the get-to-work fever.<sup>36</sup>

Only young working women, who came in the evenings, were offered vocational instruction. As University of Toronto volunteer Phoebe Magee noted, Evangelia House provided these members with classes in "physical culture, cooking, dressmaking, millinery, and stenography, as well as the ordinary subjects of an English education."<sup>37</sup> Since they had already entered the working world their greatest need, as Carson and Bell saw it, was for intellectual stimulation and a broader range of employment opportunities, likely in the hope that Evangelia's

<sup>33</sup>See also Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, for a discussion of middle-class perceptions of disorderliness among working girls.

<sup>34</sup>A.S. Bastedo, "A Visit."

<sup>35</sup>Mary Bell, "Settlement Work," 332-3.

<sup>36</sup>Bastedo, "A Visit," 43.

<sup>37</sup>Magee, "The College Girl," 131.

working members might find occupations more respectable than factory work. Classes in practical subjects that helped the students develop marketable skills had a much better chance of attracting young working women than did house-keeping science instruction, as other Toronto reformers had unhappily discovered.<sup>38</sup>

Details of course content and teaching methodology are scarce, but it is clear that the students in settlement classes mainly learned through active, "hands-on" instructional processes.<sup>39</sup> Appropriate equipment was, however, sometimes hard to come by. Not until late 1907, when Evangelia moved into a large, specially renovated building at the corner of Queen and River streets, did the settlement have a properly equipped facility, with gas ranges and plentiful classroom space.

From the beginning Evangelia emphasized gymnasium work and physical culture for young girls and women. In this the settlement was fairly innovative, for the notion of physical education for girls was just being introduced into the public school system, and female students at the University of Toronto had themselves only gained access to athletics instruction in 1901.<sup>40</sup> Almost certainly, the strong representation in Evangelia's volunteer corps of students from the university-affiliated Toronto Conservatory School of Expression accounts for these classes: this School, and the Margaret Eaton School of Literature and Expression, offered the strongest athletic programmes available to the women of Toronto at this time.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, Local Council of Women of Toronto (LCW), *Seventh Annual Report*, (January 1901), 9, in which the Council announced creation of a club for working girls, and University of Toronto Archives (UTA) A69-0011/014, Alumnae Association Annual Meeting Minutes, March 31, 1902, in which the Alumnae Association reported the failure of the LCW efforts, "not from lack of funds or rooms but because the girls could not be induced to come."

<sup>39</sup>See Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association," ch. 3, and "'Keeping Our Good Girls Good': The YWCA and the 'Girl Problem,' 1870-1930," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 20-24. See also Terry Crowley, "Madonnas before Magdalenes: Adelaide Hoodless and the Making of the Canadian Gibson Girl" *Canadian Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (1986): 520-47.

<sup>40</sup>See Alison Prentice, "Bluestockings, Feminists, or Women Workers? A Preliminary Look at Women's Early Employment at the University of Toronto," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* NS2 (1991): 242, in which she notes that athletics were available to Victoria College women from 1901 to 1914. J.M. Adie reported in "The College Girl" that women students at University College had agitated for such a course since 1902, but did not get one until 1905. See *The Varsity* 25, no. 2 (Oct 12, 1905): 23. See also Bruce Curtis, "The Playground in Nineteenth-Century Ontario: Theory and Practice," *Material History Review* (Fall 1985): 21-29.

<sup>41</sup>See Anna Lathrop, "Elegance and Expression, Sweat and Strength: Body Training, Physical Culture and Female Embodiment in Women's Education at the Margaret Eaton School," EdD thesis, University of Toronto, 1997. See also Heather Murray, "Making the

Gymnasium instructors at Evangelia trained settlement members in the Swedish system of exercises then gaining world-wide popularity, and taught them to play various sports and to use gym apparatus. One resident worker from a later period recalled students learning to march and to handle "Indian" clubs, dumb-bells, and wands, to use parallel bars, the box horse, and the horizontal ladder, to fence, to folk-dance, to play games like basketball, and to participate in active singing games.<sup>42</sup> Physical culture instructors, on the other hand, emphasized elocution and comportment. It was likely they who encouraged Evangelia's members to stage plays and dramatic readings. These classes had a practical dimension for their students, since a confident manner of speech and movement could benefit young women going into retail sales or clerical work.<sup>43</sup> But none of these classes was compulsory, and those members not athletically inclined could retreat to the "reading room for quiet and rest, as well as the lawn for ... croquet and other games."<sup>44</sup>

As in other settlements in the United States and Britain, a broad, non-denominational form of Christianity also played a part in Evangelia's programme. In her career Carson established ten settlement houses in the United States and Canada, always considering "tactful, and yet aggressive Christian work" to be essential.<sup>45</sup> According to Robert A Woods and Albert J. Kennedy, editors of the 1911 *Handbook of Settlements*, a settlement could maintain this kind of religious stance and still be a settlement as long as its workers conducted "specific religious effort ... without willing or conscious invasion of other religious loyalties."<sup>46</sup> This, essentially, was what Evangelia set out to do. It offered four Bible classes and two gospel meetings, but according to Phoebe Magee, "no attempt is made to force direct religious teaching on the girls, as the society works rather through physical and intellectual channels up to the spiritual."<sup>47</sup> and as Mary Bell noted in her 1903 report to the YWCA,

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Modern: Twenty Five Years of the Margaret Eaton School of Literature and Expression," *Essays in Theatre* 10, no. 1 (November 1991): 39-57. For a fuller discussion of the development of women's athletics in Canada see Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1986).

<sup>42</sup>BR, S54, History of Canadian Settlements, Book B – Notes, "Evangelia," Bunker to Hardy, February 18, 1963. The same kinds of skills were taught in the physical culture course offered by the Athletic Club to women students at the university in 1905. See Adie, *The Varsity*, 25, no. 2 (Oct 12, 1905): 23. See also Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association," 255-7.

<sup>43</sup>See Cathy L. James, "Not Merely For the Sake of An Evening's Entertainment," *History of Education Quarterly* 38, (Fall 1998).

<sup>44</sup>Bell, "Settlement Work," 333.

<sup>45</sup>"Sara Libby Carson," *Social Welfare* 11, no. 5 (February 1929): 113.

<sup>46</sup>Robert A Woods and Albert J. Kennedy, eds., *Handbook of Settlements* (Philadelphia: Wm. F. Fell Co., 1911; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1970), v.

<sup>47</sup>Magee, "The College Girl," 1904.

[t]he social times at Evangelia House have seemed to be particularly enjoyed, but although on such occasions our house has been crowded, we are glad to say it has been as much so for the Gospel meetings.<sup>48</sup>

It is important to note here that before the 1910s the majority of Riverdale's residents was of British Protestant descent. Christian worship services at the settlement would probably have been seen in at least a neutral, if not a positive light by the local community.<sup>49</sup>

#### EVANGELIA'S VOLUNTEERS

Carson and Bell quickly built a substantial volunteer workforce for Evangelia. In its first year the settlement boasted twenty-two volunteers, most of whom were women students from University, Victoria, and Trinity Colleges, or members of the Round Table Club of the Toronto Conservatory of Music.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the two women attracted three other full-time resident workers: Edith Elwood, a graduate of Trinity College, and two other, unnamed women, one a graduate of University College and the other likely a graduate of the Toronto Conservatory of Music. Some private girl's school students also offered their services, likely at the behest of Edith Elwood, who had taught at a private girls' school prior to taking up settlement work.<sup>51</sup>

It is uncertain whether or not Evangelia's first resident workers were paid for their work. The pattern in British and American settlement was that most (though not all) resident workers paid a small sum for room and board and took paid employment outside the settlement during the day, devoting their evenings to settlement work. This may have been true at Evangelia as well. Later, the full-time residents, who coordinated settlement programmes, helped direct the activities of volunteers and members, taught settlement classes, and initiated community service, did draw a salary.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Bell, "Settlement Work," 333.

<sup>49</sup>Edith Elwood, "The Social Settlement," Twelfth Canadian Conference of Charities and Correction *Proceedings* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 31-2. See also Maurice Careless, "The Emergence of Cabbagetown in Victorian Toronto" in Robert F. Harney, ed., *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Toronto, 1985), 25-45.

<sup>50</sup>Bell, "Settlement Work," 333.

<sup>51</sup>Edith Elwood graduated from Trinity College in 1896 with a BA, and taught for a while at a private girls' school in Parkdale before returning to Trinity to earn her MA, which she completed in 1903. See *The Calendar of the University of Toronto, 1906-07* (Toronto: The University Press, 1906), 187.

<sup>52</sup>UTA, A69-0011/13, Alumnae Association of University College, Minutes, November 5, 1904; UWCA, Executive Minutes, February 13, 1905.

Important as the residents were, unpaid, non-resident volunteers were essential to the operation of the settlement. In these early years volunteers performed various functions—supervising settlement clubs, teaching classes, overseeing the library, refereeing games, conducting “friendly” visits in the neighbourhood, doing much the same work as residents—but for only a few hours per week. Even with five full-time workers, it would have been difficult to manage over 600 young women and girls without volunteers. Moreover, voluntarism fulfilled a key settlement aim by providing middle-class members of the community with the opportunity to bridge the ever-widening social and geographical gap between the classes.

As “one of the principal societies for women students” in Canada at the turn of the century, the YWCA was crucial to Evangelia’s existence not only because the Dominion Council initially sponsored Carson and Bell’s endeavours, but also because it was an important source of potential volunteers and donors.<sup>53</sup> YWCA branches at the colleges were among the first groups Carson contacted when she launched the settlement in 1902.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the YWCA connection provided Evangelia with an endorsement allowing Carson relatively easy access to church groups and voluntary associations outside the university. Since the pool of women university students and graduates in Toronto was still fairly small, such links were critical to the development of Evangelia’s volunteer corps.<sup>55</sup>

Volunteering at Evangelia was for some an unnerving experience. The recollections of one volunteer, Adeline Wadsworth, are particularly evocative:

I can remember when I served midday dinner to the women who were workers in the laundry nearby. I can remember even now being very shocked with the condition of their hand – swollen, red, looking deformed and painful – probably due to the long duration in water, strong soaps and lye. Hands that seemed utterly destroyed.<sup>56</sup>

During every shift at the settlement Wadsworth and the other Evangelia volunteers saw the results of long hours of poorly paid, debilitating work, the only work available to many working-class women in Toronto. Not all the volunteers were touched, as Wadsworth was, by what they saw, and indeed a few seemed to

<sup>53</sup>Diana Pedersen “‘The Call to Service’: The YWCA and the Canadian College Woman, 1886-1920” in Paul Axeirod and John G. Reid, eds., *Youth, University and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 188.

<sup>54</sup>See, for example, UTA, A69-0011/13, Alumnae Association of University College, Minutes, October 27, 1902; United Church Archives (UCA) 90.135, Victoria College YWCA minutes, March 13, 1902.

<sup>55</sup>Alison Prentice, et al, *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 158-62.

<sup>56</sup>BR, History of Canadian Settlements, Notes, Book B, Reminiscences of Miss Adeline Wadsworth. The lunch room was established in the fall of 1904. See University Women’s Club Archives, “Minutes,” October 4, 1904.

maintain an attitude of superiority regardless, but some, at least, viewed their world differently as a result of their settlement experience.

Volunteer work at *Evangelia* provided many young, relatively privileged women with "an outlet for their active faculties," as Jane Addams put it.<sup>57</sup> Whether or not they sympathized personally with settlement members, volunteers at *Evangelia* were able to use their energy and academic training in work that they and their peers perceived as practical and socially beneficial.

#### EVANGELIA'S FINANCES

Whereas Mary Bell concentrated on supervising *Evangelia*'s clubs, classes, and volunteers, Sara Carson's most pressing administrative worry was finance. At first Carson supplemented the settlement's budget from her private income, contributing \$500 to \$600 per annum.<sup>58</sup> She also collected about \$400 per year from *Evangelia*'s members through membership fees and club dues, a remarkable achievement considering the young age and relative poverty of the members. The fees were a hallmark of settlement work, and settlement workers the world over placed a great deal of significance on them. Small as they were, fees-for-service set settlements apart from charities. They also, however, placed settlement memberships beyond the reach of the very poorest—indeed, one member noted that *Evangelia*'s members did not consider themselves poor, which suggests that their perceptions of poverty did not necessarily align with those of the *Evangelia*'s workers.<sup>59</sup> Overall, settlement workers maintained that the requirement to pay for services rendered built up members' self-respect and thus guarded against pauperization. As one supporter succinctly put it: "Nothing is free. Consequently everything is valued."<sup>60</sup>

Most of the rest of *Evangelia*'s \$3,000 budget came from "occasional" endowments, secured through Carson's frequent personal appeals to church groups and private individuals. Although Carson's experience with the YWCA and with Christadora House contributed to her effectiveness as a fund-raiser at *Evangelia*, this method of financing was time-consuming and exhausting,<sup>61</sup> and left the settlement in a precarious financial position, unsure of its funds from month to month. In November 1904 Carson introduced an innovation intended to solve both problems; she went to various women's organizations and clubs

<sup>57</sup>Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," 15.

<sup>58</sup>BR, M.S. files – *Evangelia* House, 1905 – Dear.

<sup>59</sup>BR, History of Canadian Settlements, Notes, Book B, Interview with Miss Golden Haliburton, [1963].

<sup>60</sup>Bastedo, "A Visit," 1905, 43.

<sup>61</sup>Diana Pedersen, "'Building Today for the Womanhood of Tomorrow': Businessmen, Boosters, and the YWCA, 1890-1930," *Urban History Review* 25, no. 3 (February 1987): 225-42.

around the city and suggested that each become a branch or chapter of the settlement. Each chapter would contribute \$25 per year, send two members to sit on the settlement's governing council, and appoint either two of their members each year to be resident workers for a week, or one member for a fortnight.<sup>62</sup> Various groups welcomed the policy and exceeded its expectations. For example, in 1903 the Round Table Club reported sending, on a weekly basis, three members to "the College Settlement" to teach physical culture and three to teach expression. In 1905 the Club noted it had contributed \$100 to Evangelia, the proceeds of a Dickens evening, and that some of its members regularly taught physical culture and English there.<sup>63</sup> In general, middle-class women's organizations both on and off campus proved enthusiastic Evangelia supporters, and the chapter system provided an important structure for encouraging donations and volunteer participation.

By the fall of 1904 Sara Carson and Mary Bell were ready to expand Evangelia's mandate to include everyone in the neighbourhood. This required the final severance of the settlement's ties with the YWCA, as the expanded programme went beyond the YWCA's agenda, which was to provide services exclusively for young women and girls. The settlement secured the substantial financial backing it required to put its expansion plans into effect through the patronage of Edmund B. Osler, a wealthy Toronto financier. Osler, together with his colleagues W.A. Charlton, B.E. Walker, and F.W. Strathy, spearheaded a fund-raising drive on behalf of the settlement in 1905. Osler himself subsequently became the president of Evangelia's executive committee, a position he held until 1917.<sup>64</sup> In 1907 he helped Carson to buy, renovate, and equip a large building, formerly a local distiller's combined residence and place of business. Evangelia's new quarters, located at the northeast corner of Queen and River Streets, came complete with extensive grounds.<sup>65</sup> The total cost for the property and the renovations was \$40,000; yet with Osler's aid the settlement was free of

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<sup>62</sup>UTA, Alumnae Association Executive and General Meetings, Minutes, Nov. 5, 1904 and February 11, 1905; UWCA Minutes, Oct 4, 1904 and Executive Minutes, Nov 21, 1904; Foster, *The First Fifty Years*, 5.

<sup>63</sup>Toronto Local Council of Women, *Annual Reports*, 1903, 16 and 1905, 221. In the *Annual Report of 1908* (39) the Round Table Club reported its 30 members had held eight meetings in 1907, all at Evangelia. The Club secretary also noted that "one of our members is a resident worker there and all of our members [did] in the past and do in the present try to aid this institution in various ways." Round Table members would often put on an evening's entertainment for one of the settlement's clubs.

<sup>64</sup>BR, S54, History of Canadian Settlements – notes, Book B, Evangelia; UTA A67-007/028 – Evangelia Settlement, Edmund B. Osler, "Summary of Ten Months work from 1st January to 1st November, 1913."

<sup>65</sup>See Might Directories, Ltd., *Toronto City Directory* (Toronto: Might Directories, Ltd., 1888–1907).

debt within two years. Osler also bought The Gables, near Barrie, for Evangelia's summer campground.<sup>66</sup>

Osler's most significant contribution was to raise Evangelia's profile in the city by attracting a number of prominent civic, provincial, and federal political figures to the settlement cause. The grand opening of Evangelia's new premises in October 1907 warranted the attendance of the Lieutenant-Governor Sir William Clark, Mayor Coatsworth, Robert Falconer, then newly-installed as President of the University of Toronto, and Governor-General Grey, who was the guest of honour.<sup>67</sup>

### EVANGELIA'S CHANGING FACE

In 1905, shortly after Osler and his colleagues launched their appeal, adult women and males of all ages began attending Evangelia. The settlement's largest constituency continued to be girls between 6 and 20 years of age, but school-aged boys soon comprised the second-largest group, followed by adult women, mostly the mothers of Evangelia members. The small number of adult males among Evangelia's membership is not surprising; working-class men had their own, male-dominated benevolent associations and other organizations. Evangelia's membership also remained predominantly British Protestant, although Eastern-European immigrants began to join the settlement after 1905.

Evangelia's broadened mandate led to changes in staff and volunteer corps. With the move to the Queen and River site, the number of resident workers increased to twelve. Among the settlement's non-resident volunteers, women students from the University of Toronto were still in the majority, but a few men began to donate time to the settlement as well. Dr. Frederick H. Torrington was one. A professor of the university-affiliated Toronto College of Music, and renowned organist and choirmaster, Torrington taught singing and led the settlement's children's choir and people's chorus.<sup>68</sup> Other men taught boys' athletics or volunteered in the settlement's medical clinic. The addition of males

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<sup>66</sup>BR, S54, History of Canadian Settlements – notes, Book B, Evangelia.

<sup>67</sup> "Earl Grey Here To-Day to Open Evangelia Home," *Toronto World* (October 16, 1907):2, "His Excellency Had a Busy Day," *Mail and Empire* (October 17, 1907): 2.

<sup>68</sup>Torrington was also the husband of Rosaline Torrington, who helped to establish another Toronto settlement, Central Neighborhood House, in 1911. Rosaline Torrington was president of the Local Council of Women, director of the YWCA, a member of the Women's Canadian Club, and the president of the National Council of Women of Canada in 1911. Henry James Morgan, ed., *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Hand-book of Canadian Biography of Living Characters* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), 1105. See also Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 52, 140-1.



as supporters, members, and volunteers did not, however, alter the settlement's essential character as primarily a women's community.<sup>69</sup>

Nor did the inclusion of boys and parents and the growth of its volunteer corps alter significantly the content of Evangelia's educational programme. Age- (and now sex-) segregated clubs remained the central organizing tool and, as before, each club held a short (15-20 minute) weekly business meeting before moving on to active games, magic lantern shows, or crafts, and then to classes. Club members continued to attend classes together during the week, but cooking, music, and possibly also drama and art lessons became co-educational.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the opportunity the settlement afforded young people to interact socially with members of the opposite sex may well have been an attractive feature in Evangelia's neighbourhood. One former member recalled girls coming out to boys' ball games to cheer, and attending mixed parties at members' homes. Some couples who met at the settlement later married.<sup>71</sup>

Physical education continued to be emphasized at Evangelia. Now even mothers in the neighbourhood had access to gym instruction (in addition to domestic science classes) while volunteers looked after their pre-school aged children.<sup>72</sup> But the stress on athletics was especially evident in settlement programmes for young men. Many contemporary theorists considered physical exercise the best way to channel the excess energy which they believed inevitably built up in urban inhabitants with no recourse to healthful activities in fresh country air during their work or school-day. Experts believed males suffered the most from the failure to expend this built-up energy, although some recognized that females too needed a physical means to release tension.<sup>73</sup> At Evangelia this led to an emphasis on team sports, particularly for boys. Evangelia's workers had always encouraged the girls to play basketball, and after the move to the Queen

<sup>69</sup>When in 1910 male students at the University of Toronto began to express interest in creating a university settlement, one student noted that a "disinterested few" had undertaken "a certain amount of settlement work" in the city, but he dismissed Evangelia as "more an experiment than anything else." Sara Burke argues that he took this view because Evangelia was a female-dominated institution. See A.M. Goulding, "An University Settlement," *The Arbor* 1, no. 1 (February 1910): 33; Sara Burke, "Science and Sentiment: Social Service and Gender at the University of Toronto, 1888-1910," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* NS4 (1993): 75-93.

<sup>70</sup>BR, History of Canadian Settlements - Book B Notes - Evangelia - letter from Mrs. Lorne Jacques to Mrs Frances Golden Haliburton, 1961; letter from Miss Ethel Bunker to Miss Irene Hardy, February 18, 1963.

<sup>71</sup>BR, S54, History of Canadian Settlements - Book B - notes, Reminiscences of Mrs Jacques.

<sup>72</sup>Bunker to Hardy, February 18, 1963.

<sup>73</sup>Bruce Curtis, "The Playground in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 33; see also Lynn Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

and River location female members could also play tennis and hockey. Boys, for their part, had baseball and football teams in addition to basketball, tennis and hockey. Young men in the workforce could participate in twice-weekly gym classes in the evenings and had exclusive use of the gymnasium on Saturday evenings. They could also participate in coeducational singing, games, and folk dancing on Saturdays.

Athletics was not the only thing Evangelia offered its male members. Like their female counterparts, young working men could also take such high school subjects as English or mathematics, as well as manual training courses, all taught by volunteers on weekday evenings. In addition, men had their own club, called the Fidelity Club. Evangelia's staff offered their male neighbours "illustrated lectures on interesting subjects," and their own Bible-study class on Thursday evenings ("the line of work having been their own choice," according to Bastedo).<sup>74</sup> In addition, men and boys were included in the family-oriented social occasions organized at the settlement, such as picnics (complete with games and races), skating parties (accompanied by a street organ), and Sunday evening song services.<sup>75</sup>

#### EVANGELIA'S COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

After 1904 Evangelia became more closely linked to Toronto's civic government, particularly the city's developing relief, parks, and public health departments. During the economic recession of 1907-08 Evangelia reported that it distributed relief to 255 families in its local community.<sup>76</sup> Later the settlement became the meeting place for the Eastern division case conference, which brought together workers from charities and agencies operating in the Eastern part of the city. Evangelia also became the headquarters of the secretary in charge of the division.<sup>77</sup> The settlement established Toronto's first supervised playground, a penny savings bank, a kindergarten, a three bed infirmary, a free dispensary, a pure milk depot, and a well-baby clinic. Evangelia's volunteer corps grew to approximately 100, including 12 doctors, and among the settlement's resident

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<sup>74</sup>Bastedo, "A Visit," 1905, 43.

<sup>75</sup>BR, S54, History of Canadian Settlements, Book B, notes, Evangelia, Bunker to Hardy, February 18, 1963; interview with Miss Fleury, 1963.

<sup>76</sup>Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room (TFRB) MS 12, Box 1, folder 9, Toronto Social Welfare Agencies "Associated Charities Report—Winter 1907-08." Settlements were not supposed to offer their clients charitable relief, but Evangelia, like most of her sister institutions in the United States and Britain, found it impossible to avoid doing so in times of severe economic recession.

<sup>77</sup>James Pitsula, "The Emergence of Social Work in Toronto," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 37-9; and J.M. Pitsula, "The Relief of Poverty in Toronto, 1880-1930" (PhD diss., York, 1979), 233.

workers were a handful of district health nurses, some of whom continued their work at Evangelia under the auspices of Toronto's public health department after the latter expanded its services in the 1910s.<sup>78</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In 1908, six years after establishing Evangelia, Sara Carson returned to settlement work in New York, leaving Evangelia in the hands of her assistant Edith Elwood. Mary Bell had already left in 1906, eventually to become headworker of Ottawa Settlement House. Evangelia had grown into a busy enterprise serving the educational, recreational and social needs of hundreds of people from the immediate neighbourhood and from "uptown." The settlement provided a way for well-educated young women in search of some way to develop and utilize their talents and energy. Some became professionals in the developing field of social work, and many enthusiastically supported Canada's first social work training programme created in 1914 at the University of Toronto. Evangelia also fostered the city's development of other educational innovations, such as supervised playgrounds. By the beginning of the 1910s Canadians were ready to launch new settlement houses in Toronto and in other cities across the country. They had accepted the settlement ideal of education through community-based recreational activities and practical public services. It was a ringing endorsement of what Evangelia had done so much to create.

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<sup>78</sup>BR, S54, History of Canadian Settlements – Notes – Book B, Evangelia, "Bain Interview." See also Kari Dehli, "Health Scouts' for the State?: School and Public Health Nurses in Early Twentieth-Century Toronto," *Historical Studies in Education* 2, no. 2(1990): 247-64.