

Guide to the Laura Brownell Collier Papers, 1874-1944

Biographical Note

Laura Brownell Collier was born on January 27, 1851 in Williston, Vermont. A member of a prominent New England family, she was descended from Governor William Bradford and John and Priscilla Alden. Laura's father, Chauncey Wells Brownell, was prominent lawyer and Vermont state senator, and her mother, Laura Chapin Higbee Brownell, had been head of the Williston Academy.

At the age of 13 Laura began teaching in a one-room school in Williston and later taught in the Burlington, Vermont public schools for \$1.50 a week. She entered Vassar College as a senior and was graduated in 1874 as a member of Phi Beta Kappa. After Vassar, she taught at Abbot Academy in Andover, Massachusetts for three years, and then studied at Berlin University from 1877 to 1878.

In 1882, Laura married John Austin Collier, a research chemist who worked on experiments involving sorghum, rice production, and milling. They then moved to Brooklyn, New York where Laura found a job teaching Latin at Packer Collegiate Institute. They had two daughters, Elizabeth and Katharine, who attended both Packer and later, Vassar College. From 1902 until 1911, John was the manager of the Vermont and Arizona Copper Company, which was located in Arizona, although Laura and the girls remained in New York. Laura was widowed on September 11, 1920.

Active in various historical and social organizations, Laura was a member of the Alden Kindred Association, the Meridian Club, the League of Women Voters, and other groups concerning the antiwar and woman suffrage movements. She took pride in the fact that she voted at every regular and special election. Laura also wrote a number of editorials for the New York Press, on topics ranging from the Mexican Revolution to the College Settlement movement.

In 1942 she moved back to Vermont with her younger daughter, Katharine, where she remained until her death in 1949.

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