

**Blackwelder, Gertrude B. Excerpts from "Report of Vacation School Committee." 1902.
Chicago History Museum. Chicago Woman's Club Records. Box 21, Folder 4.**

"This year (1901-02) is the eighth in the history of the Vacation School movement in Chicago. For five years the Women's Clubs of Cook County have carried the work on their shoulders.

We have learned, though the settlements, and from teachers, that summer time with the closing of the public schools, brings the children of the poor districts a period of danger, both as to morals and health. They have no place to play; their homes are hot and crowded; the streets filthy and contaminating. Enforced idleness incurs juvenile crime to an alarming extent.

It may be a matter of sorrowful interest to learn that the children of the congested districts seem to have lost the instinct for play. This is an unnatural and dangerous state for the activities of young children must find vent in some way. The Vacation Schools are bringing the little ones into their own, by making organized play, with games and music, our important feature of the work.

To one who walks through the crowded streets of one of the river wards, the first impression is of the great number of children on the sidewalks and doorsteps. Their stunted figures and listless expression are in sharp contrast to the happy faces one sees on entering one of the Vacation Schools where a few hundred of these children are gathered, and are learning how to do and to think and to observe.

The excursions, which have been such an important feature of Vacation School work, have taken the children to Nature itself; have made them acquainted with green fields and trees, pure water and living animals.

"...To change the course of young lives, which are surrounded with unwholesome influences is a work which ought to atone for the mistakes of a year.

We are in danger of becoming too self-centered, of forgetting that our motto literally translated, means "doing for others."

(Signed) Gertrude B. Blackwelder,

Chairman Vacation School Committee