

Women Helping Women:

The YWCA of Nashville, 1898-1998



by Carole Stanford Bucy

WOMEN HELPING WOMEN:
THE YWCA OF NASHVILLE,
1898-1998



Carole Stanford Bucy

Nashville, Tennessee
The YWCA of Nashville and Middle Tennessee
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It is in large part due to Mary Ann Jackson's belief in the importance of the YWCA's history that this project has been done. When Mary Ann Jackson accepted the job as Executive Director of the YWCA of Nashville in 1977, one of the first things that she did was to read all of the YWCA minutes. Although Mary Ann knew something about the YWCA's rich heritage, she wanted to learn specific details of the history. She wanted to study the women of the YWCA. She wanted to learn about the Executive Directors, board members, and the women whose lives had been changed by the YWCA. In short, she wanted to learn what had happened in the past before she charted a course for the future of this organization. She wanted to identify the historic foundation for the YWCA and then build on that foundation. Mary Ann Jackson believed in the YWCA. She believed that women had a moral responsibility to help other women.

It was Mary Ann who saw that the historic files were carefully boxed and taken to the Tennessee State Library and Archives for safekeeping when the Seventh Avenue building was sold. When she retired from the YWCA, the YWCA history project was an important one which she wanted to see finished. She saw the celebration of the YWCA's centennial in 1998 as the appropriate time for this history to be presented and recruited me in 1994 to work on it. She took me down to the archives to view the boxes of files and shared her vision for this history. I would write the history of the Nashville YWCA with her help and support. Unfortunately, Mary Ann lost her battle with cancer in 1995 before my work began.

I have thought about her throughout the process of writing this book. To Mary Ann Jackson, I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude for inviting me into the project. Because of her vision, future scholars from across the country can come to study the Nashville YWCA papers at the Archives where they are being preserved. This history is only the beginning. Much will be written and published in the future about the unique role of the Nashville YWCA as the women involved with it accepted the challenges of the day and responded to the needs of women.

Carole Bucy, December 31, 1997

There have been many people who have made important contributions to the writing and publication of this book. Anita Goodstein, retired professor of history at the University of the South in Sewanee, read the first draft and made helpful suggestions regarding the organization and writing of this material. I am grateful to Anita for her work on this project as well as her belief in me. She continued to remind me of the importance of this work and the importance of the history of women in Nashville and Tennessee. My husband, Rhea Bucy, then read another draft and helped with several critical passages. When the second draft was completed, many devoted YWCA supporters – Gertrude Caldwell, Harriet Foley, Joanne Bailey, Sue Spickard, Carrie Hull, Deby Samuels, Joyce Searcy, and Louise Burgess – proof-read the text and made certain that the story was right. Jamie Coleman Williams, retired head, Department of Communications, Tennessee State University, then read yet another draft and gave important comments.

This book would not have been possible without the support and assistance of Dr. Hal Ramer, Dean Charles Lea, and Dean Vanita Lytle-Sherrill of Volunteer State Community College. The administration of the college made certain that this history would become a reality by allowing Lorrie Bentley, a work-study student, to scan all of these photos into the computer. Clarence Dobbins of the Volunteer State faculty development center trained Lorrie to use the software and the computer and then supervised the scanning of all the photos. When the photos were scanned, Clarence continued to answer my seemingly endless list of questions regarding scanning and was always cooperative and kind when I showed up in his office “with just a few more pictures” that I had just found.

When the writing was completed, Beverly Grant, Julie Gwinn and Carole Jessup of the YWCA staff went into action. They organized the production of the book and coordinated the efforts of volunteers. Tania Owen designed the cover. Jan Thompson laid out the text. Kathryn Smith, a past president of the YWCA, and Shirley Williams, a Volunteer State student, then did one final proof-reading. Kathryn Smith has been on hand since the first day that I began to open the boxes at the state library and has provided invaluable support that has kept me focused and working.

To all of these, I say “thank you.”

Carole Bucy

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