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# EMIE Bulletin

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## Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table

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### Leaders in Library Work with Immigrants:

Jane Maud Campbell, 1869-1947

Part II:

The North America Civic League for Immigrants Years, 1910-1913

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In May 1910, Campbell made the decision to leave her position as librarian at Passaic in order to pursue her interests in the fertile field of immigrant education. She had been offered an employment opportunity by Anne Morgan, daughter of the philanthropist and businessman John Pierpont Morgan, who invited Campbell to assume the position of education secretary for the recently organized New York Committee of the North American Civic League for Immigrants.<sup>10</sup>

The North American Civic League for Immigrants (NACLI), founded in Boston in 1908, was the outgrowth of a conference of social workers and reform-minded citizens sponsored a year earlier, in February 1907, by the International Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in New York City. The NACLI chose as its mission the civic improvement of the immigrant. The NACLI was not as concerned with the highly political issue of admission or exclusion of immigrants, as it was with the more humanitarian issues of protection, education, distribution, settling, and assimilation of immigrants once they had arrived in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

The NACLI had initially confined its activities, on an experimental basis, to Boston, the second largest port of entry next to New York City. Later, branches were established as well in the large immigrant cities of New York and Philadelphia. The NACLI sponsored extensive programs of lectures in English and foreign languages to evening school classes for immigrants. It published and distributed these lectures in pamphlet form as Messages for Newcomers to the United States to public libraries throughout the United States.<sup>12</sup>

In 1908, concurrently with the founding of the NACLI, the New York State Immigration Commission was appointed by Governor Charles Evans Hughes. The mandate of the New York State Immigration Commission, like its

predecessor, the 1906 New Jersey Immigration Commission on which Campbell had served, was to investigate the condition of immigrants throughout the state of New York.

In March 1909, the commission made its final report, which, again like its New Jersey predecessor, emphasized the education of the adult immigrant as the key to immigrant assimilation and progress. Having no organization in existence to take over its work and to see that the legislation it had recommended was enacted, the commission's former members approached the leadership of the NACLI, which by then had established its reputation nationally.<sup>13</sup>

#### NACLI New York Committee

In December 1909, nine months after the termination of the 1908 New York State Immigration Commission and the beginning of its former members' negotiations with the NACLI, the administrative district under the auspices of the NACLI New York City branch was expanded to incorporate the entire state of New York. The committee was re-

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named the NACLI New York Committee to reflect the expansion of its jurisdiction from municipal to statewide. In early 1910, NACLI New York Committee assumed the recommendations as its mission.<sup>14</sup>

It was with the NACLI New York Committee that Campbell initially began her work in the field of immigrant education. Anne Morgan and other members of the NACLI New York Committee were anxious for Campbell as education secretary to accomplish in New York State what she had done so successfully in New Jersey.<sup>15</sup> Campbell began her duties in the summer of 1910.

By September 1910, the NACLI New York Committee had been successful in getting the New York State Legislature to pass the immigration bills recommended by the 1908 New York State Immigration Commission, one of which established the New York Bureau of Industries and Immigration that was empowered to oversee immigrant affairs, from banking and employment to legal aid and education.<sup>16</sup>

With her headquarters in New York City, Campbell, as education secretary of the NACLI New York Committee, was responsible for coordinating the establishment of classes in English and citizenship for newly arrived immigrants in New York City. Her responsibilities also included the on-site development, implementation, and supervision of programs to facilitate the Americanization of the immigrant laborers and their families in temporary labor camps falling outside the jurisdiction of local school districts in upstate New York.

Addressing initially the needs of immigrant children covered by the compulsory education laws, the NACLI New York Committee, using ships' manifests at Ellis Island, compiled lists of the names of school-age children entering the port of New York. These lists were then transferred to the proper school authorities in permanent as well as temporary educational facilities throughout the state of New York. By March 1911, the NACLI New York Committee, in turn, would be successful in convincing the federal authorities to assume the responsibility for providing such lists to school authorities not only in New York but also in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Illinois, other states where the majority of immigrants was destined to establish residence.<sup>17</sup>

Most of Campbell's time and energy with the NACLI New York Committee, from 1910 to 1913, would be consumed by her work with adult immigrant workers and their families, largely Italians, Poles, Russians, and Austrians. These immigrants were employed in the labor camps in upstate New York, where a vast network of aqueducts to serve the needs of New York City was under construction. The fact that these construction camps did not fall within the boundaries of local school dis-

tricts, coupled with the fact that their existence was only temporary, necessitated the provision of special accommodations for the camp residents.

In December 1910, the NACLI New York Committee established an experimental camp school in Valhalla, New York, the site of one of the construction camps building the Catskill Aqueduct. The committee used as their models the construction camp schools in Pennsylvania and New York that were established as early as 1905 by the Society of Italian Immigrants under the direction of Sarah Wool Moore.<sup>18</sup>

#### NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee

In January 1911, the NACLI New York Committee expanded its jurisdiction to include the state of New Jersey and, in recognition of this major administrative change, was renamed the NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee. Shortly thereafter, the NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee convinced New Jersey Governor Woodrow Wilson to appoint the 1911 New Jersey Immigration Commission, which, like its predecessors, the 1906 New Jersey Immigration Commission and the 1908 New York State Immigration Commission, was charged "to make full inquiry, examination and investigation into the conditions, welfare, distribution and industrial opportunities of aliens."<sup>19</sup>

Crippled by a lack of state funding, this second New Jersey Immigration Commission, relying solely on the financial support of civic-minded individuals and on the NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee, was unable to get legislation passed to establish a permanent state agency to handle immigrant affairs, as had been done in New York State. Indeed, the 1911 commission accomplished nothing of significance other than a most informative report of its findings, which painted a vivid portrait of New Jersey as an immigrant state.<sup>20</sup>

Concurrently with its sponsorship of the 1911 New Jersey Immigration Commission, the NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee, under the leadership of Campbell, continued to advance its work in the construction camp school at Valhalla, New York. By April 1911, a special assembly hall was opened in Valhalla to take care of the educational needs of immigrant children, women, and men. A day school was operated in the hall for the children, while later, in the afternoon, classes in home economics and sewing were held for the women and girls. Completing the daily cycle of the educational program, an evening school for the immigrant men provided instruction in English and preparation for naturalization.

During the summer of 1911, Campbell experimented with the provision of a new recreational program—moving picture shows with musical accompaniment pro-

vided by phonograph recordings—which were provided to a circuit of fourteen temporary labor camps situated all along the construction route of the Catskill Aqueduct. Recreational activities eventually included a moving picture show every Saturday night and a dance once a month.<sup>21</sup> Campbell demonstrated her concern for the provision of leisure activities for immigrants as well as structured educational experiences, since the only other diversions for the construction workers after eight hours of manual labor were gambling and drinking.

A horse and covered wagon were engaged for the summer of 1911, and beginning in June, the experiment was started and continued for eighty-seven days. During these three months, Campbell personally conducted a total of fifty “entertainments” throughout the circuit of construction camps, with a total attendance of almost seven thousand. The moving picture shows were not only recreational but also instructional and informative. They presented in a novel format essential advice on such topics as health regulations, personal hygiene, the laws of the land, the naturalization process, and technical instruction on various aspects of aqueduct construction. The experiment was so successful that several construction contractors agreed to purchase the moving pictures and projection equipment in order to inaugurate recreational programs for the immigrant laborers in other temporary labor camps.<sup>22</sup>

The ameliorative effect of these educational and recreational experiences, which were provided under Campbell’s supervision in the construction camps in the Catskills, was duly noted in an article written by a contractor at Valhalla and published in the September 1911 issue of the Catskill Water System News. The contractor assessed the overall effect of its activities and educational experiences on the construction workers as “a better class of men, a better camp, and a higher standard of living than is generally found, which all makes for efficiency.”<sup>23</sup>

Throughout her tenure as education secretary of the NACLI New York State Committee and, later, the NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee, Campbell maintained a rigorous schedule of lecturing that she had begun earlier in Passaic. Campbell’s address on the social and educational needs of immigrant women was delivered to an audience of social workers at a meeting of the New Jersey Conference of Charities and Correction held at Princeton, New Jersey, in April 1911. She revealed her advocacy for the suffrage of women, both native-born and foreign-born.<sup>24</sup>

For the immigrant woman as well as the immigrant man and immigrant child, Campbell argued, the problems of assimilation and education were synonymous. She was convinced that “the most difficult problem with the immigrant woman is to make her appreciate the ad-

vantages of education, which to her is something only for the men and children.”<sup>25</sup> Campbell pointed out as well the widening of the generation gap between immigrant parents and their children, which was ironically exacerbated by the exposure of immigrant children to the Americanizing influence of the public schools.

Campbell continually searched for ways to lure immigrant women to take part in educational opportunities offered by the NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee. Sewing, cooking, and child care classes were often the “bait” to get immigrant women out of the confines of their homes and the congested immigrant community. Campbell wanted to bring them into settings where they would be exposed to the Americanizing influences of hearing spoken English and have the opportunity to share everyday experiences with other Americans in the making.<sup>26</sup>

In 1911, the voluminous reports of the 1907 Federal Immigration Commission were made available to the general public. Campbell and her staff must have read with particular interest sections of the reports dealing with immigrant labor camps. Referring specifically to the mining operations in Pennsylvania, which employed mainly immigrant laborers, the federal commission reports drew attention to the alarming statistic that “the great majority of the injuries and fatalities in the mines occur because the foreigner does not understand words of command.”<sup>27</sup> The NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee was not only convinced that the same statistic could be applied to the temporary labor camps, but also convinced that the problem lay in the lack of appropriate materials for teaching English to adult immigrant laborers.<sup>28</sup>

To remedy this lack of pertinent adult-oriented lessons in English, the NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee wrote and printed a series of elementary English lessons based on words used in the construction work at the temporary labor camps. These instructional materials were arranged appropriately in parallel English-Italian and English-Polish, since the majority of the laborers were Italian and Polish immigrants. Pamphlets and leaflets explaining the naturalization requirements for first and second papers and the basic laws of the United States, including child labor and compulsory education laws and sanitary regulations, were also prepared and printed in English and the foreign languages spoken by the construction workers and their families.<sup>29</sup>

In early 1913, the New York–New Jersey Committee’s parent, the NACLI itself, was urging the appointment of yet another state immigration commission. Already having been instrumental in the appointment and support of the 1908 New York State Immigration Com-

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mission and the 1911 New Jersey Immigration Commission, the NACLI turned its attention to Massachusetts, another of the five largest immigrant states.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, Campbell and her associates on the NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee were winding up their education work with the immigrant laborers at the experimental camp school at Valhalla, which had become the model emulated throughout New York State. The influence of the NACLI New York–New Jersey Committee was evident in the passage of a law introduced in the New York State Legislature by the New York State Department of Education that public schools established for laborers in temporary construction camps engaged in public work projects should be maintained out of the funds designated for these public work projects.<sup>31</sup> Access to education by immigrant laborers was now legally sanctioned in New York State.

## NOTES

10. North American Civic League for Immigrants (NACLI), New York–New Jersey (NY–NJ) Committee, [Report,] December 1909–March 1911 (New York: The Committee, 1911), 3–4; and Massachusetts Library Club Bulletin 3 (Oct. 1913): 141. See also letter of recommendation for Campbell signed by Anne Morgan, 1 May 1912, Campbell Papers.

11. Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*, 38, and chap. 2: “The North American Civic League for Immigrants and Affiliated Organizations,” 38–63 passim; and NACLI AR 1910/11, 9.

12. NACLI AR 1910/11, 10–11.

13. NACLI, NY–NJ Committee, [Report,] December 1909–March 1911, 5–6; and Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*, 53–56.

14. Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*, 56.

15. NACLI, NY–NJ Committee, [Report,] December 1909–March 1911, 3–4.

16. *Ibid.*, 35–36.

17. *Ibid.*, 26–28.

18. *Ibid.*, 32–33; and Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*, 27–28. See also Jane E. Robbins, “Schools in Temporary Construction Camps,” *Immigrants in America Review* 1 (June 1915): 28–30.

19. NACLI, NY–NJ Committee, [Report,] December 1909–March 1911, 38–39; Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*, 60, 71–73. Although Hartmann refers to the 1907 NJ adult immigrant education law, he does not mention the 1906 NJ Immigration Commission, which was responsible for its passage. Hartmann, for this reason, refers to the 1908 NY

State Immigration Commission as the first state commission rather than the second, as was the case.

20. Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*, 71–73.

21. NACLI, NY–NJ Committee, [Report,] December 1909–March 1911, 32–33; and North American Civic League for Immigrants, New York–New Jersey Committee, [Report,] December 1, 1909–February 1, 1913 (New York: The Committee, 1913), 14.

22. NACLI, NY–NJ Committee, [Report,] December 1, 1909–February 1, 1913, 14–15.

23. *Ibid.*, 14.

24. Campbell, *Immigrant Women*; Paper read at the New Jersey Conference of Charities and Correction, Princeton, NJ, April 3, 1911 (New York: New York–New Jersey Committee, North American Civic League for Immigrants, 1911?).

25. Campbell, *Immigrant Women*, 4, 14 (quote).

26. *Ibid.*, 14.

27. NACLI, NJ–NJ Committee, [Report,] December 1909–March 1911, 29–31.

28. *Ibid.*, 29–30.

29. *Ibid.*, 30.

30. Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*, 73.

31. NACLI, NY–NJ Committee, [Report,] December 1, 1909–February 1, 1913, 15.

## EMIE Bulletin Mission Statement

The purpose of the *EMIE Bulletin* is to promote the practice and theory of multicultural librarianship. The *Bulletin* publishes research, opinions, reviews, and reports on services, events, and news relating to diversity and multiculturalism in libraries and communities in the United States. The *Bulletin* encourages contributions from EMIERT members and others interested in promoting multicultural librarianship.