

Women in the First Sixty Years of the American Economic Association, 1885-1945

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The papers in the archives of the American Economic Association (AEA) are not replete with information about female economists. Although women were present from the Association's beginnings, their voices as revealed through archival materials appear barely audible and their role in the formation of a profession seemingly scant.

While women were a small minority in the United States economics profession prior to WWI, they were by no means totally absent from the profession. There were seven women among the 182 members of the AEA in 1886, and 60 women among 1339 individual members in 1910.¹ Primarily working at women's colleges such as Wellesley, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Smith, Mount Holyoke, or Barnard, as dean of women in coeducational institutions, or in social work, women faculty were largely absent from elite institutions and, with the exception of Minnie Throop England at the University of Nebraska and Jessica Peixotto at the University of California, Berkeley, at state universities. From the 1920s onwards, some women taught economics at women's colleges affiliated with elite institutions, such as Elizabeth Boody (later Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter) at Radcliffe (affiliated with Harvard) and Elizabeth Faulkner Baker as department head at Barnard (affiliated with Columbia), while Ann Bezanson (later the first female president of the Economic History Association) received tenure in Industrial Relations at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton business school, the first tenured woman in any field at Penn. Such limited academic employment was comparable to the opportunities for British women to teach at Girton and Newnham Colleges in Cambridge and at Somerville College and Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, but there was no American equivalent of the equal employment of male and female economists at the London School of Economics, academic home of such scholars as

full professors Lillian Knowles (Dean of the Faculty of Economics of the University of London) and Eileen Power (founding secretary of the Economic History Society, see Berg 1992).

Women were, from the beginning, active participants in researching and publishing in the newly emerging professions of the social sciences and even appeared in some leadership roles within the AEA. The lead article in the inaugural issue of *American Economic Review (AER)* was by Katharine Coman (1911a), professor of history and economics at Wellesley College since 1883, and the only woman among the organizers of the AEA in 1885. Coman also published in the second issue of *AER* (Coman 1911b), and had published in previous series of *Publications of the AEA* (Coman 1891, 1903). Edith Abbott of Chicago was one of three AEA vice-presidents in 1918 (there were only two each year from 1920), followed by the economic historian Susan Kingsbury of Bryn Mawr in 1919, Jessica Peixotto of Berkeley in 1928, and Mabel Newcomer of Vassar in 1947. After Newcomer², there were no women among AEA vice-presidents until Barbara Bergmann of the University of Maryland in 1976, Anne Krueger of Stanford in 1977, Irma Adelman in 1979, and Alice Rivlin of Brookings in 1981, and none even among other members of the Executive Committee until Mabel Timlin of the University of Saskatchewan in 1958-60 and *JPE* editor Mary Jean Bowman of Chicago in 1969-71. The early series of *Publications of the American Economic Association* included some substantial monographs by women (Emily Greene Balch 1893, Hannah Robie Sewall 1901, Katharine Coman 1903) and a few early conference papers by women (Coman 1891, Marietta Kies 1891, Crystal Eastman 1909, see also Kies 1894, Balch 1972, Cook 1978). Yet, what most women in economics typically lacked, were institutional affiliations that would bring status and access to leadership roles within the newly emerging profession of economics.

While popular arguments against women's intellectual capacity and fitness for academic pursuits had subsided by the turn of the century, more subtle notions of academic identity continued to shape women's careers well into the twentieth century. Moreover, women, who had worked to gain admittance into institutions of higher learning, were increasingly segmented into

disciplines thought to be appropriate for women and women in the social sciences occupied a particularly ambiguous location. It is little wonder then, that women economists – particularly those whose work traversed the borders of several disciplines -- found their professional lives complicated and their ability to gain acceptance limited.

In this essay we examine the liminality of women economists professional lives in the early years of the AEA and what the archives of the AEA reveal about the ways in which gender was reflected in the priorities of the Association and its drive to expand membership and gain revenue and the way in which cultural notions of gender may have played an important role in the segmentation of academic labor in the early years of the profession. The archives of the AEA cast a revealing light on power and influence in what was emerging as a distinct academic discipline of economics and on the differing treatment of men and women in the academic life of the time.

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In the spring of 1897, following a four month lecture tour, Charlotte Perkins Gilman spent a week on a ranch in Eureka, Kansas. The past several years (and Mrs. Emily Tracy (Swett) Parkhurst) had brought her to Oakland, California where she began what would be a lifelong association with women’s clubs – clubs that she would later call “one of the most important sociological phenomena of the century” (Ceplair 1991, 44). She organized the Oakland Nationalist Club (renaming it The New Nation Club), and joined the Pacific Coast Women’s Press Association (PCWPA), the Women’s Congress Association, the Ebell Society, the Ethical Society, the Parents Association, and the Economic Club. Gilman was not alone. By the first decade of the twentieth century, over a million clubwomen were active in voluntary reform associations calling for change, for example taking the lead in founding 75 to 80 percent of the libraries in communities across the United States.

It was through her role as secretary of the “Oakland Economic Club” that “Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Stetson” joined the American Economic Association (AEA) in 1892-93, maintaining a membership until 1895-96 where Box 1 Folder 3 of the Archives of the AEA simply indicates her

status as “resigned.” Less than a year after resigning her membership in the AEA, Gilman wrote in her diary from Kansas, “State weak, but fall to work in sheer despite for article about economic basis of woman question. Get hold of a new branch in my theory on above subject – the biggest piece & saw it. Now I can write the book” (Ceplair 1991, 44). The book she wrote was published in 1898 and titled simply *Women and Economics*. Although *Women and Economics* is thought by many to be one of the most original works on economic thought in the twentieth century, like the work of so many women in this period, it was written from the margins of the discipline (Gilman 1898). However, being at the margin of the discipline was not the same as being completely outside the discipline: she later rejoined the AEA and published a discussant’s comment on child labor in the proceedings of the AEA annual meeting (Gilman 1907) – possibly the only woman on the program of any AEA annual meeting or in AEA conference proceedings between Coman (1891) and Eastman (1909) (Dimand, Black and Forget 2011; the programs for 1895 through 1898 have not been found).

Although often missing in the histories of higher education and largely absent in many examinations of the process of professionalization; in fact, the role of women, present or absent, marginalized or exercising voice, has been a central aspect of academic life in America.³ Gender, as Mary Ann Dzuback has argued, is integral to the history of higher education just as it is an integral aspect of higher education today. Yet, as she points out, “rarely are the processes and institutions of education themselves explored in these accounts” (Dzuback 2003).

The history of the American Economic Association is a history of the rise of professional expertise in a discipline that would play a central role in the organization of society in the century to come and the examination of material in the AEA archives offers us a unique window into the role of gender in the struggle of economists to gain status and authority. Although overall histories examining the rise of economics as a discipline have paid scant attention to the role of gender in the rise of professional authority, there is a growing body of literature that examines early women economists and their contributions, challenges, and conflicts with the discipline

(Libby 1984, 1987, 1990, 1998; Pujol 1992; Hammond 1993; Dimand, Dimand and Forget 1995; Folbre 1998; Dimand 1999a, b; Madden 2002; May 2006; May 2008; Folbre 2009; May and Dimand 2009; Forget 2011; Dimand, Black and Forget 2011; Dimand 2011; Dimand and Black 2012; and, perhaps most importantly, the massive bibliography by Madden, Seiz and Pujol 2004). Materials in the archives of the AEA help to further expand this literature and our understanding of the role of gender in the professionalization of economics.

BEYOND THE PROFESSORATE PER SE

The proportion of women among AEA members in the first six decades of the Association peaked in 1888, with 46 women among 429 individual members (10.72% -- there were also 25 institutional members), with the proportion of women declining to 2.44% in 1903 (21 women among 860 individual members) after the AEA's first membership drive (1900-1903), which increased the number of men belonging to the AEA (from 560 in 1900 to 860 in 1903) but not the number of women (21 in 1900, 21 in 1903). In absolute numbers, the 50 women belonging to the AEA in 1889 (out of 565 individual members) was not exceeded until 1910 (when 60 women were 4.48% of 1339 individual members). This latter level was achieved in the course of the AEA's second membership drive, which increased the membership from 980 men and 33 women in 1909 (3.37% female) to 2312 men and 84 women in 1913 (3.63% female). From 1890 to 1909, the number of women belonging to the AEA never exceeded 33, with a low of 19 in 1897. The proportion of women among individual members of the AEA slipped back to 2.88% in 1919, thereafter growing slowly but steadily, exceeding 4% from 1924, 5% from 1928, and 6% from 1942, and was 8.15% in 1946 (359 women, 4045 men).

From its inception, the Association had embraced the notion of branch associations. In Vol. 1 No 1 of the Publications of the American Economic Association, the officers of the Connecticut Valley Branch were published and among them were Professor J. B. Clark, Dr. C. W. Walker, S. B. Griffen, Esq., Dr. Edward W. Bemis, and D. P. Crocker Esq. As later described

in his Report on the Connecticut Valley Branch of the Second Annual Meeting of the AEA, Dr. E. W. Bemis brims with enthusiasm over the prospects of these branch associations, explaining that this association (Connecticut Valley) “has grown steadily in numbers and influence until it now counts upon its rolls sixty-two members, including eleven ladies, living in Springfield, Northampton, Amherst, South Hadley, Westfield, Wilbraham and neighboring towns.” B⁴emis went on to ask, “May it not be one mission, and an important mission, of the American Economic Association to organize such branch associations of men and women, as, while increasing tenfold in scores of places, as in Springfield, the membership of the national body shall also serve to educate and arouse public opinion upon the pressing needs of our economic and social order?”⁵

The Connecticut Valley Branch was the first, but was soon joined by the Orange (N. J.) Branch, Buffalo, (N. Y.) Branch, Galesburg (Ill.) Branch, Washington (D. C.) Branch, Canton (O.) Branch, and the Austin (Tex) Branch. Officers were reported periodically and were all men in 1886, 1888, but Mrs. Annie H. Barus became Vice-President of the Washington (D. C.) Branchy in 1889 as did Miss A. McGregor of the Canton (O.) Branch.

Although the 1890 Handbook of the American Economic Association reported no women officers in any of the five branches listed, the 1894 Handbook reported what appeared to be the first sign of trouble for the branch associations. No names of branch officers were published in this handbook, but it was reported that “It was ordered that the names of all members of branch associations over one year in arrears in their dues be dropped from the rolls.”⁶ Concern was clearly emerging about the growing financial pressures brought about by having branch associations that collect half the dues but are provided with full access to published monographs. When the share of the dues were not

passed on to the national office, action was swift. In the following year of 1895, the association reported, “Of the branch associations, none remain. All of them had by the beginning of this year ceased active work and had ceased to pay dues some years before, though we still continued to send them monographs. Repeated letters to Secretaries and much diligent work on the part of some of them have succeeded in settling our business with all of them but one, and we hope to get a final settlement with this in due time.”⁷

As the Report of the Secretary showed, the loss of branch members was not insignificant for a fledging association. The Report of the Seventh Annual Meetings showed a decline in branch members from 132 to zero from January 1 1894 to December 27, 1894 at a time when regular members totaled a mere 482 in January of that year. The narrative in the Report indicates that “In this way we have gained 19 regular members out of 132 branch members, a net loss to the roll of 113 names from this action.”

The demise of the branch associations is particularly noteworthy in terms of its impact on women’s participation in the AEA. Women were active participations in the club movement and what little we know about the membership of these branch associations shows a much higher proportion of women than the national rolls show. The branch associations allowed women’s participation which was indeed often limited by geographic constraints. The movement toward a national association without these branch associations worked against women’s overall participation.

Along with the demise of the branch associations, other changes were underway in the Association. A careful review of the 1902 membership list of the AEA would reveal a change in the reporting of titles for individual memberships that reflected more perhaps than simply the desire to save space, for in that year remaining clergy were listed by their names alone (only one Rev. remained) and their credentials, where applicable, Doctor of Divinity – D.D. The

transformation of E. Benjamin Andrews from “Rev. Elisha Benjamin Andrews D.D. L.L.D. Chancellor of the University of Nebraska” to “Elisha Benjamin Andrews, Chancellor of the University of Nebraska” speaks to this transformation and the decline of the authority of the clergy. In that year, the number of clergy who were members stood at a mere nineteen – four less than the number in the first year of the Association when the total membership stood at only 182.⁸

The decline in the representation of clergy among the AEA’s membership has been well recognized as an indication of the changing character of its membership. Whereas in the early years of the Association when Richard T. Ely was Secretary, “determined efforts were made to enlist the support of a wide variety of nonacademic persons, and the early membership lists included a high proportion of clergymen,” when Ely became president in 1900 a conscious effort was made to “arouse the support of business and professional men” (Coats 1993, 241). In fact, efforts to solicit the support and membership of businessmen would characterize much of the membership efforts in the period before the 1930s. This effort reflected not only the desire of the leadership to obtain an increasing source of membership revenue, but is more accurately viewed as a means by which members and the organization sought to enhance their public prestige and influence.

The effort to recruit businessmen extended, at various times, to most officers of the AEA. In a letter dated 13 October 1913, Davis R. Dewey, editor of the Association’s journal, the *American Economic Review (AER)*, wrote to Charles L. Raper of Chapel Hill to solicit names of potential members. Raper was apparently not the only individual from North Carolina receiving such a solicitation. In a letter dated 20 October 1913, William H. Glasson responded to another of Dewey’s recent letters drawing attention to the “comparatively small number of members of the Economic Association in North Carolina.” Glasson responded by suggesting the following names of persons who ought to be interested in membership: Mr. George Stephens (Banker), Mr. Joseph G. Brown (Banker), Col J.F. Bruton (Banker), General J.S. Carr (Banker), Mr. J.F. Wily (Banker), Hon. J.A. Long (Banker and State Senator), Hon. Victor Bryant (Lawyer and State

Senator), Mr. George Watts (Capitalist), and Mr. John Sprunt Hill (Banker). Noting that they were nearly all bankers, Glasson suggested that Dewey direct their attention to the “great value of our publication to them as a class” as they “are apt to regard our association as a purely academic organization.”⁹ Dewey responded as directed including in his solicitations articles that might be of particular interest to businessmen.

In the winter of 1914, when memberships appeared to be falling off, then secretary Allyn Abbott Young embarked on a similar campaign sending letters to 5,300 potential members (Bernstein 2001, 18). However, it was WWI that offered a unique opportunity to appeal to the business class for membership. Dewey, of course, did his part and directed his secretary to obtain a Boston directory in order that addresses might be obtained for “a list of names to use for circulating for members.”¹⁰ Irving Fisher, then president of the AEA, crafted his rhetorical appeal around the war effort. In a letter dated 30 October 1918, Fisher wrote:

Dear Sir: I am sure that you, as a lawyer, are deeply interested in the great economic problems of the war and of the period after the war. For this reason I venture to call your attention to the work of the American Economic Association. This Association is the representative organization of the professional economists of the country, but its membership includes an increasing number of men in other professions, in business, and in the government service, who are interested in the wider aspects of business and economic problems (Letter from Fisher dated 30 October 1918.)

Included in Fisher’s letter was an application blank which, along with a “check for one year’s dues (\$5.00)” would be sufficient for membership. Ivy Ledbetter Lee, also a member of the AEA, would have perhaps been proud.

Measured in terms of Association memberships, these solicitations produced seemingly poor results. As Allyn A. Young noted as early as 1914, the returns to this investment would appear to be “disappointingly small.” The new memberships among the business class were often short lived and members often resigned after only one year. More annoying perhaps, their

resignations were often communicated through letters from disgruntled former members explaining the reasons for their departure. In this regard, the chief of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce was uncharacteristically blunt when he wrote: “There seems to be so little of interest in your periodical and so little of real vital interest in your meetings.”¹¹

When these relationships with business could be maintained, they were sometimes useful and officers of the AEA also called upon these business leaders to make donations. The decline in membership which occurred in 1913 brought with it a growing anxiety about the impact that such a fall in revenue would have upon the financial stability of the young journal prompting AEA officers to solicit support through direct donations in addition to memberships. Again in 1920, \$10,000 had been raised by “thirty gentlemen” for the Association. A.W. Coats goes on to report that by January 1923, Seligman was hoping to raise a further \$3,000 a year for three years from members’ contributions to a permanent endowment fund (Coats 1993, 262).

Of course there was the delicate problem of what the Association had to offer to the non-academic business class in an Association increasingly focused on academic pursuits and what might be expected in return – a problem that continued to trouble Young especially. These tensions would emerge periodically in letters such as the one received by then secretary Young in 1918 from Erastus W. Bulkley who took it upon himself to investigate the membership of the committees he was being asked to support. Bulkley, responding to Young’s request for contributions to support the “necessary expenses of various special committees appointed to work on the economic problems of the war,” wrote to express his concerns:

In looking over these committees, I find that they are composed almost entirely of professors in various institutions. While I do not wish in any way to minimize the work of professors, especially professors of economics, it has always seemed to me that if economics was to make any progress in this country consistent with its general importance, there would have to be close cooperation between the professors and the business men. (Letter from Erastus W. Bulkley to Young, 15 July 1918.)

Bulkley, having copied the letter to then president Irving Fisher, received Fisher's carefully framed response admitting that the "suggestion was a good one in so far as it is consistent with the character of the American Economic Association which is primarily an association of academic economists." Not leaving well enough alone, Fisher added:

I would suggest that you write to Professor Seligman. His committee is closely in touch with business men. When the Committee on the Purchasing Power of Money was formed I suggested having a number of business men as members and the Executive Committee took the ground that every business man would prefer to have a committee of professional economists" (Letter from Irving Fisher to Erastus W. Bulkley dated 16 July 1918).¹²

Fisher's short letter elicited a three page (single spaced) response from Mr. Bulkley which began with the somewhat acerbic observation that "I was rather under the impression that the membership of the American Economic Association included not only academic economists, but also not a few business men ..." but went on to entice Fisher with the suggestion of an "institution for economic research, properly endowed." Communicating his strong belief that it would perhaps fall to economists to initiate this delicate relationship, Bulkley referred Fisher to a Dr. Edward D. Jones, Professor of Commerce and Industry, University of Michigan, who apparently had the admiration, not to mention support, of Bulkley and other business men in realizing "that he cannot sit in his study and evolve [the]science of economics." After suggesting that "there is no subject before the economic interest of the country today of more importance than his matter of cooperation between academic economists and business men and the enlargement of facilities for the scientific study of various business matters," Bulkley closed by indicating "I will not be writing Prof. Seligman, as suggested. I have put this general broad question to you" (Letter from Bulkley to Irving Fisher dated 17 July 1918.)¹³

A few days later Young wrote again to perhaps smooth things over, explaining how it is that many business men find little time for the work of committees while professional economists

often find that this work comes “so directly in the line of their work vocation that they usually regard it as more or less important” (Letter from Young to Bulkley dated 22 July 1918). Responding to Young’s letter of July 22, Bulkley wrote to indicate that Young’s viewpoint “might be open to considerable discussion for and against,” insisting again that economists and business men would have much to gain by greater cooperation. Bulkley, apparently not convinced that he had succeeded in influencing Young, closed by inviting him to “have luncheon” with him some time now that he was in New York. It is not clear whether or not Young ever took him up on this offer of lunch, but what was clear was that Bulkley had no intention of letting go the issue. In a letter dated 1 October 1918, Bulkley wrote to Young requesting a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws, List of members, and any other general information you have regarding the aims, purposes and accomplishments to-date of the Association” (Letter from Bulkley to Young dated 1 October 1918).

GENDER, PROFESSIONALIZATION, AND JURISDICTIONAL DISPUTES

The membership lists of the AEA in the first thirty years of its existence provide a window into the shared character of the men and women drawn to the AEA and help to expand our understanding of what members were like in the early years and how the backgrounds of these members changed over time. These lists, along with material in the archives, illustrate the ways in which the priorities of this newly emerging academic association contributed to the increasingly precarious position of women academics in the social sciences and particularly in economics.

Although Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s membership in the AEA lasted only a few years, she was in many ways indicative of the women who joined the AEA in the latter part of the 19th century. Among the early members of the AEA were many other well-known women activists, social reformers – a membership extending well beyond the professorate per se. Moreover, those

members who were women scholars often shared the same commitment to activism and reform evident in women members from outside the confines of academic walls.

The first women members of the AEA reflected the reform-minded nature of its female contingent. The first organizing meeting of the AEA held in 1885 had only one woman in attendance, Professor Katharine Coman of Wellesley College. In 1886 – the first year memberships were recorded, women were seven of the 182 members or about 3.8 percent of the membership and these women members included scholars and activists. The women listed as members this first year were Mrs. Mary W. (White) Bond, school teacher and treasurer of her brother's bank in Florence, Massachusetts; Mrs. Helen Stuart Campbell, author, reformer, and pioneer in the home economics movement helping to organize the National Household Economics Association, winning an AEA prize for her book entitled *Women Wage Earners* (1893), writing for the *New York Tribune*, and serving as head resident of the Unity Settlement house in Chicago; Professor Katharine Coman, full professor of history and economics at Wellesley and later head of the Department of Economics and Sociology whose colleagues at Wellesley were Emily Greene Balch and (for one year) Edith Abbott; Mrs. Imogene (C.) Fales, delegate to the 1896 populist convention and who, together with Helen Campbell, organized the Sociologic Association of America; Miss Jennie R. Lippman, educator at the Mary Institute – a school for girls founded by William Greenleaf Eliot only five years after he began Washington University; Mrs. C. R. (Josephine Shaw) Lowell, reformer active in the Anti-Imperialist League and founder of the New York Consumer's League; and Miss Mary A. Wilcox, professor of zoology at Wellesley.

In the first ten years of its existence, the AEA continued to expand in membership and in the "Membership book, 1890-96" a total of 866 different members were listed. Included among the nearly fifty women members listed during this period were the following. Miss Jane M. Bancroft (Robinson) studied at the Sorbonne University in Paris and went on to found the Western Association of Collegiate Alumnae and become dean women and professor of French at

Northwestern University. Mrs. Alfred H. (Emma M.) Batcheller was the daughter of Francis Amasa Walker, president of MIT and first president of the AEA. Miss E. H. (Emma Helen) Blair did graduate work at Wisconsin State University and went on to edit numerous works including work on the Lewis and Clark expedition. Miss S.P. (Sophonisba) Breckenridge graduated from Wellesley College in 1888, became the first woman to be admitted to the Kentucky bar in 1895 and to practice law in Kentucky and who also earned a Ph.D. in political science and economics from the University of Chicago in 1901 (Breckenridge 1903) and graduated from the University of Chicago Law School in 1904. The author of eight *JPE* articles, Breckenridge worked with Edith Abbott in the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, with Breckenridge as Dean from 1909. After the school became the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Social Science Administration in 1920 (with Abbott as Dean), Breckenridge was promoted to full Professor of Social Economy in 1925 and named the Samuel Deutsch Professor of Public Welfare Administration in 1929. Miss Carrie L. Chapman (Catt) was active in the suffrage movement serving as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and later founded the League of Women Voters. Miss Grace H. (Hoadley) Dodge was a philanthropist who donated roughly 1.5 million dollars to various organizations and played a large role in supporting the Teachers College of Columbia University. Miss Claire de Graffenreid received two AEA prizes for her studies on child labor and conditions of women's labor, taught at the Georgetown Female Seminary, and obtained a non-academic (and controversial) career as an investigator with the Bureau of Labor (see Dimand and Black 2012). Miss Sarah J. (James) Eddy was an artist and friend of Susan B. Anthony. Mrs. Mary Lynde Hoffman (Craig) was active in the Pacific Coast Women's Press Association, studied law and was one of the first women to practiced law in California. Miss Jane D. Kelly (Sabine) is listed as an M.D. in Boston and was married to Harvard physics professor Wallace C. Sabine. Mrs. Florence Kelley, who graduated from Cornell and did graduate work in economics and social science at the University of Zurich (Rosa Luxemburg's *alma mater*), received a law degree from Northwestern University School of Law

and was admitted to the bar in Illinois in 1895, collaborated with Jane Addams at the Hull House, translated Friedrich Engels's book on the English working class, and helped create the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Miss Ida M. Mason was active in the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, philanthropist and major contributor to the Tuskegee Five Year fund. Mrs. Emily Tracy (Swett) Parkhurst worked on behalf of women writers and helped to found the Pacific Coast Women's Press Association. Mrs. Emma (Ferdon Winner) Rogers, married to the president of Northwestern University, was active in the Northwestern University Settlement Association and later the Lowell Settlement House and served as Treasurer of the National Women's Suffrage Association. Mrs. Lita Barney Sayles served on the Executive Committee of the Association for the Advancement of Women, as editor of the *Co-operative News of America*, and as General Secretary of the Sociologic Society of America. Mrs. F.H. (Frances Haldeman) Sidwell attended Vassar and later became co-principal of the well-known Sidwell Friends School in Washington DC. And, of course, there was Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Stetson (later Gilman), author of *Women and Economics* (Gilman 1898, Dimand 2000).

Although the total membership of the AEA had increased to 1510 by 1910, the number of women members was only slightly higher in 1910 as it had been in the mid-1890s.¹ Moreover, while the membership rolls of the AEA in 1910 showed the continuing membership of reformers such as Batcheller (above), Mary Marshall Butler, founder of the Women's Institute and Executive Board member of the American Civic Association, Grace Dodge (above), Mrs. John M. Glenn (National Conference of Charities and Corrections), Mrs. C. Stedman (Clarina Barlow Shumway) Hanks of Boston, Mary W. Ovington who helped to found the NAACP, and Ida M. Tarbell, journalist and author of *The History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904), also included were a growing number of women academics – many with doctoral degrees. The 1910

¹ Carver to Clarence E. Bowen, quoted in Bernstein (2001, p. 17). The number of women members in the 1910 “was a mere 59”.

membership rolls included Edith Abbott (author of nineteen *JPE* articles, AEA vice-president in 1918, Chicago PhD in economics 1905, published as Abbott 1905), Emily Greene Balch (Nobel Peace Prize, 1946, for the same antiwar activism for which she lost her full professorship at Wellesley in 1918), Alice E. (Emeline) Belcher, Marie M. (Manly) Bradley, Elizabeth B. Butler (published in law journals and charities journals), Katharine Coman, Mrs. Mary Roberts Coolidge (Stanford PhD in economics 1895, published by American Statistical Association as Coolidge 1895), Mrs. Minnie Throop England (Nebraska PhD in religion 1906, published on business cycle theory in *JPE* and *QJE*), Amy Hewes (Chicago PhD in sociology 1903, published articles in *AER*, *JASA*, *JPE* and *QJE*), Emilie Josephine Hutchinson (Columbia PhD in economics 1919, published as Hutchinson 1919 and republished 1968), Eleanor Hope Johnson (Hartford Seminary 1925), Susan M. Kingsbury (Columbia PhD in history 1905, published as Kingsbury 1905), Caroline Elizabeth MacGill (Chicago 1927), Marion (Smith) Parris (Bryn Mawr PhD in economics 1908, published as Parris 1909), Jessica Peixotto (UC Berkley PhD in political science 1900, published as Peixotto 1901, and one of the few early female economists to receive a *Festschrift*), Mrs. Jane Bancroft (Robinson) (Syracuse 1884), Hannah Robie Sewall (Minnesota PhD in economics 1898, published by the AEA as Sewall 1901, reissued by Kelley Reprints of Economic Classics in 1968 and 1971), Helen L. (Laura) Sumner (later Woodbury, Wisconsin PhD in political economy and American history 1908), and Anna Prichett Youngman (Chicago PhD in economics 1908, published as Youngman 1909 and republished 1973, and seven *JPE* articles from 1907 to 1910, three in *QJE* 1913 to 1917, and *AER* articles in 1921 and 1922).¹⁴

However, as the “1916 Handbook of the American Economic Association,” would show, fundamental changes had overtaken the membership of the AEA. Women members became increasingly academic in background while the proportion of women fell. The 1916 Handbook recorded an increase of only eleven women over 1910, while the number of male members had

increased from 1283 to 2000 over the same period.² The AEA's ability to recruit within academic circles was indeed limited. As then secretary-treasurer, Thomas Nixon Carver noted in his communication with Professor Dixon of Dartmouth, "We have pretty nearly exhausted the academic field, and have practically all teachers of economics in the Association now, though occasionally we find a new one" (Letter from Carver to Dixon dated 14 April 1911). Yet, there were many teachers – many with doctoral degrees, who were not members at the time that Carver wrote – individuals such as Ellen Deborah Ellis (PhD in economics Bryn Mawr 1905, published as Ellis 1905, four *American Political Science Review* articles 1920 to 1935), Katharine Bement Davis (PhD in economics University of Chicago 1900, four *JPE* articles 1898 to 1900), Hannah Robie Sewall (PhD in economics University of Minnesota 1898, thesis published by the AEA in 1901), Helen Page Bates (PhD in economics University of Wisconsin 1896, partly published as Bates 1898), Florence Elizabeth Watson (PhD in political economy Boston University 1890), Mary Graham (PhD in economics Yale 1895), and Sara Scovill Whittelsey Walden (PhD in economics Yale 1898, thesis published as Whittelsey 1901, and wrote three *AER* book reviews in 1916 and 1917) to name a few. Some of these had moved on from economics to other fields (e.g. Davis's 1929 book *Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-two Hundred Women* or Ellis's articles in political science) or non-academic pursuits (e.g. Sewall's career as a special agent of the US Bureau of Labor investigating child labor, see Sewall 1904).

At the same time the AEA resisted initiatives that would have potentially appealed to women. For example, in a letter of 29 July 1916, Theodora B. Cunningham and Virginia King Frye wrote on behalf of the *League of American Pen Women* suggesting that "a valuable addition to the *AER* might be a "woman's Department of household economics, which would be to the busy but intelligent house-wife what the *Economic Review* is to her thinking husband," This

² The total number of members including institutional membership totaled 2392 in 1916; institutional memberships were 344; the number of male members was 1975 and the number of female members a mere 73. Some ambiguity remains for a handful of member for which gender is not determined and some

section could describe, they suggested, “what is being done along the line of Household Economics by various State Federations of Women’s Clubs” (Letter from Frye and Cunningham to Dewey dated 29 July 1916). It is not clear whether or not Dewey consulted widely on this question, but his brief reply dated 9 August, 1916 was resolute. “In reply to your inquiry of July 29 in regard to the possibility of establishing a women’s department of household economics in the *American Economics Review*, I am sorry to say that we have not the space” (Letter from Dewey to Frye dated 9 August 1916.)¹⁵

Of course it was through the decisions of Dewey and the board of editors that policies and determinations of what was worthy of inclusion in the valuable space of the *AER* were made. In the nearly three decades of service as editor of the *AER*, Dewey had the opportunity to work with fifty-eight editors who assisted in determining which articles were worthy of inclusion and which were not – decisions affecting the professional lives of countless faculty in the process. In his careful documenting of the editors of the *AER*, Dewey reveals what criteria were important in the editorial board as he lists them by name (with men’s names only initialized and women’s with the full name reported) and by institution and by year of service. The importance given to geographic representation is revealed by the inclusion of a second list, reporting the editors by geographic region.¹⁶ This geographic diversity may have seemed especially important to document given the accusations by some members of an “east coast” conspiracy to dominate the Association.

It is noteworthy that over the period that Dewey served as editor, only two women economists served on the editorial board of the *AER* – Alzada Comstock of Mount Holyoke College 1937-39 and Mabel Newcomer of Vassar in 1940. In other words, women editors did not serve on the *AER* editorial board until the late 1930s, constituted only 3.5% of the editorial board in total, and served for only 3 of the 125 person years of service under Dewey’s service as editor.

women’s membership, while listed as individuals with a library affiliation, were not marked as institutional memberships.

When economist and historian Michael A. Bernstein notes that “time and again, Dewey would canvas his editorial board for suggestions regarding article topics and prospective authors,” we must surely recognize that it was a particular view that he received as a result.

The history of women and membership in the AEA is not, however, a story of simply overlooking women in the recruitment of membership or even the failure of its officers to recognize the importance of placing women in positions of influence, but is also in part a story that demonstrates the ways in which status seeking professionals overlooked a natural constituency of individuals “outside the professorate per se” – individuals that, given their practical experience with economic issues, appeared in many ways to be more likely candidates for membership than many of the business men so actively courted by the AEA. Already involved in charitable and reform activities, women were, in the words of Dorothy Ross, “a natural constituency for the social sciences, but one that could threaten the masculine image of the social scientists’ effort to achieve realism, science, and professional standing” (Ross 1991, 102). For this reason, social science was dangerous territory for women academics at the turn of the century.

The rise of social science disciplines in general and economics in particular in the later part of the nineteenth century cannot be understood without recognition of the sweeping changes in society brought about by the rise of the market system. While the church occupied the center of social and intellectual life in eighteenth century America, commerce supplanted the church as the locus of social life in the nineteenth century representing an “apparent triumph for the competitive, commercial, and individualistic spirit.”¹⁷ With these changes, the commercialization of American culture and the rise of the market system wrestled authority from religion, vesting it with science in the aid of commerce. What feminist historians have pointed out, of course, is the important notion that the market revolution was also a gendered revolution. Hence, nineteenth century industrialization, in the words of Ann Douglas, disestablished both women and clergy in

the process, increasingly relegating them to the economic and intellectual periphery of American society.¹⁸

The sweeping transformation in American culture that accompanied the rise of market capitalism brought a fundamental and extensive transformation in higher education that both reflected these changes in the broader culture and helped to shape them as well. The colonial college, founded to supply a learned clergy “for the moral betterment of society” was, by the mid-nineteenth century, an institution in transition. Whereas the “real world” came increasingly to be associated with the “business world” and acknowledged as the appropriate arena for restless, competitive ambition, the higher learning was in some ways analogous to what historians later referred to as the private sphere – a sphere where man’s “finest sympathies, tastes, and moral and religious” understanding were to be nurtured. In this world, young men were to learn strict obedience and be guided by duty and young women were to be absent or trained to be the “cultivated and thoroughly schooled wives” of obedient young men.¹⁹

By the end of the nineteenth century, higher education was transformed in the service of commerce. The new professional would reflect values of the new culture – competition, ambition, and individuality and the new professional culture, as Burton J. Bledstein has pointed out, was one that entailed a “vertical vision” with “scheduled mobility” (Bledstein 1978, 102). But the new professionalism also required a mechanism for control – particularly in the face of instability introduced by the market system. The need to control competition through limiting the supply of practitioners in a particular profession produced what Abbott calls jurisdictional disputes – disputes in which higher education would play a central role.²⁰ Moreover, these disputes were also disputes in which gender relations had to be negotiated and gender identities were to be shaped and called upon to lend authority to some and not to others.

The secularization of the higher learning changed the role of the university from one centered upon the transmission of knowledge to one centered upon the production of knowledge.²¹ According to Patricia Albjerg Graham, the very definition of an “educated man”

changed: “In the early part of the century, he had knowledge of the classics . . . by the end of the century the educated man was seen as a person who had attended college.”²² Credentials replaced knowledge as the mark of an “educated man” and as an important indication of status attainment – credentials that could be crafted in a manner so as to be more usefully applied to commerce. Faculty, previously hand chosen by the president for family and character as much as knowledge, were eventually self-selected, forming a new professional culture of colleagues as experts. Faculty governance promised that the authority of the expert would be safely located among the experts themselves. The background of university presidents changed as well. Ceasing to be clergy, the university president was chosen not so much as a moral leader, but as an organizational leader trusted to oversee the development of large enterprises at the same time that clergy began to also disappear from governing boards.²³ In terms of their function in society, universities, and particularly elite universities, became the gateway to professions in both politics and commerce. This central location in the formation of status made higher education a particularly important locus of activity. “In nineteenth-century America, higher education emerged as the seminal institution within the culture of professionalism,” as Burton Bledstein put it.²⁴

The emergence of the discipline of economics with its potentially close association with business and commerce represents a unique discipline in the examination of the transformation in higher education in the nineteenth century and one in which the “stakes of the game” were particularly high. Not surprisingly perhaps, the professionalization of economics was accompanied by jurisdictional disputes – disputes between groups over jurisdictional boundaries that determined who would be allowed to engage in the tasks of the profession as well as what those tasks would be (Abbott 1988, Fourcade 2009). The history of women in the early years of the AEA allows us to more clearly understand the role of gender in the process of professionalization in the “academic knowledge system.”

These jurisdictional disputes began with the segmenting of academic labor through the awarding of areas in doctoral degrees which set a professional trajectory that was difficult to alter – especially for women. Whereas a majority of the founding members of the AEA had doctoral degrees in history, as economics evolved into its own area of study, economists began to argue not only for a greater separation between economics and sociology²⁵, but for a separation between economics and home economics. The disestablishment of religion and advocacy (not to mention the soft-headedness of economists such as Ely) would require disciplinary boundaries that made clear the scientific nature of economics. As Thomas Carver would state it, “Economists would prefer to stick to the subject of Economics. [One] should especially doubt whether the members of [the] association would easily find a common ground of discussion with Miss [Jane]Addams or Mr. Felix Adler” (Bernstein 2001, p. 24).

As the press clippings of the “1900-1914 Scrapbook: Annual Meetings Program Clippings” in the AEA Archives shows, the growing disdain for sociology by economists did not go unnoticed. In an article entitled “Sociologists Complain of Their Own Standing: Delegates Say They are Not Regarded as Trained Specialists by Men,” these jurisdictional disputes were growing ever larger and sociologists complained that they were not regarded with the proper respect by their fellow men.

The outgrowth of these jurisdictional disputes was indisputable for women. Increasing numbers of women were characterized as having doctoral degrees in home economics, labor relations, education and home economics, labor economics, and sociology. Whereas earlier male scholars were able to transcend such labels and be accepted as professionals in the field of economics—economists such as Davis R. Dewey who received a doctoral degree in History from The Johns Hopkins University and Allyn Abbott Young who received his doctoral degree from the University of Wisconsin in Sociology, women economists would not be so fortunate. There were a very few exceptions: Jessica Blanche Peixotto of the University of California, Berkeley, AEA vice-president in 1928, received her PhD in political science (Peixotto 1901), Susan

Kingsbury, AEA vice-president in 1919, held a Columbia PhD in history (see Kingsbury 1905, 1906, 1933, 1935), and Minnie Throop England of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, took her PhD in religion even though her teaching and publications were about business cycles and crises (see Dimand 1999b). Dorothy Stahl Brady of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, an analyst of consumption and saving important enough to be the subject of a *New Palgrave* article (Reid 1987), also held a non-economics PhD but this was not a barrier to professional acceptance among economists since it was in mathematics (from UC Berkeley, 1933). To a limited extent, essay prize competitions could enhance the credentials of women economists, as with Clare de Graffenreid's winning of two early AEA essay competitions (see Dimand and Black 2012) or, after the AEA discontinued such competitions, Hart, Schaffner & Marx Essays Prizes won by Mollie Ray Carroll (1923), Hazel Kyrk (1923) and Yetta Scheffel (1916) (see also Carroll 1929/1930).

CONCLUSION

What has been neglected by historians of the professions, is the degree to which associations such as the AEA neglected and even eschewed initiatives that would have brought increasing numbers of women as members at the same time they were trying to expand their membership, the complex ways that status seeking behaviors worked to limit women's membership in such organizations, and the role of gender in segmenting labor in such a manner as to exclude women's labor. There is evidence that women economists were solicited as well for membership in the AEA. In a letter dated 30 March 1918, Dewey wrote to Young suggesting the following names from the staff of Bryn Mawr for membership in the AEA: Angie L. Kellogg; Anna C. McBride; Clara E. Mortenson; and Anne Bezanson (Letter from Dewey to Young dated 30 March 1918).²⁶ Yet larger forces at play worked to preclude women's participation and membership in the AEA in far more fundamental ways. The segmentation of academic labor

made women whose degrees were in the social sciences vulnerable to exclusion and prey to ontological disputes. The significant influence of what Virginia Vallian has called “gender schemas” allowed academic economists in the early years of the AEA to characterize women with doctorates in economics as sociologists and men with doctorates in sociology and history to stand as economists, and raised little cause for concern about the discrepancy.

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¹ Figures on women's membership in the AEA from its inception to 1946 were collected from various sources and include the following: Publications of the American Economic Association 1886, 1888, 1889, 1894; Handbook of the American Economic Association, 1890, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1913, 1914, 1916, 1919, 1922, 1924, 1926, 1928, 1931, 1933, 1936, 1938, 1940, 1942, 1946.

² The Vassar College website (<http://vcenclopedia.vassar.edu/faculty>) reports that "a plan to make her [Newcomer] president [of the AEA], ended when she went on mission to Germany" (in 1950 Newcomer served on a Technical Assistance Mission on German Refugees). Charles Kindleberger (1991, 65) recalled that "when I served one year on the nominations committee of the American Economic Association (AEA), the chairman of the Committee mentioned in opening the meeting that the Association had never elected as

president a woman, a Southerner or a Canadian” and so Harold Innis of the University of Toronto became president-elect in 1952, although he died before assuming the presidency.

³ Few economic historians or historians of thought have brought the depth of understanding to the study of economics as a discipline as A.W. Coats. In his well known histories of the rise of economics as a separate discipline, Coats examines, like few others, the delicate relationships between economic history and the history of ideas within an institutional framework – an approach that draws heavily on the work of Joseph Schumpeter, Michael Polanyi, and Thomas Kuhn (Coats 1993, 4). While Coats provides us with important insights into the early years of the AEA, his work gave scant attention to the role of gender in the rise of the economics. While subsequent histories of the AEA such as those offered by Michael Bernstein also provide useful insights on the struggle for professional authority in the early years of the AEA, they too offer little insight into the role that gender played in the development of economics as a discipline (Bernstein 2001). In fact, detailed studies of the rise of the professions, such as those by Andrew Abbott and Marion Fourcade, have also failed to integrate gender into the analysis in a satisfactory way (Abbott 1988, Fourcade 2009).

⁴ Bemis reported a total member of 62 with 11 ladies among them making women about 18 percent of the membership of the Connecticut Valley Branch.

⁵ In Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association, Boston and Cambridge, May 21-25, 1887 published in Publications of the American Economic Association, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Jul 1888). P. 43-86.

⁶ See p. 44, Publications of the American Economic Association, Vol. 9, No. 1, Hand Book of the American Economic Association, 1894 and the Report of the Sixth Annual Meeting. University of Chicago, September 11-15, 1893 (Jan., 1894), pp. 41+43-46.

⁷ Report of the Secretary, The Seventh Annual Meeting, pp. 43-45.
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⁸ Total membership in 1902 as reported in the “Summary of Membership” included 12 honorary members, 74 Life members, 749 annual members, and 130 subscribers (institutional memberships.) See p. 40.

⁹ AEA Archives, Box 65 Folder 27 “AER Membership for AEA (1913-1915) Corr. Of Davis R. Dewey.

¹⁰ AEA Archives, Box “Correspondence Dewey: 1918.”

¹¹ AEA Archives, Box 13 “Correspondence Dewey: 1915) E.E. Pratt to Young, 8 November 1915.

¹² AEA Archives, “Correspondence 1918.”

¹³ AEA Archives, “Correspondence 1918.”

¹⁴ Location and year of doctorate listed in parentheses. See the entries on Abbott, Balch, Coman, England, Hewes, Peixotto, Sewall, Sumner Woodbury, and Youngman in Dimand, Dimand and Forget (2000). There were also a few women contributing to economics in the US at that time who had doctorates from other countries: Agnes Wergeland, who in 1890 became the first Norwegian woman to receive a PhD from the University of Zurich, was a docent in history at the University of Chicago from 1896 to 1902 (and non-resident instructor in the Extension Department until 1909) and chair of the Department of History at the University of Wyoming from 1902 (where she also taught Political Economy), and published six *JPE* articles from 1900 to 1905 (posthumously republished by the University of Chicago Press as two books in 1916). The only one of these women in the early decades of the AEA who published jointly with a male relative was Gladys McAlpine Campbell Blakey of the University of Minnesota, who, writing with her husband and University of Minnesota colleague Roy Gillespie Blakey, published ten *AER* articles on the federal tax legislation of the previous year: a 31-page article in 1919 and others in 1932 and in each year from 1934 to 1941 (he also wrote single-authored *AER* articles on the same topic in seven years from 1914 to 1928), as well as books on federal income taxation and on taxation in Minnesota.

¹⁵ AEA Archives Box 65 Folder 6 “League of American Pen Women.”

¹⁶ Also revealed in Dewey’s list of editors is either his geographic naiveté or his New England centric perspective, listing as he lists Johns Hopkins, Vassar, and Princeton, among “Middle States” (perhaps meaning Middle Atlantic) and the University of Kansas and the University of Nebraska among “Western States.”

¹⁷ Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 24.

¹⁸ Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1977).

¹⁹ Graham, “Expansion and Exclusion,” 764.

²⁰ Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Labor of Expert Labor*.

²¹ Dzuback, “Gender and the Politics of Knowledge,” 186.

²² Graham, “Expansion and Exclusion,” 761.

²³ Richard Hofstadter, “The Revolution in Higher Education,” in *Paths of American Thought* eds. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Morton White (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), 6.

²⁴ Burton J. Bledstein, p. 121.

²⁵ In Canada, where the population of scholars, like the population in general, was less than a tenth that of the United States, economists and political scientists shared the Canadian Political Science Association until 1966 and the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* until 1968 (the sociologists seceded in 1963).

²⁶ AEA Archives, “Correspondence Dewey 1918”