

**A Woman of the Twentieth Century: A Biographical  
Sketch of Sophonisba P. Breckinridge**

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Autumn 2000-2001  
May 6, 2002

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## I. Background

*I can recall on this blustering, disagreeable March afternoon, that Easter Sabbath afternoon when you came into my life—when I called you my “peace baby”: and how I nursed you that summer.*<sup>1</sup>

William Campbell Preston (W.C.P.) Breckinridge surely could not have imagined the twentieth century woman his “peace baby” would become when she was born on April 1, 1866 in Kentucky.<sup>2</sup> He was a Colonel in the Confederate Army and had only been home for eleven months from fighting in the Civil War when Sophonisba was born. Sophonisba was the second child of W.C.P. Breckinridge and Issa Desha Breckinridge; there would eventually be three daughters and two sons in the family.<sup>3</sup> Their older daughter Ella, was said to be Issa Desha’s favorite. There is no doubt that Sophonisba, or Nisba as she was known, was W.C.P.’s favorite. He wrote in a letter to her while she was away at college that he put her to sleep, walked her when she was sick, and unlike other fathers of his day, “persisted to give [her] brain a fair chance to show its power.”<sup>4</sup>

Sophonisba was lucky to have been born to W.C.P. Breckinridge. He supported the idea of coeducation and encouraged the right of women to vote.<sup>5</sup> This is in contrast to the pervasive nineteenth century conception of women belonging to the home and children, and only the men monopolizing the public spheres of the political and economic world.<sup>6</sup> And, Kentucky was an especially non-progressive state, said to be “among the most backward in the country” when it came to the rights of women. Well into the late nineteenth century, Kentucky had “no property law for married women, no law permitting women to make a will without her husband’s consent, no law giving women full rights to their own earnings, no law allowing them full voting privileges.”<sup>7</sup> Despite this context, it was Sophonisba, rather than either of her two brothers Desha or Robert, whom her father looked to as the one who would “preserve the connection for

the next generation” of the Breckinridge name with the values of “good thinking and courageous utterance.”<sup>8</sup>

Sophonisba thrived as a result of her father’s love and encouragement. Later in her life she said that she was saved by her love for him and her desire to please him. Prophetic of her future life, she even learned to read by looking at the letters in her father’s law books.<sup>9</sup> She was always different from other little girls, including her sisters Ella and Curry. For example, once her father offered her and Ella either a dollar or a party if they should receive perfect grades in school. Ella took the party and Sophonisba took the dollar. Later and again prophetically, she spent her savings by giving them to a missionary who told her about the poverty suffered in China.<sup>10</sup> Her disinterest in parties remained with her. She once commented that she would “rather have a good fight any afternoon, even if [she] get[s] beaten, than go to a party any time.”<sup>11</sup>

Sophonisba was also lucky to have been born to parents of the middle class. Her father was a lawyer and had an impressive family tree. W.C.P.’s grandfather was a Kentucky Senator and Attorney General under President Jefferson.<sup>12</sup> John C. Breckinridge, a cousin of the family, was a U.S. Senator and Vice-President in the Buchanan administration. And, W.C.P. himself served as a U.S. Representative.<sup>13</sup> Issa Desha was also from a prominent Kentucky family and had family ties to Patrick Henry.<sup>14</sup> Her families’ prominence afforded her many opportunities that she otherwise would not have had.

Her father’s professional status and commitment to women’s education allowed Sophonisba her first college experience. W.C.P. Breckinridge was the lawyer for the State Agricultural and Mechanical College and was instrumental in changing their charter to allow coeducation. As if a reward for her father’s commitment, at the young age of fourteen,

Sophonisba enrolled in the state school.<sup>15</sup> When she was arguably still a girl, Sophonisba became one of the first women students at the A&M college.<sup>16</sup> She worked hard at her schoolwork for four years and was one of the top three students in her class. She said that she “cared about grades because it pleased [her] father and justified his position with reference to the treatment of women.”<sup>17</sup> Sophonisba seemed keenly aware of her example as a pioneer in coeducation. She was also aware that her presence at the school was less than welcomed by most people. When she first went to the school to enroll, she was turned away by the president because of her sex. Her parents instructed her to return with a message for the president reminding him of the provision in the new charter allowing female students.<sup>18</sup> She also recalled a professor who did not like to have girls in his class and his humiliating her with difficult problems to perform in front of the class. Telling of her spirit, although Sophonisba could not answer one problem correctly the first time, the answer came to her in her sleep and she answered it correctly the next day in front of the visiting trustees. Also telling of her spirit, she claimed that after writing the correct answer on the board, she behaved “maliciously complacent” and this upset the professor.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Wellesley Years**

Issa Desha divulged to her daughter that she was her father’s “sole [and] only hope for an educated daughter.”<sup>20</sup> She, with the support of her parents, decided to travel north to Massachusetts and attend college at Wellesley in 1884. Sophonisba was very excited about the opportunity and even exclaimed that the college “was made or established for me or the likes of me.”<sup>21</sup> Early on though, Sophonisba became terribly homesick.<sup>22</sup> Rather than sending for her, both of her parents wrote letters, encouraging her to be strong and remain in school. Her father told her that she was experiencing this feeling because she had been “tenderly reared and always

treated with rather peculiar and affectionate esteem,” and that however “kind and pleasant every one may be, the difference is immense.”<sup>23</sup> Her mother reminded her how much she had wanted to go to Wellesley and asked her to remember how dull life at home was and “how one day is like another.”<sup>24</sup> It seemed both of her parents knew that Sophonisba was not like the girls who stayed in Lexington. Her father “doubted that traditional womanly pursuits could hold his daughter’s interests, and he openly dreaded the possibility that they would.”<sup>25</sup> Her mother was convinced that she had “intellect and culture beyond the girls of [her] age and that [she had] everything to look forward to in life.”<sup>26</sup>

It didn’t take long for Sophonisba to settle into her new home. She was elected president of the freshman class half way through her first year.<sup>27</sup> Coincidentally, W.C.P. had also been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives during that same period. He offered political advice to his daughter<sup>28</sup> and told her that he was proud of her for having been elected, not because of the office that she held, “but because of the evidence of respect and affection that it affords.”<sup>29</sup> Sophonisba would be elected class president twice more during her years at Wellesley.<sup>30</sup> Other than her presidency, Sophonisba enjoyed such activities as the Shakespeare Society, rowing crew and serving as the mistress of ceremonies for the Junior Promenade.<sup>31</sup> Sophonisba did enjoy a couple of parties, such as the Promenade and a costume party, but after a long letter to her mother explaining an outfit she put together for such an occasion, she said that she would miss such festivities from then on “because things like these take so much time and don’t pay.”<sup>32</sup>

Another new experience Sophonisba was granted at Wellesley was that of being coeducated with African-American women. When she arrived at Wellesley, she saw an African-American student being enrolled, like herself. When a traveling companion asked W.C.P. about whether he approved of this, he said that Nisba had “got on all right with the boys; I think she

will get on all right with the colored.”<sup>33</sup> He also commented that if the girl could “beat Nisba when it comes to studying, she is good enough to be anywhere; but she will have to be better than any of the boys in the college at home.”<sup>34</sup> W.C.P. was a supporter of the education of African-Americans. He was friends with Frederick Douglas, whom Sophonisba claimed commented that W.C.P. was “the white man with whom he could most freely and without consciousness of racial differences discuss problems of public concern.” W.C.P. had in the past gained a reputation as a liberal and thereby lost his first bid for public office because of his support for admitting into evidence the testimony of African-Americans in court proceedings.<sup>35</sup> He also represented African-Americans in court and condemned literacy tests and grandfather clauses that served to disenfranchise the group.

Issa Desha was not as supportive of coeducation with African-American students, or at least not when that meant coeducation with her own daughter. She wrote that she hoped Sophonisba would have no reason to come into contact with “them,” but that she did not fear her daughter’s contamination or her not acting like a lady. She warned her daughter that it “is hard for people raised with our prejudices to ever treat them as equals,” but encourage her to “treat them properly.”<sup>36</sup> It was difficult for Sophonisba at first. The Negro Jubilee Singers visited Wellesley during Sophonisba’s freshman year. Sophonisba said that it did not bother her to serve them food, but she admitted, her “own food [she] could not swallow.”<sup>37</sup> By her junior year, she championed the cause of an African-American classmate who was not allowed to invite guests to the Junior Promenade because classmates argued that the Negroes “could claim equality in educational matters but not social matters.” Sophonisba challenged that by stating that all activities at Wellesley were educational and eventually the African-American classmate

was given equal right to bring guests to the dance.<sup>38</sup> Her opinions about race and civil rights would evolve substantially as she grew older and more educated.

Sophonisba thrived academically at Wellesley, as well as socially. She majored in mathematics, an unusual major for women during that period. An enthusiastic student, Sophonisba commented that she “became literally intoxicated over Conic sections and breathless at the infinite curves to which [she] was introduced in Calculus.”<sup>39</sup> She warned her family that if they did not hear from her, it was likely because she was “lost to all the world in the fascination of examinations.” After one set of exams she concluded that her “chief desire [would] be to have the examinations come back again” because they had been “so very lovely and [she had] enjoyed every one.”<sup>40</sup> A fellow student claimed that Sophonisba had taken top rank in all of her classes and that she was the “most brilliant student in the class.”<sup>41</sup>

As the years at Wellesley drew to a close, Sophonisba and her family wondered what she would do next. Sophonisba assumed that her next life experience would be decided for her, and she wished she knew what it would be.<sup>42</sup> At one point, W.C.P. encouraged his daughter to take up chemistry so that she could explore pharmacy, electricity or botany after college. He thought those were fields “of profitable and honorable work for women; less onerous and more attractive than the needle, the school-room and the store.”<sup>43</sup> He bluntly told Sophonisba that she had to consider that if he were to die, she would have to make a living for herself and that she may have to do so even if he lived.<sup>44</sup> W.C.P. would rather his daughter earn a living through “honest toil,” than to take on the “worse than aimless life of the young girls [she] would associate with” in Lexington.<sup>45</sup> Still, Sophonisba did not know what she was to do with herself after graduating from Wellesley. She later lamented how her “college work had failed in every way to help me toward a profession.” She wondered if she had gone to Michigan, “where progressive women

like Miss Laura Clay went,” whether she would have been able to follow her father’s footsteps in law after college. Having studied math and Latin, she regretted, she “was no nearer earning [her] living when [she] came back from college than when [she] had left home.”<sup>46</sup>

### **The Transition Years**

Sophonisba returned to her parents home after graduating from Wellesley. They lived part of the year in Lexington and part in Washington D.C., as her father was still serving as a U.S. Representative. She had hoped to begin studying law at that time. She later explained that she was not able to because so few law schools were open to women and because her mother was frail and needed her help at home. There was one law school in Washington that accepted women students, but the school only offered classes in the evening, which is when her family duties required her to be at home.<sup>47</sup> Her first paid position was as a high school teacher of mathematics in Washington; she was able to teach school during the day and keep the house in the evenings. Although teaching was not enjoyable for her, she did enjoy receiving pay and contributing to, rather than draining, the family income.<sup>48</sup>

A highlight of this otherwise aimless part of her life was the time she spent with Susan B. Anthony. For one winter, the Breckinridge family and Ms. Anthony boarded together in Washington.<sup>49</sup> Anthony and Sophonisba became friends. Sophonisba called herself a “modest little victim”<sup>50</sup> of Anthony’s teachings on women’s suffrage and recalled Anthony’s “vigorous” attempts “to indoctrinate her [with] women’s rights principles”.<sup>51</sup> Anthony even tried to find Sophonisba a job in the suffrage movement, knowing how dissatisfied she was with teaching. Unfortunately, Sophonisba did not “think herself outspoken enough nor qualified enough to work for Anthony’s cause.”<sup>52</sup> Her role in the suffrage and women’s rights movements would come later in her life.

Still terribly unhappy teaching, Sophonisba sank into a sickly and depressed period of her life. She even contemplated becoming an Episcopal nun.<sup>53</sup> During the winter of 1890, Sophonisba became ill with influenza. She did not recover well and her father was very worried about her welfare.<sup>54</sup> The family returned to Lexington that same year. While Sophonisba's condition did improve and she even enjoyed a social life in Lexington during that period, her father noticed in the spring of 1891, Sophonisba was still not well. In response, he sent her and her sister younger Curry away to Europe for over a year. They stayed in France, Belgium and Switzerland and took French and German lessons.<sup>55</sup> In between these lessons and the sightseeing she and her sister did, Sophonisba took the time abroad to study law on her own.<sup>56</sup> Her mother encouraged her, writing, "I am so glad you love and are going to study law and make it your profession—if God gave our girls more purpose than our boys, He intended they should do more."<sup>57</sup>

Soon after that letter of encouragement, during the summer of 1892, Sophonisba and Curry received the news that their mother was very ill. They had planned to stay in Europe another several months, but quickly made their way home to be with their mother. Sadly, their mother had passed away by the time they were back in Lexington, dying at the young age of forty-eight.<sup>58</sup> Sophonisba again became depressed, feeling guilty that she was not at home for her mother and that she had not been a dutiful daughter.<sup>59</sup> She was probably also quite burdened by the household responsibilities that she had to assume.<sup>60</sup>

Sophonisba took the time to continue studying law and had her father's law books to herself when he returned to Washington that year.<sup>61</sup> One day in November of 1892, Sophonisba's brother had business to attend to in Frankfort, Kentucky. Sophonisba traveled with him in order to take the bar examination<sup>62</sup> The chief justice of the court of appeals had been a

friend of W.C.P. Breckinridge during the Civil War. He agree to examine Sophonisba and gathered two other judges for the test.<sup>63</sup> Sophonisba recalled having been questioned for three or four hours and was amused when she was asked to promise that she “never fought a duel with deadly weapons.” Ultimately, the panel of judges agreed that she was qualified to practice law. They administered the oath that very day to the first woman ever to be admitted to the bar in Kentucky.<sup>64</sup> This news made the front page of the New York Times. The newspaper informed that there was “a pretty little story” about the “bright and handsome young daughter” of W.C.P. Breckinridge. The story also credits Susan B. Anthony with proclaiming “it to the world that she was an aspirant for legal honors, before the idea was in the least formulated in [Sophonisba’s] own mind.”<sup>65</sup>

Sophonisba went home to Lexington after the exam and spent the next several months trying to establish her legal practice. Her first case was a homesteading dispute brought to her by a lawyer friend of her father’s. She later recalled that during “the first few weeks, three cases involving special women’s interests were brought to” her. As time passed and few clients came seeking her help, she began to think that people who were already in trouble with the law were not likely to want to be represented by a woman.<sup>66</sup> This must have been a depressing and disappointing revelation.

Sophonisba would not soon have respite from disappointment. In the 1893, about a year after the death of Issa Desha, W.C.P. remarried a woman named Louise Wing, who was also a cousin of the family. After only a month of marriage, another woman, Madeline Pollard sued W.C.P. for breach of promise, claiming that she had been W.C.P.’s lover for the past nine years and that he had promised to marry her after an appropriate time had passed. She also claimed that W.C.P. had fathered three children by her, although none of them lived passed infancy.<sup>67</sup>

W.C.P. admitted to the affair and was found liable for Pollard's breach of promise claim. He was ordered to pay her \$15,000.<sup>68</sup> The embarrassment went on even longer because W.C.P. ran for reelection in 1894. The unlikely grouping of "social purity groups, religious associations and women's rights activists joined with [W.C.P.'s] partisan political enemies" to make sure he lost his reelection bid.<sup>69</sup> Opponents to his reelection held rallies attended by as many as five to six thousand people. People spoke out against him calling him "a disgrace to Kentucky, a shame upon manhood, an insult to womanhood, a sinful example to youth, a menace to society and the home."<sup>70</sup> W.C.P. went on to lose his seat, but remarkably, only by less than one percent of the vote.<sup>71</sup>

During this time Sophonisba supported her father in more ways than one. She remembered the love her father had given her and her mother and described him as "endlessly kind."<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, she continued to keep house for her father and cared for his new wife. Louise "had a strange nervous [condition] that manifested itself sometimes in attacks of a [hysterical] character."<sup>73</sup> Sophonisba remembered that "by sheer will power and prayer I could often carry her through. If I did not succeed, the results were quite dreadful for she became very abusive, especially about my father."<sup>74</sup>

One can imagine that this was a very unhappy time for Sophonisba. Her mental and physical health were acutely unwell. In order to try to heal and to get away from Lexington, Sophonisba traveled to Oak Park, Illinois to visit a friend from Wellesley, May Estelle Cook.<sup>75</sup> May took graduate classes at the University of Chicago and told Sophonisba about her experience. She also introduced Sophonisba to Marion Talbot, then the assistant dean of women and professor of sanitary science at the University of Chicago. It was this fateful visit to Chicago

and fateful introduction to Marion Talbot that would drastically change the course of Sophonisba's life.<sup>76</sup>

## II. A Profession of Her Own

### Graduate Education

Marion Talbot took an instant interest in Sophonisba and encouraged her to stay in Chicago and attend graduate school. She knew that Sophonisba was interested and knowledgeable in law and suggested the political science department as a place for Sophonisba to continue her studies.<sup>77</sup> The University of Chicago was a young school, only open since 1892<sup>78</sup>, and had welcomed women as students in undergraduate and graduate work.<sup>79</sup>

The University of Chicago offered a unique and exciting setting in which to study. Chicago was a large city and the population had increased six fold in the previous three decades. Much of this population explosion was a result of immigration, mostly from Europe. At that time, as many as three out of every four people were foreign born or first generation Americans. Furthermore, Chicago had been recovering from a great fire in 1871 and had hosted the Columbian Exposition in 1893.<sup>80</sup> The city was growing and changing and was a microcosm of industrial growing pains. Labor unrest and poverty were rampant in the city, a stark contrast to the progress and wealth that the city also represented.<sup>81</sup> Another phenomenon taking place in Chicago was the settlement movement. The Hull House, opened by Jane Addams in 1889, was an example of this movement. Hull House would later figure prominently in Sophonisba's life and the life of many other progressive reformers of her era.<sup>82</sup> This was an exciting time in Chicago and a perfect laboratory for a scholar.

Sophonisba began work on her Masters degree in the political science department during the 1894-1895 school year. She recalled having to ask the janitor "to shorten the front legs of

one of the big chairs [in the classroom], otherwise my feet would not touch the ground.”<sup>83</sup> She studied in particular with Ernst Freund. From him she learned that “law could be understood within the social and historical context that framed its very existence,” and that “legislation could be used as a social tool.”<sup>84</sup> Another key influence in her studies was J. Laurence Laughlin. From Laughlin she learned about using research to solve social problems.<sup>85</sup> Laughlin, although too conservative for Sophonisba’s liking,<sup>86</sup> was known for his generosity in helping women students. Sophonisba appreciated that about him and once noted that he was “one of three or four who found it possible himself and made it possible for others to be wholly unconscious of the fact of differences of sex.”<sup>87</sup> Sophonisba wrote her thesis on the evolution of court decisions in Kentucky in a study titled “The Administration of Justice in Kentucky.” Always exaggerating in humility, she later commented that the study was a “ridiculously inadequate piece of work” and that she used it to show her students “how much more careful one should be in preparing a piece of work that remains forever in the library.”<sup>88</sup>

She had to finish work on her masters thesis in Kentucky because she did not have adequate funds to remain in school.<sup>89</sup> Also, her father requested her help in dealing with his ailing wife.<sup>90</sup> In 1897, Sophonisba’s brother Desha offered to pay for her to take a vacation. Of all the places she could have chosen to go, she asked for a trip to Chicago so that she could take her masters examination and defend her thesis. Her brother exclaimed, “Well, go take your damned examination.” She did just that and was awarded her masters degree in 1897.<sup>91</sup> She returned to the University permanently for the next school year and said that she “never left without either a round trip ticket or an arrangement that insured [her] return” again.<sup>92</sup>

She was only able to return permanently to the University of Chicago because she obtained a fellowship with the help of Marion Talbot. Her yearly stipend was \$500, an award

smaller than it would have been had she been a male. In a letter to her father, Sophonisba explained that women could not get awards larger than that because the University assumed that they would leave to marry anyway.<sup>93</sup> While she studied for her doctorate in political science, Sophonisba was able to earn extra money by serving as Assistant Dean of Women (Marion Talbot was the Dean) and earned room and board by serving as the head resident of Green Hall (a position she continued to hold for the next four decades).<sup>94</sup> She wrote her thesis on the history of legal tender in the United States. The topic was perhaps more interesting than it would be now because of the debate at the time between those who wished for money to be backed by silver and those who wished to use the gold standard.<sup>95</sup> Sophonisba completed her thesis in 1901 and graduated with her Ph.D.<sup>96</sup> *summa cum laude*.<sup>97</sup> She was the first woman at the University of Chicago to be awarded a doctorate degree in political science.<sup>98</sup>

As almost every one of Sophonisba's male classmates took positions as professors at colleges and universities,<sup>99</sup> Sophonisba discovered that despite her extraordinary academic record, her sex would prevent her from being a desirable candidate for such a position.<sup>100</sup> Several studies that were conducted in the 1920's suggested that women may have been invited to study at many universities, but few were invited to teach. Those who did "received a chilly reception—in addition to lower salaries, heavy responsibilities for female students, and inadequate research support." Furthermore, women faced "grim chances for promotion," and clustered "on the bottom rungs of the faculty."<sup>101</sup> Sophonisba's past and future would be shaped by the doors that were closed to her because of her sex. She would eventually make a place for herself in academia.

In the meantime, Marion Talbot begged for a position that would keep Sophonisba in Chicago. She convinced the head of the political science department to allow Sophonisba to

teach classes in the department as a docent (perhaps something akin to an instructor).

Unfortunately, not a single student registered for the classes that she offered.<sup>102</sup> Sophonisba decided to further put off the question of her career and enrolled in the brand new law school at the University of Chicago, which opened in 1902.<sup>103</sup> When Sophonisba entered the law school, “some of the male students asked [the head of the law school] to bar women from the school, his reply was, ‘Perhaps,—if at the end of the quarter any one of you will show me a record as good as Miss Breckinridge’s.’ And that was the end of that.”<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, an article printed in the *Chicago Public* suggested that Sophonisba’s “superiority to the men of her class is another argument against coeducation.”<sup>105</sup>

Very little is written about her experiences in law school, except that she continued to study with Ernst Freund, who left the political science department to teach at the law school.<sup>106</sup> In keeping with her pattern of achieving not only firsts for women, but also excellence, Sophonisba was the first woman to graduate from the University of Chicago law school in 1904. She received the highest grade point average in her class.<sup>107</sup> She was likewise the first woman admitted to the Coif.<sup>108</sup>

### **Evolution of Academic Influence**

Sophonisba was again faced with having to figure out what to do with herself professionally. Again, Marion Talbot pressured the administration to offer Sophonisba a position that reflected her talent and intellect. Finally, Sophonisba was offered a position as an instructor in the Department of Household Administration, for the salary of \$1,000 per year. Sophonisba accepted the position.<sup>109</sup> Sadly, she also had to deal with the death of her beloved father that year.<sup>110</sup>

The Department of Household Administration was along the lines of what would now be referred to as home economics.<sup>111</sup> Sophonisba's academic work had never been about such things, but she made due with the appointment that was given her. This new department was paradoxical: on the one hand, it was an attempt by male academic establishment to segregate female students and encourage even educated women to remain in their own sphere; on the other hand, it provided much needed professional opportunities for women as professors and other in other working roles.<sup>112</sup> For Sophonisba, it was her first and only opportunity to have a faculty position after so many years of graduate and professional education. It was also a fateful twist that directed Sophonisba to use her political, economic and legal skills to look at the lives of women.<sup>113</sup>

Unlike the other faculty in the Household Administration department, Sophonisba did not focus or teach classes on women's management of the home or their role in traditional spheres. Rather, she tended to teach about women in industry, women professionals, the effect of marriage on the rights of women, and the role of the state in women's lives. "The State and the Child," "The State in Relation to Labor," and "The Legal and Economic Position of Women" are all example of classes Sophonisba taught during this period.<sup>114</sup>

In 1907, two important events happened that lead Sophonisba closer to her fate of social work. First, she spent her vacation quarter from the University at the Hull House,<sup>115</sup> as she would continue to do for fourteen years thereafter.<sup>116</sup> At the Hull House, progressives such as Jane Addams, Julia Lathrop, Florence Kelley and Edith Abbott lived and worked.<sup>117</sup> Sophonisba became increasingly active in progressive issues around the city.<sup>118</sup> The second event is that Julia Lathrop obtained funding from the Russell Sage Foundation for an institution she worked for, the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy. This funding was to be used to install a

research department at the school. Sophonisba was asked to head this new research department. She accepted the position, but continued her work in the Department of Household Administration at University of Chicago. At this time Sophonisba asked Edith Abbott, a former student of hers, to return to Chicago to work with her in the new research department.<sup>119</sup> This was the beginning of the professionalization of social work and a lifelong friendship and partnership between Sophonisba and Edith.

Most of the training of social workers was done through an apprenticeship system. At the time, social work consisted of charity work done by women who would visit the poor on the behalf of private social service organizations.<sup>120</sup> With industrialization, urban problems began to be more complex and some recognized the need for some kind of formal training of social workers. Still, the training was not “viewed as an academic function.”<sup>121</sup> The Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy was an institution for training social workers headed by Graham Taylor, minister and professor of theology.<sup>122</sup> During the early years of the school, only one or two courses might be taught by a professor; the rest were a series of lectures by guest speakers. There was no real curriculum offered to students and textbooks for social work did not yet exist.<sup>123</sup> Sophonisba and Edith both believed that this educational system was inadequate as training for social workers. They wanted the school to become associated with the University of Chicago so that social work students could benefit from the resources of a large institution.

By 1909, Sophonisba became the dean of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy.<sup>124</sup> Taylor disagreed with Sophonisba about the direction the school should take and about the importance of field work in training social workers. Taylor stressed the priority of fieldwork, while Sophonisba wanted fieldwork to be a part of an overall learning experience characterized by “rigorous academic standards...at a level consonant with graduate education in

disciplines related to social work.<sup>125</sup> It was not until 1920 that Sophonisba had the opportunity to change the school in the way that she wanted. That year Taylor took a vacation and Sophonisba was appointed acting president. While he was on leave, Sophonisba negotiated with the president of the University of Chicago about the possibility of merging the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy into the University of Chicago.<sup>126</sup>

The merger did take place and in the fall of 1920 the Graduate School of Social Service Administration (GSSSA) opened for classes. This school was the first graduate school of social work in the country to be affiliated with a major university. Taylor was not very pleased when he returned to see what had happened in his absence.<sup>127</sup> He feared that the school of social work “would be academicized to death at the University to gratify the pride of [Sophonisba P. Breckinridge].”<sup>128</sup> Sophonisba characterized the change as “an emancipation” and thought that the school would only be strengthened by the partnership.<sup>129</sup> It is not clear what the emancipation freed Sophonisba from. Perhaps she was freed from having to be thought of as a home economics teacher; perhaps she was freed from Taylor’s opposing views; perhaps she was freed from the search for a profession to call her own.

Sophonisba and Edith Abbott set out to make the school worthy of its position as the only university graduate program in social work by developing a broad curriculum for their students. The school “offered classes in social research methods, sociology, economics, public administration practices, social psychology, and the history of social work.”<sup>130</sup> Sophonisba’s offerings included classes in “immigration law, the criminal justice system, and social welfare legislation.” She thought it was crucial that social workers be trained in understanding the legal system and “‘the points at which the law [had] so fallen down’ for many disadvantaged

people.”<sup>131</sup> In addition to classes, Sophonisba added pedagogically to the field by introducing the case study method of instruction.<sup>132</sup>

As a professor for the GSSSA, Sophonisba taught the first class in the nation on public welfare administration and wrote a textbook entitled *Public Welfare Administration in the United States*, which became the standard text for other classes of that nature.<sup>133</sup> This class reflected Sophonisba’s belief that the government was the “most effective instrument for the promotion of human welfare” and that the job of the social worker was to make state services better.<sup>134</sup> These beliefs, and others, were exemplified in Sophonisba’s academic pursuits and personal activism throughout her life.

In furtherance of their objective to professionalize social work, they worked to establish the American Association of Schools of Social Work, the first national organization of its kind. Sophonisba served for two years as the president of the AASSW.<sup>135</sup> Her goal was to “standardize the curriculum, the admission of students, and the accreditation procedures of all member schools.”<sup>136</sup> Another goal was to establish social work as a field distinct from sociology.<sup>137</sup> Sophonisba did not want people to substitute professional graduate training in social work for an undergraduate major in sociology.<sup>138</sup> She felt strongly about this issue and wrote a response to someone from another institution, who had inquired about the GSSSA and had assumed that it was a subset of sociology, “It really disturbs me that you should think of our work as being part of the Sociology Department here...You are just decades behind the times, and there isn’t any real excuse for it. I don’t apologize for the tone of my letter because I am both offended and indignant.”<sup>139</sup> Perhaps she felt so strongly because as a sociology professor, Sophonisba would have been, at best, low ranking faculty member in a department controlled completely by men.<sup>140</sup>

Another missing piece for the field of social work was the lack of textbooks. In this vein, Sophonisba and Edith wrote and edited a series of texts called the Social Services Series. Ernst Freund credited the series as “recognized authorities in their fields all over the country.”<sup>141</sup> They also established the *Social Service Review*, a professional journal dedicated to social work issues. This was the first journal of its kind and is still in print today.

Interestingly, until 1925, Sophonisba still was not a full professor at the University of Chicago and may never had held that title had it not been for Marion Talbot. Just before her retirement, Talbot waged a battle with the university for its treatment of women faculty. She publicly commented that the university had violated “the terms of its charter by failing to provide women with equal ‘opportunities.’” According to Talbot, the school failed its promise by not placing women on the board of trustees, discriminating against women in hiring as well as discriminatory pay and promotion practices for women.<sup>142</sup> Finally, Sophonisba was made a full professor at age 59 and owed her progress once again to Marion Talbot. In 1929 Sophonisba was honored with an endowed chair as she was made the Samuel Deutsch Professor of Public Welfare Administration.<sup>143</sup>

Sophonisba did not just arrive at success alone, she brought scores of women with her. Her vision for social work was for it to rise in professionalism to the level of law and medicine.<sup>144</sup> This would create unprecedented opportunities for women as professionals. Women would rise from aspiring to be charity work apprentices to taking over the once male province of social administration and public policy work. Those positions were once reserved for men with social science degrees.<sup>145</sup> With the professionalization of social work women went on to have a huge role in the development of the U.S. welfare state.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, part of Sophonisba’s revolution in social work was taking personal responsibility for placing her

students in positions. Examples of students whom Sophonisba placed include Aleta Brownlee, County Commissioner of Public Welfare in Santa Barbara, California; Pauline Thrower, Assistant Commissioner of the State Department of Charities and Corrections in Oklahoma; Rhoda Morgan Starr, Supervisor of the Home Relief Bureau of the New York State Department of Social Welfare; Alice Channing, serving on the President’s Commission on Social Trends.<sup>147</sup>

### **III. Academic Pursuits and Activism**

Sophonisba advocated for many causes throughout her life. Her most prominent scholarship and activism were in women’s issues, children’s issues, immigration, African-American rights and the development of the welfare state. The paper will briefly discuss Sophonisba’s work in relation to women’s issue and in relation to immigrant and African-American rights.

#### **Women’s issues**

*We do get sort of tired, when good women are available, to have authorities insist on taking poorer people because they wore trousers.*<sup>148</sup>

Sophonisba herself was passed over, as a lawyer in Kentucky, as a post graduate in Chicago, and as a professor, because she was not a man. After working so diligently to open a profession to women, through which they could become politically active and respected, it was surely disappointing to see change happen so slowly in the area of women’s rights. Sophonisba worked on women’s issues throughout her life, both in her academic work and in her personal activism. She was an outspoken feminist, which to her simply meant that “she want[ed] good women to have their chance.”<sup>149</sup>

Sophonisba first demonstrated an interest in women’s issues early in her position as an instructor in the Department of Household Administration at the University of Chicago. Her intellectual interest in law, politics and economics combined with her forced placement in a

department made for women offered Sophonisba the opportunity to produce groundbreaking research and literature on the place of women in the economy. One of her early articles, a collaboration with Edith Abbott, was “Employment of Women in the Industries: Twelfth Census Statistics,” published in the *Journal of Political Economy*. In this article the two scholars expressed concern about the “lack of attention given to female workers.” They noted pervasively “exploitative conditions,” “constant inequality,” and “grueling conditions” for women in industry.<sup>150</sup> They called attention to sex segregation in the workplace, calling it “‘unendurable’ in its effect upon women’s self respect and financial security,” and attacking the exclusion of women workers because men workers may be distracted by their sexuality.<sup>151</sup> Sophonisba believed that a Congressional study of the condition of working women needed to be done in order to bring attention to these issues, discover trends across the nation and trigger public support. President Roosevelt took this advice and in 1907 signed a bill into law appointing a commission to study both women’s and children’s labor issues.<sup>152</sup>

This concern for women workers translated into personal activism. Through her membership with the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, she encouraged the group to work harder for the economic interests of women graduates. The ACA heeded Sophonisba’s suggestion and embarked on a study of the economic position of their members. The study found pervasive low income and lack of opportunities for advancement that resulted from “a large social, educational, and economic situation which [was] beyond the control of the individual woman.”<sup>153</sup> Sophonisba received letters from women who looked to her for professional example and advice and she wrote letters on their behalf, recommending them for positions when she could. She once received a letter from a young woman who was an architect and complained that the government employed only men for its building projects. She

responded to the woman and put her in touch with a woman in the Democratic National office to inquire about conducting a hearing on the issue in Washington.<sup>154</sup>

Sophonisba did not only concern herself with the advancement of college educated women, she also cared deeply for the cause of working class and poor women in the work place. An example of her work in this area is her assistance with the garment workers' strike in 1910. Sophonisba and her students interviewed the strikers so that their complaints could be understood. She was an outspoken defender when women were arrested for demonstrating on behalf of "hungry, unemployed, and largely homeless workers." She helped ensure jury trials for defendants and donated to a fund the Hull House set up to provide bail for the demonstrators. She begged Chicagoans "to get away from the idea that hunger and want [could] be obliterated by a display of police power."<sup>155</sup> She even advocated on behalf of prostitutes. She thought it unfair that they were targeted while their male counterparts were not. She was disgusted with the involuntary physical exams given to suspected prostitutes and the lack of due process afforded this group.<sup>156</sup>

Sophonisba was active in the Women's Trade Union League and was a charter member of the Chicago branch.<sup>157</sup> Perhaps because of the inhumane treatment of women workers Sophonisba had become familiar with, she became an advocate of protective legislation for women workers,<sup>158</sup> such as laws that improved working conditions, and provided minimum wage and shorter hours for women.<sup>159</sup> This stance put her on the opposite end of the debate from many feminists of her time. Some feminists thought protective legislation would limit the career options available to women and set an undesirable precedent for allowing the government to place limitations on a woman's freedom. Rather than protecting women, these feminists wanted equal opportunity and equal access for women to do whatever they should choose.<sup>160</sup>

Sophonisba's rationale for supporting protective legislation was that legal equality would only result in the exploitation of women, who would still be subject to discrimination and unfair treatment. Furthermore, she would have liked to have seen "protective legislation" put in place for all workers and saw such legislation for women workers as a step in the direction of improving working conditions for all.<sup>161</sup> Her commitment to better working conditions for all is also evidenced by her support for "the trade-union cause and collective bargaining at a time when trade-unions were thought of an 'undesirable' organizations by many groups of people."<sup>162</sup>

Because of her support for protective legislation, Sophonisba opposed the Equal Rights Amendment that was being discussed by feminists in her era. She sympathized very much with the cause, but felt that women workers would lose the benefits they could gain with protective legislation if an Equal Rights Amendment was achieved. She was especially concerned about this result because of the discrimination of labor unions against women.<sup>163</sup> Sophonisba was active in the League of Women Voters and believed in their motto "specific bills for specific ills." She therefore advocated that equality should "be obtained step by step rather than by the uncertain route of the Equal Rights Amendment."<sup>164</sup> Still, Sophonisba was torn about the issue. She thought that the ERA debate was one of the most difficult issues facing women and told a friend, "The truth of the matter is that with all of its dangers, equality looks awfully good to me at the present moment."<sup>165</sup>

Sophonisba's vision of protective legislation was always within the framework of women's participation in political decision making. She believed that the most important advance for women in their full and equal participation in society was involvement in politics. Only with women's suffrage would adequate protections for women workers ever be realized.<sup>166</sup> Sophonisba wrote about the importance of the right to vote and became active in the suffrage

movement. She was a member of the National American Women's Suffrage Association and served as the National Secretary to the organization.<sup>167</sup> In this capacity she often spoke at suffrage rallies in Chicago. She wrote a pamphlet for the Equal Suffrage Association defending women's suffrage against anti-suffrage who argued that women who did have the right to vote did not use the vote in advancement of women's interests.<sup>168</sup> She also edited *A Handbook for the Women Voters of Illinois*; she wanted women not only to have the right to vote but to have the ability to exercise that right with an understanding of the government and the issues at stake.<sup>169</sup> Sophonisba attempted to become a politician herself when she ran for city alderwoman on the Progressive ticket; a ticket made up of all women. Unfortunately, the slate was unsuccessful.<sup>170</sup>

As a lawyer, Sophonisba thought it was important to women's political rights for women to have a presence in the court room. She worked on the Committee for Women on Juries so that women would have a "voice in determining matters before the courts in which the rights of women, as well as those of men, [might] be involved."<sup>171</sup> She supported the cause of women serving on the bench at all levels. She personally advocated for Pearl Hart's, a public defender for the Cook's County Women's Court, campaign for Municipal Judge.<sup>172</sup> She wrote numerous letters supporting Judge Florence Allen's appointment to the Supreme Court when Justice Louis Brandeis retired.<sup>173</sup> The appointment of a woman to the Supreme Court would not come until several decades later and Sophonisba did not live to see it.

Sophonisba's activism for women's rights took on an international scope when she helped form the Women's Peace Party and served as their treasurer. She also helped organize the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.<sup>174</sup> She attended a conference at the Hague with a group of like minded women who attempted to send the message of peace and women's suffrage to the world during World War I.<sup>175</sup> Many of the points in the platform of the

Women’s Peace Party can be recognized in the “Fourteen Points” presented by Woodrow Wilson.<sup>176</sup> She is said not to have been a pacifist,<sup>177</sup> technically speaking, but she “never failed in her public and challenging support of the world cause of peace and disarmament.”<sup>178</sup> She also served as a delegate to the Seventh Pan-American Conference held in Montevideo, Uruguay. This particular conference had a special focus on international treaties for women’s rights.<sup>179</sup> Sophonisba influenced international policy and also made history as the first woman ever to serve as an official delegate of the United States.<sup>180</sup>

On a more personal note, Sophonisba was known for her letter writing campaigns on behalf of women and women’s issues. Once she contributed to a report presented at the Second Annual Conference on Social Work. When she received a copy of the report, she noticed that the one male contributor was listed above all of the women authors. Sophonisba wrote to the conference organizer and said, “May I say a word to you not as a social worker but as a feminist? I am just wondering why, in the list of persons to report on this subject, you put Mr. Petit first...Alphabetical order would have eliminated the suggestion that even in our groups to be of masculine gender is to take on an adventitious value.”<sup>181</sup> On a similar note, Sophonisba wrote a feisty letter to the president of the American Economic Association for not having any female speakers in the program for that year’s annual conference. She wrote, “I notice no women on the program and life is short and women are having a very hard time and I think that I will just put my little membership somewhere else.”<sup>182</sup> Sophonisba wrote angry letters when the female president of Mount Holyoke College was succeeded by a man and commented that if it were important for female colleges to have a male influence, then male colleges should need a female influence.<sup>183</sup> Other letters in Sophonisba’s papers demonstrate progressive discussions about

various women's issues including birth control, maternity leave, abortion, day care and the convention of married women changing their name.<sup>184</sup>

Finally, many of Sophonisba's books, written as texts for social work curriculum, were important in bringing women's rights to national attention. In one such book published in 1933, *Women in the Twentieth Century*, Sophonisba described women's use of free time, their relationship to employment and their relationship to government.<sup>185</sup> She also wrote about the special case of working women who were married. She witnessed married working women increasingly being discriminated against and blamed for the economic troubles of the country.<sup>186</sup> She attacked the argument that women's wages should be lessened based on the assumption that they were not the primary earners for their families. After all, whether or not men were the primary earner was not considered when determining their pay.<sup>187</sup>

### **Immigrant and African-American Rights**

In 1908, the chief sanitary inspector of Chicago approached Sophonisba about undertaking a housing study. Sophonisba accepted the job and incorporated her students in the project so that they would have the opportunity to engage in real social research. She was already familiar with the dismal housing conditions in the city because of the time she spent living at the Hull House. Sophonisba's influence on the survey resulted in data that not only explored the city's housing, but also offered analysis of the data in relation to immigration and race.<sup>188</sup>

Sophonisba and her students went door to door canvassing tenement neighborhoods and interviewing residents. They were disturbed that the housing conditions did not allow for traditional family life. They were also bothered by the fact that immigrants often paid "the highest rents for the poorest apartments." Sophonisba blamed unbridled industrialization for the

housing problem and therefore placed on the public the responsibility of improving it. She advocated “enforcement of health and building codes, police protection, and a crackdown on criminals who preyed on the poor families.” Ultimately, she advocated the provision of housing for the poor as the only good solution to the housing problems and other social problems in the tenement neighborhoods.<sup>189</sup>

While conducting the study, the Health Department told Sophonisba not to go into the black neighborhoods because they were not worth studying. Sophonisba insisted that they be canvassed anyway. She called attention to what she called “the color line in the housing problem” and discussed the “increasing manifestations of race prejudice” in Chicago.<sup>190</sup> She noticed that the African-American community had “come to acquiesce silently, as various civil rights” were withheld from them. She encouraged African-Americans not to give up insisting on a “respectable neighborhood and at a reasonable rental, an equal chance of employment with the white man, and education for [their] children.”

African-Americans were in an even worse position than the discriminated against white immigrants because, no matter what their economic status, they were barred from living anywhere but in the most destitute of neighborhoods. Yet, they paid the highest rents in the city. Sophonisba somehow believed that all of these problems were a result of simple ignorance on the part of most white Americans. She claimed that only a small portion of white people actually held racially prejudicial beliefs and that African-Americans suffered so much injustice because most white people didn’t realize the burden of the situation. That viewpoint is difficult to reconcile with Sophonisba’s acknowledgment not only of the housing situation of African-Americans but also of their exclusion from restaurants, hotels and entertainment.<sup>191</sup>

Despite her naive perspective on racial prejudice, Sophonisba was personally dedicated to the cause of improving reality for immigrants and African-Americans. One author who wrote about this subject suggested that she, was “in the vanguard of racial liberalism and offered valuable white support for civil rights organizations.”<sup>192</sup> Sophonisba was a founding member of the Chicago branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Chicago. She was also a member of the Urban League and the Association of Colored Women.<sup>193</sup> She attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to end the racial segregation in student housing at the University of Chicago and corresponded with W.E.B. DuBois about the discrimination African-Americans faced at the University and tactics she could use to assist their cause.<sup>194</sup> She used her influence to help establish the Wendell Phillips Settlement (an African-American Settlement) and obtain funding for scholarships for black women to attend GSSSA.<sup>195</sup> When race riots overcame the city in 1919, Sophonisba was asked to serve on a city commission to study them and develop strategies for educating Chicagoans on how to improve the strained race relations in the city.<sup>196</sup>

Sophonisba’s advocacy on behalf of the African-American community was most notable in her work for children, which is not discussed at length in this paper. One of her more enduring initiatives was the struggle to have minority children included in programs for temporary foster care. Child care agencies openly discriminated against children who were not white,<sup>197</sup> even though those children were disproportionately in need of services because their parents were less likely “to be alive, to be healthy, [or] to command living wages.”<sup>198</sup> African-American children were excluded from services primarily because the services that were offered at the time were offered by private institutions. Sophonisba and Edith Abbott served on a county committee that investigated the services available to dependant African-American children and

Sophonisba chaired the Subcommittee on Colored Children that was a part of the State Department of Public Welfare.<sup>199</sup> Due to Sophonisba's and Edith's reports and recommendations on these committees and others, the Department of Child Placing for Negro Children was established through the GSSSA. This program was an experimental model and had a number of components such as "a boarding home service for unmarried mothers and their babies [and] supportive services for families as an alternative to child placements."<sup>200</sup> This department evolved eventually into the first public child welfare agency in Chicago,<sup>201</sup> an integrated agency that served all children regardless of race.<sup>202</sup>

Sophonisba's advocacy on behalf of white immigrants was also great. She "was responsible for the plan and the first work of the Immigrants' Protective League" organized in 1907.<sup>203</sup> The goal of the League was to address problems particular to immigrants such as naturalization, dealing with family members living abroad and assimilation. Sophonisba personally respected the "individual cultures and customs of the various immigrant groups" and encouraged assimilation only to the extent that it allowed immigrants the opportunity to have their children educated, maintain employment, and exercise political rights.<sup>204</sup> She feared that discrimination would prevent the advancements that the "rich contributions" of immigrants would otherwise allow.<sup>205</sup> In her book, *New Homes for Old*, Sophonisba offered anecdotes about the experience of immigrants in Chicago. She discussed the success of social services that were already offered and the areas where services were still needed. Sophonisba applauded services that assisted immigrants to learn English, find housing and health services, and lessons on the banking and legal systems. However, she encouraged reformers to appreciate the cultural habits that differentiated the way immigrant women ran their homes, rather than try to change them.<sup>206</sup> In a fusion of her interest in women's issues and immigration issues, Sophonisba wrote

*Marriage and the Civic Rights of Women* in 1931. This book addresses the right of women to obtain citizenship and the effect of marriage on that right. It offers anecdotes about the plight of foreign born women and their struggle for citizenship and outlines the relevant law in this area.<sup>207</sup>

### III. Sophonisba's Legacy

*It is not possible for the private agency to take a comprehensive view of the needs of the situation...The preference of the social worker would probably be for public rather than private service...For the social worker can be satisfied with nothing less than a universal provision for continuous service. And only the state can be both universal and continuous.*<sup>208</sup>

Sophonisba endorsed increasing government intervention in people's lives. When the Depression hit, she was able to see some of this vision realized. She toured the country offering her expertise in social work education so that the demand for social workers in the emerging welfare state would be satisfied with properly qualified people. If the new government programs were staffed by unqualified people, not only would the recipients of the services suffer, but the still new profession of social work could be tarnished.<sup>209</sup>

Sophonisba was pleased when the Federal Emergency Relief Act was passed and when funds were authorized through FERA for unemployment relief. This marked an important step in the federal government's direct involvement in "poor relief."<sup>210</sup> She was also pleased when funds were made available for grants to students attending professional schools of social work.<sup>211</sup> It was because of Sophonisba's insistence that this money was made available exclusively to already established schools of social work, of which GSSSA was the most prominent.<sup>212</sup> This grant of money was acknowledgment from the highest levels of government that Sophonisba's revolutionizing vision of social work was legitimate and valuable.

Sophonisba was deeply disappointed in Roosevelt when his social welfare programs moved away from direct relief and toward the Works Progress Administration after 1935.<sup>213</sup> She

did not like this change because the relief became localized and did not make as good of use of trained social workers. She lamented that local programs tended to be “uncoordinated, inefficient, and not infrequently, [led by the] corrupt administration of poor relief.”<sup>214</sup> This may have seemed like a setback to Sophonisba, but overall, the government was taking much more responsibility for the welfare of everyday people and social workers “had evolved to a level of influence in public policy that would never have been thought possible.”<sup>215</sup>

A colleague commented upon her death in 1948 that “The grand motif of [Sophonisba’s] pattern of action was sympathy for the lot of the weak or handicapped and desire to strengthen their position in a struggling world. This followed a broad principle of action, namely, that government has a responsibility for the care of those who cannot care for themselves—care and help without regard to social status.”<sup>216</sup> This pattern of action ushered in and encouraged acceptance of the modern welfare state and developed the modern field of professional social work, arguably all because of the discrimination of the established social sciences against women.<sup>217</sup> Sophonisba’s work in advance of women’s right was probably also inspired, at least in part, by this discrimination.

Acceptance in the male dominated social sciences would have left Sophonisba no reason to professionalize a marginal women’s activity, namely charity work.<sup>218</sup> It is difficult to imagine how history might have played out differently if this had not occurred. Besides her direct advocacy for the welfare state, her academic work over decades gave the public a reason to accept and demand tax-supported social services.<sup>219</sup> In addition, her personal advocacy touched and influenced child welfare laws, immigration, housing policy, education policy, international peace, women’s rights and civil rights.<sup>220</sup> We owe much to her courage and leadership, her intellect and vision.

## V. Personal Information

*I don't want to cook any at all unless I have to, and I like the idea of bread factories or cake factories where people are paid honest wages for a professional product.*<sup>221</sup>

Sophonisba's personal life was not like most women of her era. After arriving at the University of Chicago, she lived most of her life in a dormitory or at the Hull House, not typical homes. And, notably, she never married or had children of her own. Some scholars have written about her very close relationship with Edith Abbott and wondered whether she and Edith had a sexual relationship. Sophonisba did spend a lot of time at the Hull House and scholars have noted the close relationships that seemed to have existed among the women at Hull House. The style of living in settlement houses allowed women the opportunity to live with other people and have emotional and professional support, without having to marry.<sup>222</sup>

Sophonisba certainly is an example of a woman who built her life around other women, with a striking lack of male companionship, except that of her father.<sup>223</sup> Sophonisba did have at least two boyfriends in her younger years. One was Thomas Hunt Morgan, who went on to earn a Nobel Prize in genetics. He and Sophonisba had a courtship during her years at the A & M college. Morgan once commented that Sophonisba was such a popular lady that "he was becoming envious of other men's affections."<sup>224</sup> At her death, friends reminisced that Sophonisba and Thomas had been very close and that he would carry her books every day at school.<sup>225</sup>

Sophonisba's second courtship was with Gerald Stanley Lee, a minister and author. She carried on this relationship, mostly through correspondence, after graduating from Wellesley. Sophonisba wrote that she was afraid of life, afraid to attempt a permanent relationship with a man; perhaps afraid that she could never give a man a happy life. She once said, "There are two men whom I remember as having really loved, but neither really love me though each for the

moment thought that he did. Both married women who were cleverer than I was and both made happy, gracious homes.”<sup>226</sup> Remaining unmarried was not that uncommon for women like Sophonisba. Of fellow graduates of Wellesley between the years 1884 and 1893, only 49% married. This trend fueled arguments against the education of women.<sup>227</sup> Sophonisba’s students recalled fearing her if they had to tell her that they were going to marry.<sup>228</sup> It seems that she thought that there was just too much work for women to do to for them to bother with marriage.

Sophonisba’s relationship with Edith, whatever its true nature, was definitely the closest in her life. One scholar noted that the two “worked so closely together that it is often impossible to separate their particular contributions in their joint endeavors.”<sup>229</sup> Whenever they were apart they wrote to one another. Their letters demonstrate a loving and supportive friendship. But, there is no evidence that their relationship was sexual.<sup>230</sup> When Sophonisba retired in 1942 from her duties at the University of Chicago, she was left without a place to live because she had always lived on campus with the students. She moved in with Edith, who was lonely having recently suffered the loss of her sister. During this time in her life, she began working on an autobiography and assembling her families papers for placement at the Library of Congress. She commented during this period that she was realizing something she had never had to face before, the fact that she was “an old old old old lady.”<sup>231</sup> Sophonisba broke her hip after falling and suffered illness for five months because of that injury.<sup>232</sup> She never recovered and died on July 30, 1948. Edith had cared for her during her illness. Sophonisba listed Edith as the executor of her will and her primary beneficiary.<sup>233</sup>

After Sophonisba’s death Edith published an editorial about her in the *Social Service Review*. In this article, she offers revealing comments on the nature of Sophonisba’s personality and a picture of the kind of lifestyle that she had. She printed a portion of a letter she received

after Sophonisba's death from Frances Perkins, the former Secretary of Labor (and first woman to hold a cabinet position in a president's administration). Perkins wrote, "She was such a magnificent person, her talents so varied, her instincts so humane and yet so logical." A former student wrote that Sophonisba had a light that was "a rare blend of kindness, brilliance, and sympathetic insight." A common comment from former students was that Miss Breckinridge had made them think.<sup>234</sup>

Sophonisba truly labored her entire life on behalf of the causes she believed in, including her profession. She was said to have studied late at night when "the world was quiet and [she] could concentrate."<sup>235</sup> A nephew of her once wrote for advice about how to get his work done when he always became so sleepy by eleven o'clock at night. She wrote back, "You must remember, Lyman, that the work of the world is not done by going to bed when you get sleepy."<sup>236</sup> Her obituary noted that she rarely took vacations and even spoke out against them. She continued working in her office, writing letters and lobbying for social legislation, after retirement until her final illness.<sup>237</sup>

Sophonisba was five feet, four inches tall<sup>238</sup> and weighed only ninety pounds.<sup>239</sup> She looked as if a strong wind might knock her over.<sup>240</sup> A close friend of hers wondered, "how could a frail person do so much! Her strength was like that in the filament of an electric light, tenuous, but brilliantly resistant."<sup>241</sup> One observer of Sophonisba and Edith at the University of Chicago described the pair as "diminutive Victorian ladies [who] seemed larger because of their dress...Miss Abbott...in her black hat and dark dress...Miss Breckinridge's floppy panama hat and voile dress."<sup>242</sup>

Sophonisba was known by her generosity to others and kind spirit. One widely written about example is when a student mentioned that the upcoming holiday was the first Christmas

she would spend without her family because she was too poor to travel home. Sophonisba later handed the girl a round-trip ticket home and asked only that the girl not tell anyone. A former student wrote that “no one could possibly have associated with Miss Breckinridge without learning to care more deeply for people,” she then recalled Sophonisba commenting during the Depression years that she was “troubled about sleeping in her own good warm bed...she thought seriously that she really ought to give it to someone who needed it.”<sup>243</sup> Sophonisba always looked for ways to help her female students. She would inquire with them about their living situations, their health and their financial situation.<sup>244</sup> She would often take care of expenses for students who were in need.<sup>245</sup> She also paid expenses for her brother Robert’s three children and paid for each of her nieces and nephews to attend college.<sup>246</sup>

Sophonisba was also known for her spirit of adventure. When she returned from a conference in Montevideo, she came home by air. Air travel was very uncommon at the time, especially trans-ocean flights.<sup>247</sup> The trip spanned eight days and Sophonisba was the only passenger on some of the legs of the trip. She said, “I was very happy to have my picture taken as we would leave the plane because the pilots were quite wonderful and I was willing to show that a person of my general appearance—far from young and small and a woman—could be so happy at the end of a day’s flight. It was a great experience.”<sup>248</sup> Perhaps it was this spirit of adventure that gave Sophonisba the courage to be the first woman to do so many things.

## VI. Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup>Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, 'With more love than I can write' *A Nineteenth Century Father to His Daughter*, WELLESLEY, Fall 1980, at 19 (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>2</sup>Nancy Ellen Barr, *A Profession for Women: Education, Social Service Administration, and Feminism in the Life of Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge, 1866-1948* 1 (1993) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University) (available at Stanford Law School Library).

<sup>3</sup>JAMES C. KLOTTER, *THE BRECKINRIDGES OF KENTUCKY* 190 (1986).

<sup>4</sup>Horowitz, *supra* note 1 at 19 (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>5</sup>See Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 194.

<sup>6</sup>See Barr, *supra* note 2 at 8.

<sup>7</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 191.

<sup>8</sup>Christopher Lasch, *Breckinridge, Sophonisba Preston*, in *NOTABLE AMERICAN WOMEN* 233 (Edward T. James ed., 1971) (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>9</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 193.

<sup>10</sup>*Id.* at 192.

<sup>11</sup>*Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge*, LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER, Dec. 31, 1999, available at <http://www.kentuckyconnect.com/heraldleader/news/123099/specialdocs/31mil.brecksoph.htm> (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>12</sup>Lasch, *supra* note 8 at 233.

<sup>13</sup>Cathy Coghlan, *Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge: Social Work Pioneer and Progressive Era Reformer* 2 (1999), at [http://idbsu.edu/socwork/dhuff/history/extras/SB/sophonisba\\_preston\\_breckinridge.htm](http://idbsu.edu/socwork/dhuff/history/extras/SB/sophonisba_preston_breckinridge.htm).

<sup>14</sup>Edith Abbott, *Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge*, 23 *SOCIAL SERVICE REV.* 93, 93 (1949) (quoting May Estelle Cook).

<sup>15</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 9-10.

<sup>16</sup>See Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 195.

<sup>17</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 10 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>18</sup>ELLEN FITZPATRICK, *ENDLESS CRUSADE: WOMEN SOCIAL SCIENTISTS AND PROGRESSIVE REFORM* 5 (1990).

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<sup>19</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 11 (quoting S.P.B.). Sophonisba was both extremely intelligent and willfully wryly clever.

<sup>20</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 5 (quoting Issa Desha Breckinridge).

<sup>21</sup>*Id.* (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>22</sup>*See* Barr, *supra* note 2 at 19.

<sup>23</sup>*Id.* (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>24</sup>*Id.* (quoting Issa Desha Breckinridge).

<sup>25</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 6 (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>26</sup>*Id.* at 7 (quoting Issa Desha Breckinridge).

<sup>27</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 21.

<sup>28</sup>*Id.*

<sup>29</sup>Horowitz, *supra* note 1 at 19 (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>30</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 196.

<sup>31</sup>*See* Barr, *supra* note 2 at 24.

<sup>32</sup>*Id.* at 24-25 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>33</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 7 (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>34</sup>Edith Abbott, *Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge Over the Years*, 22 SOCIAL SERVICE REV. 417, 418 (1948) (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>35</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 4.

<sup>36</sup>*Id.* at 7 (quoting Issa Desha Breckinridge).

<sup>37</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 30 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>38</sup>*Id.* at 31 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>39</sup>*Id.* at 23 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>40</sup>*Id.* (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>41</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 14 at 94 (quoting May Estelle Cook).

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<sup>42</sup>See Barr, *supra* note 2 at 32.

<sup>43</sup>Horowitz, *supra* note 1 at 17 (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>44</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 40.

<sup>45</sup>*Id.* (quoting W.C.P. Breckinridge).

<sup>46</sup>*Id.* at 44 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>47</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 9.

<sup>48</sup>See *id.*

<sup>49</sup>*Id.*

<sup>50</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 198 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>51</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 93 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>52</sup>*Id.*

<sup>53</sup>*Id.* at 94. Sophonisba was quite religious during her younger years, but all of the sources I read suggested that her religiosity is not noted later in her life. She even commented in her manuscript autobiography that she “was horribly, wickedly pious, concerned for my own soul, and I made Sunday a dreadful day, even in Paris.”

<sup>54</sup>See Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 10.

<sup>55</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 97.

<sup>56</sup>*Id.* at 100.

<sup>57</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 10 (quoting Issa Desha Breckinridge).

<sup>58</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 103.

<sup>59</sup>See *id.*

<sup>60</sup>See Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 10.

<sup>61</sup>*Id.*

<sup>62</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 109.

<sup>63</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 199.

<sup>64</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 11 (quoting S.P.B.).

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<sup>65</sup>*Ready for the Bar, Congressman Breckinridge's Daughter's Legal Studies*, NEW YORK TIMES, Nov. 29, 1892 at 1.

<sup>66</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 11 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>67</sup>*Id.*

<sup>68</sup>*Id.*

<sup>69</sup>*Id.*

<sup>70</sup>*Id.* at 12.

<sup>71</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 113.

<sup>72</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 199-200 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>73</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 115 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>74</sup>*Id.* at 116 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>75</sup>*See id.* at 199.

<sup>76</sup>*See* Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 12.

<sup>77</sup>*Id.* at 13.

<sup>78</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 202.

<sup>79</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 143.

<sup>80</sup>*See* Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 201.

<sup>81</sup>*See id.*

<sup>82</sup>*See* Barr, *supra* note 2 at 140.

<sup>83</sup>*Id.* at 160 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>84</sup>*See id.*

<sup>85</sup>*See id.* at 161.

<sup>86</sup>*Id.*

<sup>87</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 49 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>88</sup>*Id.* at 165 (quoting S.P.B.).

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<sup>89</sup>*Id.* at 167.

<sup>90</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 200.

<sup>91</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 167-168 (quoting Desha Breckinridge).

<sup>92</sup>*Id.* at 137 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>93</sup>See Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 50.

<sup>94</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 171.

<sup>95</sup>*Id.* at 172.

<sup>96</sup>*Id.* at 173.

<sup>97</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 14 at 94 (quoting May Estelle Cook).

<sup>98</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 34 at 418.

<sup>99</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 175.

<sup>100</sup>*Id.* at 174.

<sup>101</sup>*Id.* at 157-158.

<sup>102</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 82.

<sup>103</sup>*Id.*

<sup>104</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 14 at 94 (quoting May Estelle Cook).

<sup>105</sup>*Women Law Students*, CHICAGO LEGAL NEWS, Apr. 30, 1904, at 304.

<sup>106</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 179.

<sup>107</sup>*Id.*

<sup>108</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 34 at 418.

<sup>109</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 183.

<sup>110</sup>*Id.* at 186. Not much is written about how Sophonisba dealt with her father's death. It was surely traumatic because she was very close to him.

<sup>111</sup>See *id.*

<sup>112</sup>See *id.*

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<sup>113</sup>*Id.* at 185.

<sup>114</sup>*Id.* at 217-219

<sup>115</sup>Helen R. Wright, *Three Against Time: Edith and Grace Abbott and Sophonisba P. Breckinridge*, 28 SOCIAL SERVICE REV. 41, 43 (1954).

<sup>116</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 175.

<sup>117</sup>Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Hull House in the 1890s: A Community of Women Reformers*, 10 SIGNS: JOURNAL OF WOMEN AND CULTURE IN SOCIETY 658, 662 (1985).

<sup>118</sup>*See* Wright, *supra* note 115 at 43.

<sup>119</sup>*Id.*

<sup>120</sup>Elizabeth B. Clark, “*Organized Mother Love*” and the Obligations of the State in the Later Nineteenth Century, reprinted in WOMEN IN THE WELFARE STATE CONFERENCE 11 (State Historical Society, University of Wisconsin-Madison 1989).

<sup>121</sup>JESSIE BERNARD, ACADEMIC WOMEN 243 (1964).

<sup>122</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 278.

<sup>123</sup>*See* Wright, *supra* note 115 at 48–49.

<sup>124</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 176.

<sup>125</sup>LELA B. COSTIN, TWO SISTERS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A BIOGRAPHY OF GRACE AND EDITH ABBOTT 63-64, (1983).

<sup>126</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 198.

<sup>127</sup>*Id.* at 199.

<sup>128</sup>*Id.* at 282 (quoting Graham Taylor).

<sup>129</sup>*Id.* at 286 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>130</sup>*Id.* at 288.

<sup>131</sup>*Id.* at 289 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>132</sup>Wright, *supra* note 115 at 448.

<sup>133</sup>Lexington Herald Leader, *supra* note 11.

<sup>134</sup>Wright, *supra* note 115 at 51.

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<sup>135</sup>See Arlien Johnson, Her Contribution to the Professional Schools of Social Work 22 SOCIAL SERVICE REV. 442, 445 (1948).

<sup>136</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 293.

<sup>137</sup>Johnson, *supra* note 134 at 445 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>138</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 291.

<sup>139</sup>*Id.* at 292 (quoting Ernst Freund).

<sup>140</sup>Clark, *supra* note 120 at 19.

<sup>141</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 295.

<sup>142</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 214.

<sup>143</sup>See Lasch, *supra* note 8 at 235.

<sup>144</sup>Clark, *supra* note 120 at 13.

<sup>145</sup>Bernard, *supra* note 121 at 244.

<sup>146</sup>Clark, *supra* note 120 at 27.

<sup>147</sup>*Id.* at 24.

<sup>148</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 379 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>149</sup>*Id.* at 429 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>150</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 168.

<sup>151</sup>Beverly B. Cook, *Sophonisba P. Breckinridge*, 3 WOMEN & POLITICS 95, 97 (1983).

<sup>152</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 169.

<sup>153</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 230 (quoting the ACA study).

<sup>154</sup>*Id.* at 429.

<sup>155</sup>*Id.* at 231-232 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>156</sup>See Anthony R. Travis, *Sophonisba Breckinridge, Militant Feminist*, 58 MID-AMERICA 111, 118 (1976).

<sup>157</sup>Costin, *supra* note 125 at 28.

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<sup>158</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 240.

<sup>159</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 34 at 420.

<sup>160</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 242.

<sup>161</sup>See Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 170.

<sup>162</sup>Elisabeth Christman, *A Long-Time Supporter of Trade-Unions For Women*, 22 SOCIAL SERVICE REV. 431, 431 (1948).

<sup>163</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 413-414.

<sup>164</sup>*Id.* at 416.

<sup>165</sup>*Id.* at 420 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>166</sup>See *id.* at 247.

<sup>167</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 34 at 419.

<sup>168</sup>Costin, *supra* note 125 at 50.

<sup>169</sup>Barr, *supra* note at 249.

<sup>170</sup>See Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 192.

<sup>171</sup>*Id.* at 406 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>172</sup>*Id.*

<sup>173</sup>See *id.* at 408.

<sup>174</sup>Breckinridge, *Sophonisba Preston*, Women in American History, ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA at [http://search.eb.com/women/articles/Breckinridge\\_Sophonisba\\_Preston.html](http://search.eb.com/women/articles/Breckinridge_Sophonisba_Preston.html).

<sup>175</sup>See Barr, *supra* note 2 at 250.

<sup>176</sup>Martha Branscome, *A Fried of International Welfare*, 22 SOCIAL SERVICE REV. 436, 437 (1948).

<sup>177</sup>*Id.* at 436.

<sup>178</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 34 at 420.

<sup>179</sup>See Barr, *supra* note 2 at 414.

<sup>180</sup>Branscome, *supra* note 173 at 440.

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<sup>181</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 365 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>182</sup>*Id.* at 366 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>183</sup>Travis, *supra* note 154 at 115.

<sup>184</sup>*See* Barr, *supra* note 2 at 455.

<sup>185</sup>*See* SOPHONISBA P. BRECKINRIDGE, *WOMEN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY* (1933).

<sup>186</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 373.

<sup>187</sup>*See* Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 204.

<sup>188</sup>*See* Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 177.

<sup>189</sup>*Id.* at 179.

<sup>190</sup>*Id.* at 180 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>191</sup>*Id.* at 181 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>192</sup>LINDA GORDON, *PITIED BUT NOT ENTITLED: SINGLE MOTHERS AND THE HISTORY OF WELFARE* 87 (1994).

<sup>193</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 220.

<sup>194</sup>*Id.* at 263.

<sup>195</sup>Fitzpatrick, *supra* note 18 at 182.

<sup>196</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 221.

<sup>197</sup>Sandra M. Stehno, *Public Responsibility for Dependant Black Children: The Advocacy of Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge*, 62 *SOCIAL SERVICE REV.* 485, 486 (1988).

<sup>198</sup>*Id.* at 487.

<sup>199</sup>*Id.* at 488-489.

<sup>200</sup>*Id.* at 491.

<sup>201</sup>*Id.* at 486.

<sup>202</sup>*Id.* at 496.

<sup>203</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 34 at 420.

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<sup>204</sup>Costin, *supra* note 125 at 70-71.

<sup>205</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 205 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>206</sup>*See* Barr, *supra* note 2 at 233.

<sup>207</sup>*See* SOPHONISBA P. BRECKINRIDGE, MARRIAGE AND THE CIVIC RIGHTS OF WOMEN (1931).

<sup>208</sup>Clark, *supra* note 120 at 22 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>209</sup>*See* Barr, *supra* note 2 at 309.

<sup>210</sup>*Id.* at 320.

<sup>211</sup>*Id.* at 321.

<sup>212</sup>*See id.* at 322.

<sup>213</sup>*See id.* at 326 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>214</sup>*Id.* at 328.

<sup>215</sup>*Id.* at 330.

<sup>216</sup>Charles E. Merriam, *A Member of the University Community*, 22 SOCIAL SERVICE REV. 424, 425 (1948).

<sup>217</sup>Gordon, *supra* note 189 at 169.

<sup>218</sup>Clark, *supra* note 120 at 3.

<sup>219</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 14 at 96 (quoting a statement read before the Illinois State Welfare Conference in 1948).

<sup>220</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 14 at 95 (quoting resolutions passed by the American Association of Schools of Social Work in 1949).

<sup>221</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 372 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>222</sup>*See* KATHRYN KISH SKLAR, FLORENCE KELLEY AND THE NATION'S WORK 192 (1995).

<sup>223</sup>*See* Barr, *supra* note 2 at 347.

<sup>224</sup>*Id.* at 72.

<sup>225</sup>*Id.*

<sup>226</sup>*Id.* at 73 (quoting S.P.B.).

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<sup>227</sup>*Id.* at 70.

<sup>228</sup>Gordon, *supra* note 189 at 79.

<sup>229</sup>Costin, *supra* note 125 at 27.

<sup>230</sup>*See* Barr, *supra* note 2 at 304.

<sup>231</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 446 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>232</sup>*Miss Breckinridge Dies in Chicago*, 82, NEW YORK TIMES, July 31, 1948 at 15.

<sup>233</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 454.

<sup>234</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 34 at 421-422.

<sup>235</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 14 at 95 (quoting May Estelle Cook).

<sup>236</sup>Wright, *supra* note 115 at 41 (quoting S.P.B.).

<sup>237</sup>*Miss Breckinridge Dies in Chicago*, *supra* note 228 at 15.

<sup>238</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 206.

<sup>239</sup>*Miss Breckinridge Dies in Chicago*, *supra* note 228 at 15.

<sup>240</sup>Klotter, *supra* note 3 at 206.

<sup>241</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 14 at 95 (quoting May Estelle Cook).

<sup>242</sup>Costin, *supra* note 125 at 199.

<sup>243</sup>Abbott, *supra* note 34 at 421.

<sup>244</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 202.

<sup>245</sup>*Id.* at 205.

<sup>246</sup>*Id.* at 255.

<sup>247</sup>Branscome, *supra* note 173 at 441.

<sup>248</sup>Barr, *supra* note 2 at 447 (quoting S.P.B.).

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## Appendix B: Future Research

This paper was meant to be a general biography of Sophonisba Breckinridge. An obvious place to begin future research is to delve deeper into her professional life or one of the areas of her personal activism. One area of personal activism that I did not really discuss is her work on children's issues. She was active in promoting the creation of juvenile courts, she fought for child labor laws, and was active in the struggle to establish children's services provided by the state.

Sophonisba's personal papers, including several reels of letters, as well as a manuscript autobiography is available from the University of Chicago. I was not able to get these materials, but it shouldn't be too difficult to do so in the future (however, they can only be obtained by the scholar, not by the library). I did look at a couple of the reels and there is an extraordinary amount of information. The amount of information, combined with the fact that much of the reels is hand-written letter that are very difficult to read, promise an extreme amount of work to thoroughly go through. I was able to get many, many quotes from Sophonisba's papers and manuscript autobiography by reading a dissertation by Nancy Ellen Barr. That dissertation is now available at the Stanford Law School Library.

In the materials I read for this paper I came across some names of other women lawyers with whom Sophonisba was friends. Julia Lathrop was a Hull House activist and apparently the first woman to be accepted by the Illinois bar. Florence Kelley was also a Hull House activist and she apparently attended law school at Northwestern University (it is not clear whether she practiced).

Pearl Hart was a public defender for the Cook's County Women's Court. She ran for Municipal Judge, but lost the election. Fay Bentley was on the Juvenile Court bench in Washington, D.C. Finally, I know that Florence Allen is already on the list, but I found it interesting that women were advocating her to succeed Justice Brandeis on the Supreme Court. That set of events would make an interesting paper.

## Appendix C: Pictures





























