

THE LIFELONG LIBRARIANSHIP OF MARION TWISS SMITH, 1875 - 1942

by

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Introduction

Last fall, I was in a bookstore looking for the book, *Haunted Ohio*. I knew that something about my grandmother was in it. When I finally found it, I was more excited about the book next to it, *Celebrating Women: The Women's Park of Yellow Springs*. I knew that my grandmother had a plaque in the Women's Park but I had no idea there was a book about it. When I read her biography inside I was overwhelmed and started crying. It struck me that we are so interested in the same things. I was happy to realize that and sad that she is not here to realize it with me.

My grandmother, Julie Overton, was born on February 19, 1939 in New Jersey. Her father was a Dutch immigrant and she attended high school in Holland. In 1957 she came to Yellow Springs, Ohio to attend Antioch College. In *Celebrating Women*, I learned that during her time at Antioch, she worked in a few libraries and became interested in genealogy, history, and archives. She eventually became the coordinator of local history and genealogy at the Greene County Room at the Xenia Library and was very involved in the Ohio Genealogical Society.¹

Julie died in 1997, two years after I was born. Like Julie, I came to Antioch when I was eighteen. During my time here I, too, became interested in libraries, history, and archives. At the start of my senior year, in the bookstore, having no idea what I wanted to do for my senior project, I decided that I wanted to learn as much as I could about Julie. I wanted to be able to remember and re-imagine and explore her life in new and interesting ways.

In old issues of the Xenia Gazette, I found an article about her experience during the 1974 Xenia Tornado. She lost twenty pounds from stress. I found letters to the editor and recipes

¹ Phyllis L. Jackson and Imogen D. Trolander, *Celebrating Women: The Women's Park of Yellow Springs* (Yellow Springs: Wild Goose Press, 1999), 157.

that she submitted. I found announcements of talks she would be giving, including one called "Genealogy Can Be Fun!"

Scott Sanders, the director of Antiochiana, Antioch College's archive brought me a folder of materials about Julie. Among pictures and newspaper clippings was a biography she wrote about John Bryan. It begins with the most beautiful opening sentences I have ever read: "The village of Yellow Springs is renowned for many things, including Antioch, communism, packs of wild dogs and liberated women. It is also the nearest village to John Bryan State Park..."²

In the process of learning more about her and her career, I remembered that I have another ancestor who was a librarian. I was unaware then, but this ancestor, Marion Smith was Julie's grandmother. She died when Julie was young, too. Since then, I have been trying to figure out how the three of us found ourselves interested in the same things. As I continued to uncover more about Marion, my project started heading in her direction. Unfortunately, this is the most I will say about Julie in this paper, but she is still in it, through it, and the reason for it.

² Julie M. Overton, preface to *John Bryan of Ohio* (Yellow Springs: 1978), unpublished manuscript, Antiochiana, Antioch College.

A Note About *Marion and Her Babies* and Methodology

For as long as I can remember, there has been a large teal fabric binder among the books and boxes of photographs and board games and dust on the bookshelves in my parents' house. When Julie died in 1997, my mother acquired most of her family history materials. Most memorable and most prized are the four foot radial family tree dating back to the 1600s that Julie made by hand, letters that one of my ancestors wrote home while he was a soldier in the Civil War and the large teal binder.

Although I had looked through the binder dozens of times throughout my childhood, until recently, I couldn't tell you much about it except that it contained handwritten pages and old photographs of ancestors. One thing I did remember about the book was that it contained a page about "Marion the Librarian."

Marion Twiss Smith is the focus of the entire book. It is called *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of A Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. It was written by her husband, William Griswold Smith after her death in 1942. It is the essential primary text for this project.

While the information that the book holds is valuable, its limits cannot be ignored. It was written from Marion's husband's perspective and, as reflected in the title, it focuses on Marion as a mother. In William's attempt to reconstruct her life, information about Marion before her marriage is scarce. There are years when William writes almost entirely about himself and his career. Like *Marion and Her Babies*, this paper is an attempt to reconstruct Marion's life, though it does this through exploring Marion's career and interests rather than her motherhood.

Obviously *Marion and Her Babies* cannot tell us everything about her objectively, and it shouldn't. Even an autobiography written by Marion herself would not accomplish that. Much of

the work of this project was to find out more about Marion and to fill in as many gaps as I could - to provide paragraphs where William provides a sentence. The rest of the work was to write a history that allows for space, interpretation, and possibility. History and memory are not fixed or static - they are living and changing. In this paper, I attempt to convey that by focusing on the process of reconstructing and piecing together a life - a process that I believe is possible without much to go off of at all.

My goal is to form some idea of who Marion might have been, what she might have been interested in and what she might have done. I am not interested in making any definite claim about her - something I believe is absolutely impossible. I want to explore the value in, and the process of, making guesses about people who are not here to answer our questions.

Digitization

I digitized *Marion and Her Babies* and it is available on the Internet Archive at archive.org/details/marionandherbabies.

In doing historical research, I have so often found names of people that I wanted to learn more about, or significant sources that were only accessible to me because they were digitized by an independent body, rather than an institution. I don't see why *Marion and Her Babies* couldn't be this kind of source for others.

Aside from the book's usefulness to those trying to learn about Marion or William, it could very easily help others. It might provide relevant information about: any of the places Marion lived and visited; Americans traveling in Europe while the second World War was declared; Dorothy Canfield Fisher; the University of North Dakota during its first years; or women attending Ohio State University or other American Universities during the late 1800s.

Marion's Early Life

In this atmosphere of comfort and culture Marion was brought up, and it is small wonder that she became a book worm and later librarian. She told me that she had read all the classics of English literature by the time she was 14. There were many children living on the street, most of them girls, I imagine, for Marion seldom mentioned the boys and she was very fond of boys.

- William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies*

Marion Evans Twiss was born on March 26, 1875 to Julia Minot and George Henry Twiss. She grew up in Columbus, Ohio in a house that her father built. Her father was a high school principal. He represented a publishing firm and worked with Alexander Graham Bell to bring telephones to Columbus. The two ultimately had a falling out. George opened a bookstore in 1884.³ He was a friend of Washington Gladden, a leader of the social gospel movement.⁴ When her father died in 1921, Marion wrote an obituary which said of her father that he “was identified with educational and progressive movements of every kind.”⁵ In *Marion and Her Babies*, William does not write anything about Marion's mother.

Marion lived with her family into her early college days and was part of a group of girls who called themselves “The Hamilton Avenue Gang.” They “dominated the social activities of the neighborhood.” William writes that they were like a college sorority and that outsiders copied their fashions. For fun, they dramatized books.

³ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

⁴ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “Internet.” Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2007. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Washington-Gladden>.

⁵ “Necrology,” *The Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* 14, no. 3 (January 1922): 220, <http://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/issue/19220101#!&pid=221>.

During the late 1800s, reading was considered feminine. Young girls of Marion's class were expected to become avid readers. It is not surprising that women of Marion's generation were some of the first to be college educated.

Barbara Sicherman's scholarship explores women's reading practices in the Victorian era. In "Connecting Lives: Women and Reading, Then and Now" she explores what literature and reading meant for women like Marion:

Because literature was in some respects women's province, it was an arena in which girls were permitted, indeed expected, to excel. Because domestic literary culture was both participatory and collaborative, contemporary structures of reading intertwined with women's lives in synergistic ways. At once study and play, a source of knowledge and pleasure, public performance and private dreaming, reading opened up space unlike any other... Womens literary proficiency gave them a valuable and valued space from which to move out of the parlor and into more public sites. (Women in Print, Barbara Sicherman, p. 9)

Sicherman's work contextualizes William's mentions of the Hamilton Avenue Gang's dramatizing books and of Marion having read all the classics by age fourteen.

In the same essay, Sicherman profiles M. Carey Thomas, who eventually became the president of Bryn Mawr College. Though slightly older than Marion, she also grew up privileged in her whiteness and in her well-connected upper class family. Sicherman deduces that books functioned as "a source of private dreaming, social change and collective purpose" for nearly all literate women of their generation but emphasizes that Thomas's privileges "enabled her to give practical shape to her dreams and schemes."⁶ Essentially, she credits these women's unique relationship to literature and reading for their subsequent ability to enter public spaces and

⁶ Barbara Sicherman, "Connecting Lives: Women and Reading, Then and Now," in *Women in Print: Essays on the Print Culture of American Women from the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. James Philip Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 10, 11.

transform print culture.⁷ Although Marion did not publicly transform print culture, her reading practices certainly influenced and permitted her future endeavors and interests.

Marion at College

Marion made a good record in college, was class poet, and had a fine time with the Kappas, dancing with the boys, and attending football games.

- William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies*



This photograph is captioned, “This picture needs no date. Top: Edith Twiss, Abby Slade, Middle: Marion.” (all photographs in this paper are from *Marion and Her Babies* unless otherwise stated)

In the Ohio State University yearbook from 1896-1897, Marion’s graduating year, an unnamed senior writes about how much things had changed since the University’s start fifteen years prior. He writes: “It was just a new thing for girls to be among the students... it was a

⁷ Ibid., 9.

grievous fault that this institution had established no precedence for such attendance. But the girls made up their minds to come... the boys found them to be an essential detail of college life, though few, indeed, were the conveniences afforded them.”⁸ Among those who attended college around the time Marion was born, twenty-one percent were women. By the time she attended college, women accounted for thirty-six percent of students.⁹

While Marion was in college her father lost all his money and had to sell his home and his business.¹⁰ She was part of the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority and was part of the Dramatic Club.¹¹ According to the yearbook, there were more students in Marion’s class than any class before.¹² She became friends with Dorothy Canfield, whose father was the president of the University. Marion pledged her into her sorority. William does not write much else about Marion’s college days.¹³

Marion at the State Library

The day after Commencement Marion launched her career, beginning work as a library assistant in the State Library, helping to support her parents.

- William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies*

After receiving her bachelor of arts degree in 1897, Marion immediately began her career as a librarian. She worked as an assistant in the State Library She eventually become a reference librarian there.¹⁴

⁸ *The Makio (Scarlet and Gray)*, (Columbus: Students of Ohio State University, 1896), <https://books.google.com/books?id=EExAAQAAMAAJ>, 50.

⁹ Thomas D. Snyder, ed. *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait* (Washington: National Center for Education Statistics, 1993)

¹⁰ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

¹¹ *The Makio (Scarlet and Gray)*, (Columbus: Students of Ohio State University, 1896), <https://books.google.com/books?id=EExAAQAAMAAJ>, 106, 190.

¹² *Ibid.*, 57.

¹³ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The State Library opened in 1817, a year after Columbus became the state capitol.¹⁵ When Marion entered the State Library, the gatekeeping of the materials was much less restrictive than it had been in the past. It was originally only open to state officers and General Assembly members. In 1895, the reach broadened but still only to serve ex-members and officers of the General Assembly and their widows, some state clerks, some ex-state clerks, Supreme Court judges, and "officers and teachers of the benevolent institutions of the state" and those of Ohio State University, Penitentiary officers, and clergymen.¹⁶ The following year the general public was given access to the circulating department.¹⁷

In the Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Ohio State Library for the year of 1898, Marion is listed as staff.¹⁸ The State Librarian's writes "It has been the purpose of the State Library to keep pace with the progressive spirit of the times, to strengthen its different departments, and, under the liberal provisions of the law of 1896, to extend aid to individual and organized effort in the dissemination of healthful literature among the people."¹⁹

He also writes that in the past year, an unprecedented 5,238 volumes had been accessioned, catalogued, and shelved.²⁰ Marion must have had something to do with this work. He also writes that their library staff was represented at the American Library Association Conference, the Library Section of the Ohio Teachers' Association, and The Ohio Library Association.²¹ I wonder if Marion went to any of these meetings.

¹⁵ Ohio State Library Board and Charles Galbreath, *Sketches of Ohio Libraries*, (Columbus: F. J. Heer, state printer, 1902) <https://books.google.com/books?id=IwcbAAAAMAAJ>, 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁸ Ohio State Library, *Annual Report of the Ohio State Library* (Norwalk: The Laning Printing Company, 1897), <https://books.google.com/books?id=iDBFAQAAMAAJ>, 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

In the 1901-1902 Columbus City Directory, Marion is listed as an “assistant” under the State Library.²² In the back of the book, however, she is listed as an assistant *librarian*.²³ Regardless of what her title was, Marion must have made an impact on the state library during the five years she worked there.



Marion as a reference librarian at the State Library

Marion and Her Friends

She made many close friendships of whom she said, ‘I’m nothing much myself but I do have the most interesting friends.’ Of course, these interesting friends were attracted and held by the beauty of her own interesting personality.

- William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies*

Marion had remarkable friends. She seemed to have very deep connections with women. Marion and her college friend, Dorothy stayed in touch and visited each other throughout their lives. Dorothy married, changed her name to Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and became a famous

²² *Columbus City Directory* (Columbus: R.L. Polk & Company, 1902), <https://books.google.com/books?id=ay07AQAAMAAJ>, 49.

²³ *Ibid.*, 941.

writer in Vermont. Unlike Marion, Dorothy made money and her husband cleaned, cooked, and took care of their children.²⁴

Dorothy was a women's rights advocate and an education reformer. She advocated for racial equality and children's welfare.²⁵ I have been unable to find evidence that Marion also supported any of this but it is worth considering that she might have, based on her closeness with Dorothy. William writes about he and Marion being involved in "progressive movements" but is not specific.²⁶ I found evidence that he directed a choir at a women's suffrage gala but that is the extent of the proof of their involvement in that or any other movement.²⁷

While visiting Dorothy later in her life Marion and her husband "made the acquaintance of Robert Frost, Sarah Teasdale, Zephine Humphrey, and her artist husband Fahnstock, Arthur Guiterman, and other interesting people."²⁸

We only know so much about Dorothy Canfield Fisher because she was famous during her time. Marion must have also had friends that do not have books and articles and essays written about them but were still just as powerful and interesting and important.

Here are a few anecdotes from *Marion and Her Babies* about some of Marion's other (unfamous but probably powerful, interesting, and important) friends:

²⁴ Julia C. Ehrhardt, *Writers of Conviction: The Personal Politics of Zona Gale, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Rose Wilder Lane, and Josephine Herbst* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 63.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁶ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

²⁷ *The Suffragettes - Complete History of the Movement: The Battle for Equal Rights: 1848 - 1922*, (e-artnow, 2017). https://books.google.com/books?id=waZxDgAAQBAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

²⁸ *Marion and Her Babies*

- “One of Marion’s friends while she was in the State Library was Helen Davis. They were mutually attracted by their musical, artistic tastes, and literary and dramatic enthusiasm. Helen still lives in the house in Worthington where she was born.”
- “Another friend was Editha Dann, also a literary and musical fan. They organized a string quartette, which included Dorothy Canfield, who was still in college. They just liked to play for the fun of digging out Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart.”²⁹

Marion in North Dakota

In the middle of August Marion took a steamboat for Duluth at Detroit, and then went to Grand Forks by rail. It wasn’t much of a place then, and there was no one to meet her at the train, and she was in tears.

- William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies*

In 1902, Webster Merrifield, president of the University of North Dakota called Marion and offered her the position of University Librarian. Her appointment was announced in the journal, *Public Libraries*.³⁰ She was paid 900 dollars each year.³¹ Merrifield actually served as the first librarian for the 1888-89 school year. Various faculty members took on the position in the years following until 1901-2 when Cora E. Dill became the first official librarian. Marion succeeded her.³² Marion left her job at the State Library and headed for Grand Forks. The school, and the state of North Dakota, were fairly new at the time. Grand Forks was nothing like Columbus. William writes that “[s]he never got to like Grand Forks or the Dakota Prairies.”³³

²⁹ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

³⁰ “News from the Field” *Public Libraries* 7 (1902): 273.

³¹ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

³² Clement Augustus Lounsbury, *Early History of North Dakota: Essential Outlines of American History* (Washington: Liberty Press, 1919), 569.

³³ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

I wanted to know more about the library - what it looked like, when it was built, who spent time there, etc. In the section of *Marion and Her Babies* about the Grand Forks years the narrative is more about William than Marion.

I reached out to the Special Collections Department at the University to see if I could learn more. I asked for additional information about the library and explained my project, sharing the pages of *Marion and Her Babies* that focus on the University of North Dakota. Michael Swanson, the Assistant Archivist, responded to my request promptly. He said that he understood why Marion was not happy in Grand Forks, sharing that “At the time, UND was literally isolated from Grand Forks. One would have to go by train or street car about two miles from campus to get to the town of Grand Forks.”³⁴

Michael attached seven documents to the email. The first is a faculty roster which was compiled after Marion’s death. It provides that she was librarian in 1903 until March 1904, that she received her Bachelor of Arts in Ohio in 1897, that she was born in Columbus on March 26, 1875, that she married William Griswold Smith in 1904, and that she died in 1942 (all of which I knew). Similar information is offered for William Griswold Smith, though his list of work is much more robust. He is listed as a bicycle manufacturer from 1892 until 1899, which I did not know. In this profile, it is only clear that William was an engineer and a scholar. Although that is a focus in *Marion and Her Babies*, there is an equal focus on his musical career.³⁵

The second document contains scans from the 1903 University of North Dakota catalogue. I got an idea of what it must have been like working in the library. It contains a list of those who worked there. Marion as the librarian, and three other women as student assistants.

³⁴ Michael Swanson, e-mail message to author, May 2, 2017.

³⁵ “Faculty Roster” (1903) Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota.

From this document, it appears that there were only women working in the library. It seems of that they would not have a male supervisor. It also could have to do with the fact that the library was not its own building, but inside of one with many functions. The catalogue also reveals that the library occupied three rooms.³⁶ The rest of the information provides some idea of what Marion's work day must have been like, the roles that she had, and the general uses of the library:

Students have free access to the shelves from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Sundays, and the librarian is always in charge during these hours to lend assistance in the selection of books and the use of catalogues and guides... Lectures and informal talks on how to use the library to the best advantage are given from time to time by the librarian, and every effort is made to supplement the work of the class room by opportunities for wider reading. Students desiring training in and instruction in library science are given an opportunity to learn the theory and practice, their services as library assistants being recognized officially by the library committee. (Catalog, 22-23)

The rest of the files are from the 1904 Dacotah annual, the University of North Dakota's first yearbook. It includes photographs of the library, pictured below. I like to think that the woman pictured left of center is Marion.



³⁶ *University of North Dakota, 19th Annual Catalogue for 1902-1903* (Grand Forks: Grand Forks Herald, Printers Lithographers and Binders, 1903), 23. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota.

William and Marion are also in the yearbook, pictured next to biographies.



William's biography mentions his college years at Yale and Cornell, his bicycle manufacturing, and his teaching jobs in Toledo and in Kalamazoo. Marion's biography references her work at the State Library not only naming her as a reference librarian, but an accession assistant.³⁷ The rest of the biography contains information that I had been looking for and was not sure I would be able to find - information about how Marion came to become a librarian.

Marion's Library Training

Marion and Her Babies mentions nothing about how Marion came to be a librarian, aside from her love for books.³⁸ I wanted to know what sort of training she had but was completely lost on how to find it. I was thrilled when the biography of Marion in *The Dacotah Annual* contained this information: "During the summer of 1899 she took a course in Library Science offered yearly by the University of Wisconsin. She has also visited large libraries of the

³⁷ *The Dacotah Annual*. Yearbook. (Grand Forks: 1904) Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota.

³⁸ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

east and has taken private lessons from the Librarians at Worcester, Mass., Adelbert, Oberlin, and Ohio State University.”³⁹

An October 1899 issue of *Library Journal* features information about the summer library course in Wisconsin. It was held for eight weeks in Madison from July 3 to August 25. Thirty-six students attended the session. The president of the American Library Association was present and gave four talks. Gratia Countryman, a prominent librarian, also attended. A professor from the University of Wisconsin gave talks on travelling libraries and children’s reading. The article also expresses that the attendees “... enjoyed the lake trips and the campfire.” The end of the write-up contains a list of the institutions represented by students, some from as far as Arkansas and Oklahoma. The Ohio State Library is the only state library on the list - others are public libraries, University libraries, and normal school libraries.⁴⁰

When I was learning about library women of Marion’s generations and all the work they did, Gratia Countryman came up a lot. She is sometimes called the “Jane Addams of libraries.”⁴¹ She was director of the Minneapolis Public Library from 1904 to 1936 and much of her work dealt with providing books to underserved communities - immigrants, the blind, incarcerated people, and orphans.⁴² She personally drove books to rural areas.⁴³ Her philosophy was that “the

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Cornelia Marvin, “University of Wisconsin Summer School,” *Library Journal* 14 (1899): 584-585.

⁴¹ Mary Niles Maack, “Women’s Values, Vision and Culture in the Transformation of American Librarianship, 1890-1920.” *Libraries and Reading in Times of Cultural Change* (Moscow: Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, 1996) <https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/maack/Values.htm>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Curt Brown, “Minnesota history: For Gratia Countryman, an early librarian, praise is long overdue,” *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), Apr. 29, 2015, <http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-history-for-gratia-countryman-an-early-librarian-praise-is-long-overdue/301320371/>.

books belong to the people” and the librarian must learn “to be of the people, not apart or above them.”⁴⁴

What was the ideological difference, if any, between Marion, who worked for institutions such as the State of Ohio and the University of North Dakota, and librarians who worked for the public? It might be said that librarians in public libraries care more about the public and about access to books - fitting in with the progressive era. But what if Marion was just working where she could? What if she wanted to serve the public? What if she saw the necessity in both types of work? What if the patrons she served in her institutional libraries would go on to serve the public with the information she provided?

Her summer long training in Wisconsin was full of lectures about public libraries and children’s librarians. I wonder what she thought of it - if she found it compelling. Still, she decided to go to the University of North Dakota. Throughout *Marion and Her Babies*, though, there are pictures and descriptions of the public libraries that Marion loved to visit. She probably loved all libraries and appreciated the work that public librarians did.

Marion’s Marriage

The church was well filled, and the house was crowded with relatives, out-of-town guests, and Columbus friends... It was a DAISY wedding, daisies forming the motive for bouquets and decorations of church and home.

- William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies*

While at the University of North Dakota, Marion met William Griswold Smith. He was teaching art, engineering and eventually music at the University and his work was not exactly

⁴⁴ Mary Niles Maack, "Women's Values, Vision and Culture in the Transformation of American Librarianship, 1890-1920." *Libraries and Reading in Times of Cultural Change* (Moscow: Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, 1996. <https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/maack/Values.htm>.

what he expected it to be.⁴⁵ Because of this misunderstanding, he began to visit the library frequently and introduced himself to Marion. She gave him books that he needed. He got a raise which convinced him to stay in the prairies another year. He and Marion sat together at Faculty lunch table and got along. According to William, they shared a similar taste in music and mutual friends and “of course it had to happen.” The couple stayed in Grand Forks until they married in the summer of 1904.

Their wedding was June 23, 1904 in Washington Gladden’s church in Columbus. They received many out of town guests.



⁴⁵ In *Marion and Her Babies*, William writes: “One spring day 1902 President Webster Merrifield of University of North Dakota called on Marion, and offered her the position of University Librarian at \$900 a year, and a day or two before he had offered an instructorship at \$800 to W.G.S. in Kalamazoo, Mich., where he was teaching Manual Training. Both accepted and that is how it began... I discovered that part of my job was to teach Normal School girls how to teach drawing in the elementary schools! Appalling! No one had clearly informed me of the details of my job, and my impression that I was to teach “art,” as I had seen Mae Dennis teach it at Kalamazoo. So all summer I had studied art history and art, but my preparation for teaching little kids to draw and to select work for them, was below absolute zero.”

After the wedding, the couple moved to Aurora, Illinois. In their first year together William worked a number of jobs - a choirmaster, a draftsman, a manual training teacher, and a summer job with the Western Electric Company. William doesn't mention it but this is when Marion stops working. From this point on, in *Marion and Her Babies*, he nearly organizes their lives around his work as a professor and choral director.⁴⁶

Marriage as the End of a Career

Marion made a number of nice friends and did quite a little entertaining.

- William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies*

Marion worked as a librarian from 1897 until 1904, the year she got married. For women of her generation, marriage often meant the end of a career. Although her library career was short-lived, she never stopped doing the work. She may have been more free to do this work than she might have been as an unmarried library professional. Written histories about women librarians of Marion's generation are generally easy to find - those about the women who stopped, however, are not. So maybe that's what this paper is about.

In 1900, roughly forty percent of single women were employed versus only five percent of married women.⁴⁷ I wonder if that five percent of married women consisted of lower class women who had to work to help support their families. I wonder if nearly zero percent of middle class married women like Marion worked. Most women of Marion's generation who married did not continue working and were generally not encouraged to. Historian Jane Aikin's essay "Women and Intellectual Resources: Interpreting Print Culture at the Library of Congress" in

⁴⁶ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

⁴⁷ Rosalind Chait Barnett, "Preface: Women and Work: Where Are We, Where Did We Come From, and Where Are We Going?," *Journal of Social Issues* 60, no. 4 (2004): 668.

conjunction with the work Marion continued to do throughout her life had a large impact on the way I have come to view, understand, and interpret this reality.

In her essay, Aikin provides an in-depth look at the institutional practices of the Library of Congress and the experiences, salaries, and responsibilities of the women working in it during the first two decades of the twentieth century. She tells a story through data quantifying the number of women librarians working at the Library of Congress, how long they stayed in their positions, what they did when they left, and how much they were paid, among other things.

After presenting that between 1900 and 1920 women commonly stayed at the Library of Congress for only two to four years, and often left to pursue other things, she claims that nearly *all* women who left the Library of Congress to get married never returned to the work force.⁴⁸ When I discovered that Marion also left the library when she got married and never returned, I was discouraged. It took time for me to realize that what she did after leaving the library must have also been important. If she loved her work, like many women must have, she must have found her own ways to stay involved. Aikin provides no further analysis on the lives of library women who left to get married. They are never a part of the story but they existed.

Among various references throughout *Marion and Her Babies* to Marion's love for public libraries lies evidence that she continued to use and love libraries for the remainder of her life, and maybe, if she could have, she would have wanted to work in one. In a 1939 letter from the Red Cross, I discovered that she translated thousands of pages into Braille in the latter part of her life. This is evidence that she continued her commitment to making information accessible. I am convinced that she was not the only ex-librarian who continued to practice "librarianship" in

⁴⁸ Jane Aikin, "Women and Intellectual Resources: Interpreting Print Culture at the Library of Congress," in *Women in Print: Essays on the Print Culture of American Women from the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. James Philip Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 198-199.

her own, modified war. In a broader sense, she was also not the only ex-worker who continued to do related work throughout her life.

Marion as a Mother

Motherhood is the most searchingly beautiful, divine shape that Partnership could come in - but - God has a thousand ways!

- Marion Twiss Smith, *Marion and Her Babies*

This project would be incomplete without a section on Marion as a mother or her children - especially because the only biography about her is titled *Marion and Her Babies*. Although I get the sense that she loved being a mother, I also get the sense that it was a very complicated role for her. She came very close to being a mother in 1905 - the first year of her marriage. She gave birth to a baby boy who died the same day. She grieved her son for the rest of her life. William writes that “even her two fine daughters never fully compensated her.”⁴⁹

Below are some of Marion’s words, about the loss of her son, Minot. They are some of the only words of hers I have access to.

Before the baby was born she wrote:

My child has brought me almost into reconciliation with Creation itself, for now I am ‘in partnership with God’ (as some one calls Motherhood), and when it is born I really believe I shall understand and love Creation! As it is I love to work with God and do my best.

About ten weeks after losing the baby she wrote:

Oh dear God! How can I bear it? I am still here, alive and well - and Baby gone! The stroke came like lightning, and I am still dazed and stunned. That it should have happened so! I thought of myself being taken - never of Baby’s coming and going in a few precious short hours!

⁴⁹ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

And even later, as she came to more peace with her grief, what William calls a “philosophy of reconciliation”:

The little life that was lent to me was none the less perfect because it was so brief - a perfect rose blown in an hour - nay rather, a snow-drop come and gone in a few hours - perfect, sublimely white and sweet. It is a restful thought - that little blossom blooming and dying without regret - why can I not rest in it? Surely there is some thing I can do - some bitter need I can minister to, some more unhappy grief I can ennoble.

Despite her grief, Marion had her first healthy child two years after Minot’s death.

Madeleine Marion Smith was born May 29, 1907.⁵⁰ She never married or had children. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Northwestern University. She received her doctorate from Yale in 1952.⁵¹ In 1929 she became a faculty member at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.⁵² She stayed at the institution for 42 years. She began as a piano teacher and soon became a faculty member in the Foreign Languages and Literature Department.⁵³ She was Associate Professor, Emeritus for the College of Liberal Arts, Foreign Languages, and Literatures when she retired in 1971. She now has a scholarship named after her for those wishing to study French at Southern Illinois University.⁵⁴ She died in 1979.⁵⁵

Marion’s second child Janet Griswold Smith was born December 17, 1912. She attended Swarthmore College and received her degree in History in 1935. She was on the swimming team all four years of college. She married a Dutch man, Korstiaan Van Ginkel in 1936. They had two

⁵⁰ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

⁵¹ “Retired SIU-C Teacher Madeline M. Smith dies in Chicago,” *Southern Illinoisan* (Carbondale, IL), Mar. 9, 1979.

⁵² William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

⁵³ “Mr. Thomas F. Catania,” *Southern Illinois University*, accessed June 21, 2017, <https://siu.academicworks.com/donors/mr-thomas-f-catania>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “Retired SIU-C Teacher Madeline M. Smith dies in Chicago,” *Southern Illinoisan* (Carbondale, IL), Mar. 9, 1979.

children - William and Julie (my grandmother).⁵⁶ She lived to be a great grandmother (to myself and my siblings) and died in 2007 at the age of 95.

Marion and Her Babies is full of photographs of Marion with her children. They look like they are so in love and having fun.



William wrote about Marion as a mother: “No one ever loved her children more than she. She loved them passionately and gave herself to them completely and without reserve.”

Marion and War Work

The first time I tried to learn about Marion, before I had access to *Marion and Her Babies*, I searched her name on Google. I found a “personal” (an update on her life since college) that she submitted to to The Ohio State Monthly in December 1918. She wrote: “I am busy with war work every minute that home does not claim me.”⁵⁷ Almost everything in this particular

⁵⁶ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

⁵⁷ “Personals” *Ohio State University Monthly* 10 no. 3 (1918): 21.

issue is about war. In *Marion and Her Babies*, William labels this era “The War Decade - 1910 - 1920,” and another “The World War” and the last, “1916 While the War is on” even though he hardly writes about the war. He calls 1920 - 1930 “The Post-War Decade.”⁵⁸ It seems like it was just a part of everyone’s life, a way of thinking about / remembering things - a frame of reference.

During the beginning of the first World War, the Smiths lived a life of leisure. For 1914, William writes mostly about his choral endeavors. He writes that William writes that “Marion entered into all these activities and did a lot in the way of giving parties, etc. in keeping up the morale.”

They visited Dorothy Canfield Fisher in 1916 before she went to France to do “war work.” This was the first time she and Marion had seen each other since 1899.⁵⁹ I wonder if Marion wished she could have gone to France like Dorothy. She and Marion lead very different lives. Dorothy earned money for her family while her husband stayed home and cared for the children and did household chores.⁶⁰

Much is written by William about 1914, 1915, 1916 and 1917. For 1918 he only writes, “Anxious days with so many of our boys off to the war. One of my choir boys was killed at Belleau Wood, Clarence Coe. Marion did a lot of war work, Red Cross, and other services.” On the opposite page there is a photo of Marion in her Red Cross uniform that is dated 1916.⁶¹ Unless there was an error in dating the picture, it seems that Marion was involved even before

⁵⁸ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Julia C. Ehrhardt, *Writers of Conviction: The Personal Politics of Zona Gale, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Rose Wilder Lane, and Josephine Herbst* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 63.

⁶¹ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

the United States entered the war.

With all these mentions of “war work” I became curious about what “war work” actually means. In terms of what women like Marion might have done while working with the Red Cross, it varies and neither she nor William are specific about it.

In 1918 the Woman’s Committee of the United States Council of National Defense published a pamphlet entitled *War Work for Women*. It includes a list of paid and volunteer positions in the United States and overseas.⁶² It intended to help women find “the kind of war work for which they [were] best fitted.”⁶³ A variety of jobs are represented: accountants, Americanization workers, chauffeurs, craftswomen, dieticians, draftsmen, entertainers, finger print classifiers, law clerks, librarians, matrons (in boarding houses), optical glass makers, photographers, proof readers, scientists, social workers, surgeons, teachers in Indian service, and translators. The pamphlet goes on to provide resources for training courses and contact information, by state, for chairmen of the Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense (36-37) and for the Division Headquarters of the American Red Cross.⁶⁴

In *The Work of the American Red Cross*, a report published by the organization in 1917 under a section titled “Women’s Work” it reads: "Millions of women have given a share of their time, in chapter work-rooms and at home, to the service of both soldiers and civilians. No part of Red Cross work is more important than this."⁶⁵ From the report, it is apparent that American women manufactured hospital garments, knitted sweaters, socks and mittens, and created

⁶² The Information Department of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, *War Work for Women* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), 2, 8. <https://archive.org/details/2874270upenn>.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 31-35, 38-39.

⁶⁵ American Red Cross, *The Work of the American Red Cross: Report by the War Council of appropriations and activities from outbreak of War to November 1, 1917* (Washington: American Red Cross, 1917), <https://archive.org/details/0024457.nlm.nih.gov>. 65.

“comfort kits.”⁶⁶ These kits included “soap, wash-cloths, heavy socks, shaving articles, pipe and tobacco, khaki handkerchiefs, and the like, together with writing materials and games.”⁶⁷ Perhaps this is the kind of work that Marion did.

The *Chicago Tribune* had a “Women in Wartime” feature during the war. An October 1917 article asks women to use five dollars to send a blanket to a soldier for Christmas, and announces a Salvation Army and Red Cross knitting project. The chairman of the knitting committee of Evanston’s Red Cross vowed that the chapter would knit one thousand sweaters by November. There is also an announcement of the chairman of the conservation committee of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs urging the creation of community gardens and store rooms.⁶⁸ The Red Cross even had advertising campaigns to convince people to knit for the war effort.⁶⁹

I am inclined to believe that knitting was at least some of the “war work” Marion did. There is a picture of Marion in the 1930s knitting on a hill, so it must have been something she enjoyed doing. Marion also loved gardening, as evidence in *Marion and Her Babies*. Maybe she did both as “war work.”

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 67-68.

⁶⁸ “Women in Wartime,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Oct. 17, 1917.
<http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1917/10/17/page/19/article/women-in-wartime>.

⁶⁹ For more information see Paula Becker’s Historylink.org essay “Knitting for Victory”
<http://www.historylink.org/File/5721>.



Marion in her garden.



Marion knitting on a hillside in Vermont.

Marion continued to do work with the American Red Cross, perhaps even more fervently, after the war was over.

Marion and Braille Transcribing

When I began this project, I was discouraged when I discovered that Marion was only a librarian for seven years. The discouragement came from not thinking broadly or innovatively about what that might mean. That it meant that I couldn't say what I wanted to say about her,

which was, I don't know... That she did really incredible work as a librarian and that she did it because she cared about people and their access to the things they want and need and maybe that she cared about the space of the library as a space for everyone. Nothing has proved to me that that wasn't true, but it's also not the point.

Before I came to this realization, while still discouraged, I found a letter with an American Red Cross letterhead that Marion received in 1939 that reads:

My dear Mrs. Smith:

In recognition of the faithful service which you have given the Braille Department of the Chicago Chapter, while you were located in Evanston, we are pleased to send you the following insignia:

Two chevrons (one for each four years of service)

Please be assured that we have appreciated very much your splendid assistance in this work of providing Braille literature for the blind. You are to be commended on your record of transcribing 2,476 pages of Braille in addition to the personal service which you have given to many blind students.

We hope you are enjoying your new home. You have our very best wishes and we are very grateful for all you have done to make our Braille Department a success.

*Sincerely,
(Mrs.) Ethel R. Dunham,
Chairman, Braille Service⁷⁰*

If librarians are dedicated to making literature accessible to everyone, Marion never ceased in that dedication.

Not much is written about Braille transcribing during Marion's era, but I discovered an incredible primary source that provides more insight to the practice than any other source I could

⁷⁰ Ethel R. Dunham to Marion Twiss Smith, July 19, 1939.

find. Between 1921 and 1932 someone at Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts created a scrapbook of newspaper article clippings about Braille transcribing. The document contains 188 pages and is held in the Samuel P. Hayes Research Library at the school. A digital copy book is available on the Internet Archive.⁷¹

The book contains articles from all over the United States. All of the photographs are of women and a number of the articles are specifically calling for women to do this work. I've concluded that Braille transcribing must have been considered women's work (although some articles call for servicemen who want to help their blinded friends). It is also clear that a lot of this work was spearheaded by the Red Cross and was likely in response to rates of blindness rising because of war injuries. Many of the articles specifically imply that this work was for blinded soldiers or veterans. The title of the first article in the volume captures all of these themes: "Women's Aid Urged in Work for Blind: Braille Books Needed for Ex-Service Men at Evergreen, Red Cross Institute."⁷²

If Marion's eight years of service with the Red Cross's Braille Department began in 1930 and she learned Braille at the beginning of that service, she may have been drawn in by this a Chicago Tribune article from July 1930 titled, "Volunteers Give Time to Make Books For Blind: Chicago Red Cross Calls Workers for Task."⁷³ In response to a growing demand for Braille books, the manager of the Chicago chapter of the Red Cross called for an "imminent expansion of the Braille Department." The article includes information about the Braille training course developed by the Red Cross and says: "Women seeking means to use their leisure are aiding."⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Perkins School for the Blind Bound Clippings: Braille Transcribing, 1921-1932*. Scrapbook. From Samuel P. Hayes Research Library, Perkins School for the Blind. <http://archive.org/details/perkinsschoolfo213201perk>.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Learning and transcribing Braille was likely something Marion decided to do in her leisure, but it was still real work.

Dorothy Canfield Fisher, like Marion, also learned and transcribed Braille. Perhaps Marion was inspired by her. A 1931 article about Dorothy that is included in the Perkins School for the Blind collection mentions that she served as editor of the *International Magazine*, published in Braille.⁷⁵

In *Marion and Her Babies*, William writes about this era of Marion's life: "...she contributed in work and money to the betterment of the less fortunate and most noteworthy of all, she learned to print in braille. This meant an amazing amount of time and effort, all without remuneration. Besides ordinary books in considerable number, she printed a number of text books in French and German for Billy Brannon, a talented, blind North Evanston boy."⁷⁶

I initially thought of this act as well intentioned but perhaps misguided. After the war, a large number of soldiers became disabled, causing Americans who never thought to help or take interest in people with disabilities to do something about it. It might have helped people who did not get their disabilities from war, but it took something else for people to start caring. Most people who were blind could not read Braille, so this idea of helping the blind is really one of helping the Braille literate minority of blind people. Regardless, the fact that Marion helped a blind child, like Billy, who did not become blind during the war shows that helping blind people who were not veterans was also a priority, even though other sources imply otherwise.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 163.

⁷⁶ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

Marion's Final Years

...Marion was taken very sick, arthritis, and a spinal growth. She went to the hospital, was operated on, and then was confined to bed for nine months...She finally recovered in the spring of 1926, and most amazingly entered the most glorious and brilliant period of her life, which lasted 13 years.

- William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies*

Marion seems to have lived a full and happy life after her children had grown up. She became ill in 1925 and was bedridden for nearly a year. William writes, about her recovery: "She entered into the life of Evanston as never before, made many friends, developed her garden, attended innumerable plays, concerts, operas, lectures, foot ball games, sang in the Festivals, traveled, including three trips to Europe, saw her daughters thru college, and embarked on their careers."⁷⁷

She visited Dorothy Canfield Fisher often during this era. By this time, Dorothy had become quite famous. The year that Marion got married, Dorothy received her doctoral degree from Columbia University.⁷⁸ She married John Fisher in 1907. Around the time Marion was honored by the Red Cross, Dorothy was named by first lady Eleanor Roosevelt as one of the American women she admired most.⁷⁹

Marion's love for libraries clearly continued throughout her life. The Evanston Public Library was one of her favorite places and William insists that she "nearly wore out the sidewalks" between it and their home. She looked through the shelves and talked about literature with Flora Hay, the librarian there. She loved to read about history. In Dorset, Vermont, where

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Julia C. Ehrhardt, *Writers of Conviction: The Personal Politics of Zona Gale, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Rose Wilder Lane, and Josephine Herbst* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 60.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 53.

they often vacationed and spent time with friends, William writes that the library and a hillside were Marion's two favorite places there.

Marion and William visited Europe in August 1939. In *Marion and Her Babies* William writes, "Altho war was in the air and expected by most, we decided to risk it, and go across." The description of this trip is one of the more emotional sections of the book. They visited their son-in-law Korstiaan's family in Holland. Their trip was rearranged when "sounds of war were growing louder, and people were becoming panicky." They ended up in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. War was declared while they were in Sweden. In his retelling, William writes of his worries for the people, homes, and buildings they visited during their trip - especially Korstiaan's father, Albert, about whom he writes: "We've thought of him so often, and of his brave countrymen, so cheerful, with no desire for war, no desire to injure anyone. To hell with Hitler and his dirty swine!"

A few months after this trip Marion became ill again. Her illness affected her intermittently until January of 1942 when she was in constant pain. She died on February 23. William moved in with Janet, Korstiaan, Julie, and William in New Jersey. He ends *Marion and Her Babies* with "As I finish writing this little memorial, we have lived a very happy year, and hope to live here many years to come." William suffered a heart attack and passed away in December 1944.⁸⁰

Conclusion

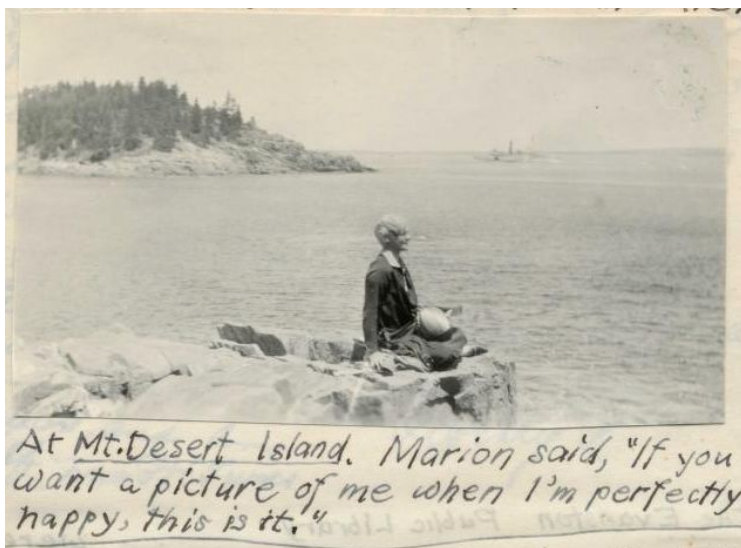
There are probably endless examples of Marion's modified librarianship that I do not and probably never will have access to. The work of this project could go on forever. People's

⁸⁰ William Griswold Smith, *Marion and Her Babies: A Record of a Mother by the One Who Knew Her Best*. Scrapbook. Packanack Lake, NJ: 1942.

histories are not always preserved and even if they are, there will always be new ways to interpret what has been preserved.

As much as, in the beginning, I wanted to do a project about my grandmother Julie, I want to be clear that this project could have been done about anyone. It could be done over and over again and there would still be more to learn and consider. In the process of doing this project I learned that Marion's mother-in-law / Julie's great grandmother / my great great grandmother, Julia Welles Griswold was a historian and genealogist in her own right. Not only that, but Marion's daughter / Julie's mother / my great grandmother, Janet, was, like me, a History major. All of this is to say that all these connections are here and they are meaningful, deep, and mysterious.

In the preface to her 1912 book *Life in A Castle*, Julia Welles Griswold wrote: "In touching upon History one cannot be original, though some historians have yielded to the temptation... As History this book is not serious; it is rather a pastime, a personal association with the Castle, its atmosphere, romance and the life within it of the Past and Present."⁸¹



⁸¹ Julia Welles Griswold, *Life in a Castle* (New York: Stewart and Company, 1912), xii.

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