

Wj *
9
vol 3
✓

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
MRS. JOHN BELLANGEE COX.

1871/5
Chas. Bellinger

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
MRS. JOHN BELLINGER COX.

Having often been asked to write a history of the different public and charitable works in which I have had the privilege of being engaged, I have now decided to do so.

In November, 1855, forty-four years ago, the late Mrs. Richard Vaux called my attention to five small children whose mother had died. The father, a poor man, was unable to care for them. At that time there were only a few children's homes in the city, and no organization that could meet such cases as this. Young, enthusiastic and anxious to do some charitable work, I called upon the late Bishop J. P. B. Wilmer, then rector of St. Mark's Church; the late Bishop Howe, then rector of St. Luke's Church; and the late Rev. Dudley A. Tyng, of the Church of the Epiphany. These gentlemen most heartily endorsed the plan I suggested to establish another home and have it under the special care of the Episcopal Church.

A meeting was called at my house, 1902 Chestnut Street, and with the full and cordial endorsement of the Rt. Rev. Abner Potter, D. D., then Bishop of the diocese of Pennsylvania, an organization was effected, and with Miss Mary Cannell, Mrs. F. B. Starr, Mrs. J. W. Robbins, Miss Margaretta Lewis, Mrs. George T. Lewis and others as my associates, a Board of Managers was selected and a Board of Council chosen, consisting of Hon. John Welch, George L. Harrison, Edward S. Buckley, Rev. W. S. Hinds and others, who gladly

consented to act with us, and the Institution known as the "Church Home" was chartered and commenced its work in a little house on Sanson Street above Sixteenth. We had no money, but Miss Cassell and I took the responsibility of the rent. We literally went from door to door on Walnut Street, giving our rich friends the privilege of helping us to furnish the house and to become annual subscribers to its maintenance. In a few days the home was furnished and we had \$1800 in the treasury, which amount was then equal to \$3000 now. At the annual meeting February 23, 1869, I declined being re-elected a Manager.

In 1863 a communication was received by the Managers of the "Church Home" from the State Superintendent of Soldiers' Orphans, asking if they could accommodate one hundred soldiers' orphan boys. Their building being small, they could not do so; but, feeling it a patriotic duty to take care of those children whose fathers had died defending our flag, a few of us determined to establish a home especially for those orphan boys. For this purpose a meeting was called by those interested and again we met at my house, No. 1902 Chestnut Street, in January, 1866. Major General George G. Meade presided, and another corporate body was formed under the name of the "Lincoln Institution." The Board of Managers consisted of Mrs. Geo. G. Meade, Mrs. John Frazer, Mrs. William Lippincott, Mrs. J. Edgar Thomson, Mrs. G. T. Lewis, Mrs. C. J. Stills, Mrs. T. E. Conrad, Mrs. James W. Robbins, Mrs. G. R. Justice, and others. I was elected First Directress, which position I have held ever since. Our Councillors were such men as Caleb Cope, Leonard Coffin, John P. Brock, Henry C. Gibson, Benjamin G. Godfrey, William Lippincott, General George G. Meade, Charles E. Lee, Thomas

A. Scott, Morton McMichael, Jr., Louis H. Bolser, Rev. J. W. Robbins, James W. Hartsburn, J. Edgar Thomson, J. Vaughan Merrick, Charles J. Stills, William P. Crosson, Joseph G. Rosengarten, and others.

The "Lincoln Institution" when organized as a Soldiers' Orphans' Home was to give the boys a common school education and then place them with business men, so that when they left the Institution they would be earning enough to support themselves, and this plan was most successfully carried out. As many of these boys came to us quite young, we soon found that when they became old enough to be placed at work we had to have a night school as well as a day school, and it was very difficult to manage the older boys and the younger ones under the same roof, as the same rules could not apply to both. We therefore determined to secure another building for the younger children. Through the assistance of Mr. I. V. Williamson, I was personally able to purchase in October, 1871, a lot of ground at Fifth and Woodland Avenues, and again a meeting was called at my house, No. 1902 Chestnut Street, and another corporation was organized and duly chartered under the title of "The Educational Home," where all boys under twelve years of age were cared for. The late Percival Roberts was elected President of the Board of Council, which was composed of Wm. H. Merrick, I. V. Williamson, G. Theo. Roberts, A. J. Drexel and others, and I was appointed First Directress of the Board of Managers, which position I still hold. My associates were Mrs. J. Dundas Lippincott, Mrs. John Frazer, Mrs. William Lippincott, Mrs. Henry C. Gibson, Mrs. Joshua Lippincott, Miss Mary C. Cox, Miss Anna B. Cox, Mrs. Briskerhoff, Miss E. C. Roberts, and others.

In looking over the reports of these Institutions, I find that, personally, I have collected about \$150,000 for them. It is most gratifying to me to remember that some of the best and ablest men of our city had such confidence in our ability to manage this important work, that they not only have given us large sums of money, but their firm support. Among these are such men as John P. Brock, Joseph Harrison, I. V. Williamson, George W. Childs, Henry C. Gibson, A. J. Drexel, Bishop Howe, Bishop O. W. Whitaker, Rev. Henry J. Rowland, Hon. Clayton McMichael, James W. Paul, George L. Harrison, E. M. Hopkins, Alexander Brown, Geo. C. Cannon, Leonard Coffin, Bishop Phillips Brooks, J. Dundas Lippincott, Charles W. Trotter, Thomas Robb, Jr., J. B. Moorhead, Joshua Lippincott, Edwin H. Fisher, Charles H. Howell, Hon. William N. Ashmun, V. Gilpin Robinson, H. Loomis Gryslin, Col. Samuel Bell, Col. O. C. Babypshoff, Gen. B. B. Booth, Wm. Livingston Boyd, Joseph S. Vetterlein, Malcolm Lloyd, W. H. Sayen, E. E. Peterson, Francis Rowle, George C. Thomas, Rev. Wm. Howard Falkner, Dr. Donald Hagler, George M. Newbold, E. Frank Clapp, Rev. Joseph H. Miller, Rev. Richard Newton, Charles H. Crump, Charles Biddle, and very many other prominent and well known citizens, not least among whom was the Hon. John Walsh, who at a time when the only difficulty I ever had with any Board with which I was connected occurred, stood firmly by me, and until his death, was a true friend to all our work. Other prominent citizens, although not on our Board, have encouraged us by expressions of confidence and approval, among them Senator Quay, Senator Penrose, Dr. Purifier Franer, Hampton L. Carson, Esq., Hon. Robert Adams, Jr., and Hon. Henry H. Bingham.

Four hundred and twenty-one soldiers' orphans were supported, educated and placed in business positions from the "Lincoln Institution," and four hundred and forty-four soldiers' orphans and other destitute boys were cared for at "The Educational Home," making eight hundred and sixty-five white boys; and in addition to these, three hundred girls were pupils at the "Church House" while I was a Manager, which bring the total number of white children in these three Institutions, up to eleven hundred and sixty-five.

In 1883, having given eighteen years to the care of the soldiers' orphans, and finding that they were able and old enough to take care of themselves, we changed the character of the "Lincoln Institution," and, feeling that the Indian race had a just claim upon us for sympathy, we decided to make care an Indian school. In this desire we were warmly supported by the late Hon. Samuel J. Randall, then Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations of the House. Mr. Randall had every confidence in our ability to do this work, so he endorsed our application for an appropriation. The past sixteen years we have devoted our time, care and interest to Indian children, of whom we have had on the roll four hundred and seventy girls and four hundred and seventy boys, total number of Indians, nine hundred and forty, which with the eleven hundred and sixty-five white children referred to above, make a total of two thousand and five children cared for in these three Institutions. Our Annual Reports for this year of both boys' and girls' schools show what has become of the Indian pupils that have returned home.

In 1862, during the war, the convalescent soldiers from the hospitals had no place to go when allowed out except to taverns, so I conceived the idea of establishing a reading-

room for them. An old church on Twentieth Street near Chestnut, dilapidated in every way, was secured and carpenters, painters, etc., gladly gave their time, at night, and soon the building was put in good order; many prominent men and women giving their money and time to this good work. Donations of books, games, etc., poured in from patriotic citizens. A dining room was attached, where for five cents these poor wounded men could get a comfortable meal, with tea or coffee; and if they did not have the money they were given their meals free. Ten thousand soldiers were fed there. On July 5th, 1863, when the Union League sent a regiment to the aid of General Meade at Gettysburg, this same reading-room gave these men a good meal and filled their haversacks. Miss Louisa E. Claghorn and I followed them the next night to Harrisburg to see that they were properly cared for there.

Now it must be distinctly understood that while I was the First Directress of these Institutions, I could have done nothing without the able assistance of the other Managers, among them Mrs. C. F. Leavitt, Mrs. T. K. Coarsd, Mrs. C. J. Kelle, Mrs. Alfred C. Harrison, Mrs. Cornelius Stevenson, Mrs. Henry J. Rowland, Mrs. Charles H. Howell, Mrs. Henry C. Gibson, Mrs. Pansifer Frazer, Mrs. E. C. H. Brock, Mrs. Joshua Lippincott, Mrs. T. P. Chandler, Miss Mary C. Cox, Mrs. E. E. Tullidge, Mrs. Hampton I. Carson, Mrs. John Pepper, Mrs. P. H. Ashbridge, Mrs. David Bough, Mrs. V. Gilpin Robinson, Mrs. James F. Lynd, Miss F. Panson, Mrs. A. N. Whartensly, Mrs. C. W. Stouffer, Miss Mary J. Lewis, Mrs. Walter McMichael, Miss Nina Lee, Mrs. Ellwood Davis, Mrs. Manning Kennard, Mrs. E. Y. Paraphar, Mrs. G. L. Harrison, Jr., Mrs. S. M. Frevost, Mrs. W. W. Colket, Mrs. G. Ashteton Carson, Mrs. Donald Hughes, Miss M. C. Dulles,

Miss McDonough, Mrs. B. T. Beylard, Mrs. S. F. Shaw, Mrs. Joseph N. Blanchard, Mrs. L. J. Dea Granger, Mrs. C. H. Horn, Mrs. Wayne MacVough, Miss Jones, Mrs. S. F. Tyler, Mrs. T. LaRoche Ellis, Mrs. Charles Wheeler, Mrs. Edward C. Jangerich, and others. Each committee has always taken its share of the work. I have always recognized the fact that a leader is also the servant of his associates. What could General Grant have done without his army? What could I have done without the assistance of the intelligent and practical women who have always composed our Boards, and the able and broad-minded men who have been our Counsellors? Could I alone have made a success of these Institutions and trained up over two thousand children? Could I have retained my position as First Directress for so many years if I had arrogated to myself undue authority, or presumed to dictate to such a Board of Managers?

It is most gratifying to me to know that during the forty-four years I have been a co-worker with such a number of prominent men and women, that there has never been the slightest unpleasantness among our members, except in one instance, which was caused by purely personal feeling. In no instance has any Manager resigned from the Board because of any unpleasantness with or personal feeling against me.

All this work has given a great deal of pleasure and much gratification in its results, for to-day there are in this city men occupying good business positions, good citizens, making good livings for themselves in our savings bank societies, our banks, railroad offices and other responsible places, who owe their education and training to the "Lincoln Institution" and "The Educational Home," and see proud towns it. I am greeted constantly by some of our old boys, all glad

to acknowledge their indebtedness to the Institutions with which I have been connected, and always expressing a personal affection for me. We know of no similar institution in this or any other country whose boys and girls are taken at the age of six years and over and retained (if allowed by their parents to remain) until they are capable of earning their own living, giving them not only a home, but education and an industrial training. While we have been successful with both white and Indian pupils in this work, we have been subjected to unfair criticism. This has been annoying but not discouraging, because the result of our labors as a whole has been most satisfactory.

There are those who do no personal work themselves, but spend their time and energies in trying to pull down what others have built. In 1886, a committee of citizens visited "The Educational Home." They found there over one hundred and seventy boys from six to twelve years of age, strong, healthy, and showing every sign of being well cared for. This committee measured with a tape line the dormitories, the height of ceilings, width and breadth of rooms, and proclaimed that there was not air-space enough for the number of children occupying them. They forgot that it was not a hospital, and that the windows were kept down from the top and there were open transoms over the doors. They found some of the boys with dirty faces and hands. Any mother with three or four boys, with a maid to look after them, knows the difficulty of keeping her boys clean, especially if they are strong and healthy. These children were bathed twice a week, and washed and combed three times daily; but what child does not love to play in the dirt, and to blacken his face if he can, to look, as he imagines, like an Indian—for these were white

boys? One hundred and seventy pairs of feet going in and out of any house must, before many hours, soil the floors. We have always tried to make our charges happy, and not to hamper them with too many restrictions. We know what cleanliness is as well as any inspector does. We have never had any odor about our buildings. We have had thirty-two cases of scarlet fever at one time, and all recovered, but they were a pretty dirty looking party while they were ill. By the doctor's orders they were gressed from head to foot, and their clothes were never changed until they were convalescent. This some persons would think dreadful, but their lives were not only saved but not one suffered any bad effects from this dreadful disease. Another year this same committee paid us a visit. The same criticisms were made, and yet all was well with the children. Their health and comfort was our object, and by judicious management we accomplished it.

Those who have found fault with us have had no such experience as ours. They have never personally taken one destitute child, white or Indian, and watched over him for years, and trained him into good citizenship. There is not practical work—it is theoretical. I will cite a case in point. A poor Indian and his wife, who belonged to a shanty, were left in this city penniless. They appealed to certain persons who claim to be the Indian's friend and protector, but were referred by them to other parties who in turn referred them to others, until, tired out and discouraged, these unfortunate people walked out to "The Educational Home," for they had no money for car fare. They were kindly received and fed there. Money was given them to pay their fare home, which they repaid in a very short time. This is the differ-

ance between theory and practice. It is the eminently practical manner in which the charitable works I have been associated with have been conducted that has gained the confidence of all practical thinking citizens. Our critics may try to pull us down—may see, as they have done, every effort in their power to close our doors, to send back two hundred Indians to their home life; but so long as we continue to do our work in the future as in the past, there is a Power behind us which they cannot overcome.

For some wise purpose which we cannot understand, it seems ordained that people who work successfully for the good of others shall meet with criticism from those whom we would naturally expect to be most sympathetic. Our consolation is that "Having a good conscience, it is better that we suffer for well doing than for evil doing."

In addition to the public work above named, I have held the following positions in Philadelphia:

June, 1864, I was Chairman of the Restaurant Committee of the Sanitary Fair. In three weeks we made \$30,000 clear of expenses. The only restaurant of all the Sanitary Fairs in the country at that time that did not lose money.

In 1875, was elected President of the Woman's Board of the Soldiers' Home.

In 1876, was appointed one of the committee of thirteen women representing the thirteen original states at the Centennial.

In 1877, was President of the Committee appointed to present the Hon. John W. Wick with the English and American flags before he sailed for London as Minister to the Court of St. James.

In 1878, was appointed President of Women's Auxiliary Committee of the Meade Memorial, to assist in raising funds for the erection of the statue of General Meade now in the Park. I was also in that year elected a Manager of the News Boys' Home.

In 1878, Mrs. Judson Lippincott and I were placed at the head of the Committee of Escort to Mrs. R. B. Hayes, wife of the then President of the United States, when she visited Philadelphia.

In 1880, I was made an honorary member of Post No. 2, G. A. R., and also the same year was made a member of Organized Associate Charities.

In 1884, Mr. A. J. Drexel made me First Directress of his proposed Institution, and I am still a member of the Advisory Board of the Drexel Institute.

In 1893, I was made a member of the committee of representative women from Pennsylvania to the Columbian Exhibition at Chicago.

In closing I feel that I must express my sincere appreciation of the confidence and support I have received, and am still receiving, from men and women of our city occupying the highest positions, both socially, officially and in the business and professional world, and they are entitled to as much if not more credit than myself for any good accomplished by these charitable and patriotic works.

MARY McHENRY COX.

Philadelphia, March 27th, 1899.