

Y.W.C.A. EMERGENCY HOSTEL

8 KTEMA STREET

ATHENS

GREECE

MARCH 1923 - MARCH 1924



The Emergency Hostel was established in the month of March 1923 by the Y.W.C.A. as a part of its Relief Emergency program in Greece and during its existence has met an increasing and changing need.

Its original aim to provide a temporary home for refugee girls without parents or unprotected in Athens

was an obvious one and most important but led almost immediately to the adoption of its second and more unique one - namely - to act as a vocational guidance bureau and training school to enable girls coming to the Hostel untrained for any work which would be most likely to make them self-supporting . This aim in turn showed the need for a Hostel Employment Bureau through which the girl could be placed according to her capabilities and under standardized conditions . This was established and developed to include benefitting not only the girl in the Hostel but any other girls or women coming to us seeking employment. When following the years work one realizes more than ever how elastic ones original program has to be to meet an actual need, and how the type of girl coming to us has changed , for instance only two of the original Hostel family are still with us and of the seventy five who until June 30 th used the Hostel for varying lengths of time only thirteen continue to be with us.

The Hostel is ideally situated on Hermaes Street in the heart of the business center with its front windows overlooking Hermaes Street and its own entrance in the rear which opens into a quaint little square on Ktema Street. The building though only three years old was occupied during the war by the Greek marines who used it for offices and if they had set out to destroy the property could not have been more successful. The walls throughout had to be retinted and only after days of scrubbing did the stairs reveal themselves to be beauti-



ful white marble. These together with the splendid tiled floors makes it possible to keep the house clean with a minimum amount of effort .



The Hostel budget was made out with a view to setting it up in the simplest possible way rather along camp lines than in the usual Y.W.C.A. Hostel fashion . However, thanks to the American Red Cross (who had already assured us of beds) the Hostel was enabled to take on a more home-like aspect . On account of the poor workmanship of a large order of hospital furniture , including tables, large and small, cupboards, screens, chairs, benches and burlap mattress covers . The Red Cross could not ship the furniture to the outside centers so the Hostel received a most generous share. With

the aid of a refugee carpenter and by directing the girls how to wield a paint brush wondrous things were brought into existence. Dining -Room tables were created from hospital examination tables and bookcases from the support which was attached to the top of each table . Couch covers were made of the burlap and by combining the screens and burlap excellent wardrobes came into being. This last combination also made possible the most appreciated makeshift of all-the salle-de-bain, on one of the two inner terraces . The fact of the floor being drained made quite a perfect equipment for the indulgence of a Turkish Shower Bath to the fullest degree . An almost similar adaptation of screen and burlap was the outdoor kitchen on the other inner terrace, which also being drained gives to the house planned for offices only, a most possible kitchen.

An effort was made to interest many of the local merchants in the work of the Hostel, not only to secure contributions in the form of a reduction on equipment bought, but also to bring to their notice all phases of the Hostel work, especially that of the employment bureau . In nearly every instance the merchants were interested and gave some percentage reduction however small the purchase.



Happily the first shop's contribution of a pail which leaked did not discourage us . A more kindly disposed merchant upon hearing of the work gave the window hangings at half price. The width and pattern made it possible to cut the material down the center thereby making the actual cost of the curtains a shade over five cents a yard. The particular joy is that it is

is a handsome old pattern reproduced in a sort of fiber mixture which gives the effect of a veritable Morris chintz toning in beautifully with the yellowish buff walls, and with its



colors in old blue, buff and mulberry gives a charming ensemble. The Italian prints of the most famous Old Masters, couch and window seats covered with buff burlap and cushions made of the same material as the hangings, comfortable raffia chairs and writing tables, with flowers will give an idea of the furnishings of the office and of the girls Living-Room which may be turned into one big room by opening the folding doors connecting the two rooms.

Adjoining the girls Living-Room is the Dining-Room with the same hangings, Mission colored dining-room tables and benches, table runners with bluecross-stitched edge, vase vases of flowers, all most simple, but its very simplicity seems to impress the many visitors as clean, restful and cosy.

The bed rooms are large and airy and with the exception of three rooms holding four beds each, have beds in each room making the Hostel accommodate sixty girls quite comfortably with two emergency beds added making sixty two girls the actual capacity.

The Hostel was taken possession of March 15th 1933, and on March 18th, Madame Deverony, the House-mother moved in with two young girls she had been protecting in one of the refugee workrooms. Madame Deverony is a delightful Greek woman of English parentage who, having been through the Smyrna disaster herself, in which she had lost every thing, came to us with a real understanding of the suffering of the girls. In the beginning only the most desperate cases were taken and this group, about twelve in all, cleaned the house, helped with the painting, made the sheets and as the numbers grew hemstitched the pillowcases and table covers for the bedrooms. These were made out of heavy cotton but nevertheless gave a dainty touch. It would indeed be hard to describe the joy of the girls as the days passed and the Hostel took on a more home-like atmosphere.



The one idea from the beginning has been to make

each girl as she has come into the Hostel feel that she was coming into a large family where each member had a responsibility toward making the life of the Hostel go smoothly.



With this end in view there have been no servants but by dividing the girls according to a fourteen day rotating schedule every girl has performed every household duty in the Hostel which has included everything from the cleaning of floors and stairways to the arranging of flowers on the dining-room tables. For the first few months the Hostel counted on Marie for the cooking. She was over the Hostel age limit of 25 but needed us as a refugee without a home until her husband, then a prisoner, should return, which he did in August. When she left one of the hostel girls who had at one time been "in ser-

vice," took Marie's place and continued to do the cooking until December when it seemed better to give more girls the chance of learning to cook and to prepare meals. Thus many girls were assigned to do the cooking each a half day a week, and on the extra day one of the students is in charge. In October the student group of twenty six attending the American College at Phaleron came to become a part of the family and the same idea was carried out which meant that after their return in the afternoon all household duties were in their hands. There being so many of them to share the duties made it possible to require it of them without infringing on their time for study. Aside from the actual doing of their share of the household duties a principle was being upheld—namely that of being considered on exactly the same footing as all the other girls for whether student, employed girl or the girls en route to America—all were benefitting in a greater or less degree from the existence of the Hostel and at the same time receiving a practical training in Home-Making. Only those who are working with the girls in these eastern countries can realize the crying need that practically every girl, regardless of type, has for training in this respect. One of the most difficult things which has been achieved was to have the girls keep the floor dry while washing dishes and not attempt to stand on her head over the dish pan which came as second nature to have on the floor instead of on the table.



The Hostel family of sixty Two is most inclusive ;—the

largest group being that of the students attending the American College at Phaleron and the Athens University. The other groups include ; those sent to the Hostel by the Migration Service,



all being girls on their way either to America or to other parts of the world. They are detained by the government authorities either on account of potential quota numbers not being ready, inadequate affidavits or eye trouble necessitating treatment; which we are fortunate in being able to give owing to the generosity of the American Womens Hospital who give our Hostel girls eye examination and treatment in addition to all necessary medical care). Another group are those girls living in the Hostel but employed outside ;--among them are three working

for the Near East Relief in the capacity of interpreter of their training school for nurses ,one a nurse and the other a financial secretary. Others represent the girls employed as dressmakers and one in a shoe shop, The dressmakers have varying degrees of skill--one of them ,the daughter of the cook at the American College at Phaleron is learning the trade in the hope of eventually making her living in this way. The final group is made up of those who are employed in our own workroom. Among them are found experts in the making of Aintab, of Armenian handkerchiefs edged with wee lace and hemstitching of all varieties. A recent market has been found for the handkerchiefs among the many tourists coming on the spring Mediterranean tours .A personal visit to the tourist boats just previous to the hour of departure has been found most fruitful . Not only is a ready sale found for the dainty handkerchiefs but an opportunity given to tell of the Hostel and of the great need it has been filling during the past year. In many cases tourists have remarked that their time was so limited in Athens that they had had no time to look up the various types of refugee work being done by the Americans and were so grateful for this opportunity of hearing about the unique work of the Hostel and of course would want to buy at least one handkerchief as a souvenir". The Luncheon sets embroidered with Greek designs in blue and yellow cross-stitch, made during the first months of the Hostel are still popular and still the chef-d'oeuvre of the dumb girl who is still with us.



A normal day at the Hostel begins with the Rising -Bell at 6 o'clock .Breakfast follows at seven .The beds are made and the individual rooms put in order between 7:30 and 8:0'clock . Eight o'clock finds the twenty four students leaving for the

American College at Old Phaleron and the girls who are employed outside the Hostel leaving for work .At 8:30 the girls employed in the Hostel workroom begin their sewing and embroidery



At 9 o'clock, the girls attending the Athens University ,one a dental student ,leave for their classes ,and the girls going to America begin their studies in English and Greek.At 9:30 on Monday,Wednesday,and Friday is the Employment Bureau hour of opening ,which is at the service for both Hostel girls and those living outside. At 12:15 the Hostel work-room closes

stop working and are given a two hour luncheon period. Luncheon comes at 12:30,bread is served at 5:0'clock and at 4:30 the students return from Old Phaleron .From 5:30 to 6:30 all gather in the dining room for a study period; from 6:30 to 7:30 one of the senior students gives English to the girls going to America,and another gives Greek to the Armenian girls who cannot speak Greek. Dinner is served at 7:30 and afterward one of the University students gives Greek to the girls employed outside the Hostel. Also an experienced dress-maker (one of the Hostel girls who goes out by the day) gives lessons in dressmaking and cutting two evenings a week.After dinner the girls not taking classes amuse themselves in the Salon with the Victrola,singing and native dances until 9:0'clock when the house is quiet .At ten o'clock the bell rings for all to go to their rooms and at 10:30 another bell ,meaning all lights out and everyone quiet.

The vocational phase of the Hostel is one of the most important ramifications of the work .With so large a proportion as the computed 60% of the refugees in Athens,women and girls,it is nothing short of appalling to see the host of unprotected girls coming to us for help so unequipped to become self-supporting. One does not exaggerate to say that 90%,apart from the students of course,coming to the Hostel during the past year,assured us that the only way they could earn their living was to make lace or embroider .The Hostel after making a survey of the many work rooms for needle work in Athens found that the best paying ones offered the average worker from 8-10 drachme a day,while some receive as low as 5 drachme. Some of the work rooms give the noonday meal consisting of one hot dish and bread. The Hostel finding that it cost ten drachme a day to feed its large family(with careful management)



felt that it could not encourage the unprotected girl, who must become entirely self-supporting, to take up that sort of work unless she was already an expert embroiderer or lace-maker. The Hostel assured the girl that it would be glad to receive her in the Hostel until it could discover her capabilities. In the meantime



she would work in the Hostel work-room, which would pay her from ten to twelve and a half drachme a day. She in turn would pay the Hostel Ten drachme a day to cover the cost of her food. Whatever help the Hostel could give her beside in the way of clothes would be kept track of

in her separate account in order that she might thereby have some definite idea of how much it actually costs a girl to live and dress herself apart from room rent. The Hostel gives also to its workroom girls free instruction in Greek and in English - the latter if it seems a practical advantage to her.

Elise for instance (number 2 in the photograph below-) came to us en route to her relatives in Constantinople but was unable to secure her visa as she is an Armenian. As she was equally at home in Greek, English, French or Armenian we advised her to work in our work-room for her Hostel Pension in order to take advantage of the Commercial Course, including Short-hand, Typewriting and book-keeping in English, offered by the Greek Y.W.C.A. Center. (This course was made possible through the generosity of Mrs Morgenthau)

Araxie (shown in the same picture) is also a Work-Room girl. She speaks French quite well and understands considerable Greek and English. She is studying both languages and as soon as possible will begin her nurses training in one of the American Women's Hospitals.



Rebecca, (also seen in the picture) who assured us when coming to the Hostel, that she could earn a very good living embroidering was put on piece work and was able to see herself at the end of the month that she would never become self-supporting by doing needle work and feels with us that if we cannot find a position for her to teach Armenian in one of the Armenian Classes, it will be better for her as she knows considerable French to have the Hostel Placement Bureau find a position for her

as a governess in a family until she learned enough Greek to take a business course.

Ephemia, age 15, who is quite alone in the world, aside from cousins, who cannot help her financially, is an unusually bright Greek child. Whenever she has a free moment she is found with her lesson book. One of the University students is giving her special lessons in the hope of preparing her for a Greek school in the Fall if a scholarship can be secured



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for her. Oftentimes the Hostel has to seem cruel to be kind in help some of the girls not to become parasites. Rosa and Zarouhie were two Hostel work-room girls who felt that needle-work was the only work they could do. Rosa had been in exile for ten years previous to the disaster (Smyrna). She did beautiful needle work slowly that it would have been impossible for her ever to earn living. After she had been in the Hostel for sometime an opportunity presented itself, through the Hostel Employment Bureau, for her to go into a family in the capacity of Mother's helper. Rosa was heartbroken, feeling that her self-respect would be imperilled as she felt that this would mean becoming a servant. The Hostel assured her that on the contrary it was the only self-respecting thing to do as she was unequipped for other kind of work, and had proven that she could never become self-supporting through her fancy work. Rosa was unable to realize this herself but as the Hostel refused to let her remain on longer she went into the family. Her first afternoon off she returned all smiles to thank the Hostel for insisting that she take the position. Zarouhie was a younger girl and typical of many cases that pass through the Hostel direction. She laboured under the delusion that she could go to America. The Migration Bureau assured the Hostel that this would be impossible so it was then decided that Zarouhie must adjust herself to her new life in Greece. She was a strong robust type of girl but with no ambition to do anything beyond needle work which she did not do well. With the handicap of not having Greek, it seemed wiser for her to go into a family as a second maid, where the Hostel Placement Bureau had placed a governess. Zarouhie however was so determined that she would not leave the Hostel that it was necessary for the House-mother to firmly lead her by the hand away from the Hostel with poor Zarouhie sobbing bitterly. The next week however on Zarouhie's half-day off she returned to visit the Hostel with a beaming countenance to say that she would not think of leaving the family even if the Hostel begged her to.

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Miss Day, who has been giving volunteer service during the year, has had full charge of the Placement Bureau reports as follows,--" The Placement or Employment Bureau during its year's existence ,has kept to its original purpose of finding work for women and girls and has proven the need for such a medium between the refugees and potential employers.



The greatest demand on the part of the employer has been for domestic servants, nursemaids and governesses and the bureau, through its successful placements has little by little become known as reliable and distinctive. Distinctive, in that it felt the need of standardizing conditions for girls in domestic service in order to meet the distaste of the average refugee girl for employment in families. The bureau's aim has been to guarantee to girls that the homes it recommended would comply with certain conditions -such as requiring for the girl at least two hours daily to herself, a half day "off" a week , a standard wage with the stipulation that it be paid regularly , and the assurance of a "follow-up" visit by the bureau to ascertain after the first two weeks whether both mistress and maid are satisfied. Even with this guarantee the supply of maids for domestic service (general maids more than cooks or second maids) continued to exceed than the demand so that it proved necessary to have a volunteer worker (whose picture appears in the foreground) visit the refugee camps from time to time with a view to discovering honest girls known to the people doing relief work in the camps, who are glad to go into service when they know of the Bureau and its standard for domestic service.

For the Greek families seeking governesses the Bureau has been fortunate in finding applicants equipped with English, French or German as the need happened to be. These were in almost every case girls who had been in American, French or German institutions in Asia Minor, and undoubtedly the most successful were those who had attended the American College at Smyrna for varying lengths of time.

From the point of view of the applicant seeking sewing positions in its various phases there were very few to offer in proportion to the inexhaustible supply of women and girls to fill the positions .These few were placed in local workrooms but one could not help but realize that for the majority of the unplaced girls and women the need for bee

training themselves to become self-supporting had never entered their heads so that sewing was their one asset. There being practically no market for this type of work ,the "Bureau " inquired carefully into their education and background and if these seemed to be indicative of a keen intelligence, ways have been devised for their taking advantage of the Business Course recently established at the Greek Y.W.C.A. Center(Through the generosity of Mrs Henry Morgenthau) whereby these girls would become well equipped office secretaries knowing stenography typewriting and book-keeping and always assured of well paid positions.

Another group of applicants for work was that of the woman coming from the refugee camps seeking work to be done at home ,not being able to leave their babies with anyone to even go out by the day. For them there was the only alternative, if in dire need, of putting their children in orphanages and they themselves of going into domestic service for which there was always demand. This of course was not the ideal thing to do so that it was with special gratification that the news was received of the establishment of Day-Nurseries in the camps -this being another evidence of the generosity and keen appreciation of great need on the part of Mrs Henry Morgenthau.-which will now enable the Mothers to leave their babies and go out for work by the day. Now that the Republic is a reality business affairs seem to be improving and the outlook for employment of all kinds is brighter than for some years.

The years experience proves that the Hostel will be just as much needed when the emergency funds are exhausted as it was when it was thought necessary to establish the Hostel in the beginning. More and more girls are looking to the Hostel for help -it has been found necessary to add fifteen beds to the original fifty-the majority of these girls are refugees who have come to Greece to stay(thirteen of the pre present family are Migration cases) so the fact must be faced that however much from the beginning the emergency character of our policy has been preserved this emergency measure has been coping with a permanent need and not an emergency one. Facing this daily and knowing from the Near East Y.W.C.A. Executive, Miss Woodsmall that the Y.W.C.A. was not going to be able to assure the Hostel running expenses for another year ,it was obviously the duty of the Y.W.C.A. here not to leave a stone unturned to find out possibilities there were in Athens itself, as Miss Woodsmall still cherished



the hope that the request of the Greek Y.W.C.A. Club Center to New York Headquarters might be granted, for the sending of a supervising secretary. For this reason every possibility and suggestion for raising funds for the Hostel running expenses, approved by the Hostel committee, was followed up. It was indeed gratifying in feeling out the possibilities for raising the running expenses to find that the very real interest on the part of the Athenian women, to have the Hostel become a permanent one, was not limited to their simply feeling the need for it but their confidence that it would be possible to raise the running expenses among their friends in Athens. Madame Photiades, whose rare executive ability and experience as a leader in the many local womens organizations and who had recently become president of the Greek Y.W.C.A. Center, had from the first been most interested in the Hostel, so upon hearing that the emergency funds of the Hostel would be exhausted June 30th and that the Hostel would necessarily close resolved that the Hostel must continue. She personally offered to interest her friends, including Mrs Venizelos, to raise the funds, necessary for the running expenses of the Hostel for at least another year. She also immediately caught the vision for the future fusion of the Hostel with the Greek Y.W.C.A. Club Center, after the running expenses were raised and the Emergency Funds exhausted. With the prospect so encouraging on the part of the Greek people to raise the running expenses but on the other hand with no assurance whatsoever that the request for the supervising secretary would be granted came the thought of keeping the contribution unofficially promised by the Athens American Relief Committee in a separate fund, along with other American financial possibilities to be sent direct to the American Y.W.C.A. toward the salary of a supervising secretary. With this in view Mrs Morganthau most generously gave the assurance of \$500.00 toward the salary of the supervising secretary and Miss Walker, the well known archaeologist, promised \$50. dollars. Added to these concrete assurances the hope of raising the entire salary of the supervising secretary for a year was stimulated by the assurance of Mr Atherton, the American Charge d'Affaires, and the American Consul General Mr Lowrie and Mrs Lowrie that they would give every possible help. The latter both wrote personal letters to wealthy friends in America telling them of the work that this was the only way that the Hostel could be assured of continuing was further confirmed by Miss Woodsmall's letter telling of the wholesale budget reductions in New York and her doubts that the request for the secretary could be granted at all, and later a letter from Miss Lyon herself regretting that New York was so financially embarrassed as not to be able to grant the request.

With the news on March 8th of the departure of Mr and Mrs Venizelos , the possibility of seeing Mrs Venizelos before she left was discussed with Mme Photiades. Mme Photiades wa very eager that Mrs Venizelos should hear of the work of the Hostel and the hope on the part of interested Greek friends to continue the Hostel after the expiration of the American emergency funds , June 30th, so she suggested that we go with her the next day to call on Mrs Venizelos. It was indeed a joy to see how deeply interested Mrs Venizelos was in all the various activities of the Hostel, and she was so disappointed that she would not be able to visit the Hostel before leaving . The following day brought the wonderful news that Mrs Venizelos had left with her Banker the handsome gift of 100,000 Dr. for the running expenses of the Hostel for another year. This most generous contribution on the part of Mrs Venizelos was not only enough to cover the running expenses for a half year but also proved a great stimulus to both Greek and American friends.

With the recent visit of Dr John R. Mott, the opportunity was given to open up one of the channels originally planned by the Hostel Committee when considering the possibilities of continuing the Hostel-namely that of the Athens University , which is said to have the unique distinction of being following a lecture of Dr Mott's given at the University , that the President of the University , that the President of the need of Hostels for the three hundred girl students attending the University . In talking the matter over with Dr Mott that same evening it was decided that no time be lost in arranging a meeting with the President of the University at which meeting Mme Photiades, of course be present . The meeting was most successful and a survey is now being made of the needs of the girl students for the coming year, with a view to housing forty University students at the Hostel this coming year, as a demonstration to the University Directors.



a wealthy institution . It was given to the students of the University spoke of the great girl students attending the University with Dr Mott that same evening in arranging a meeting with which meeting Mme Photiades, of course be present . The

If a permanent Greek Y.W.C.A. can be the out- growth of the American Y.W.C.A. Emergency Hostel it will be quite in keeping with the already phenomenal achievements of the Greek women in meeting the equally phenomenal demands of their refugee stricken country- such as the world has never seen. The American Y.W.C.A. will always look back upon its work in Greece with the feeling that it was indeed a privilege to have played even so small a part in the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ attempt to cope with so tremendous a problem.