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Te Kura Akau Taitoka

Dunedin's Kindergarten Pioneers: Some new stories

The founding of free kindergarten provision in Dunedin
1879 - 1890



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The founding of free kindergarten provision in Dunedin, 1879-1890.

Front cover image Dunedin, Walker Street Kindergarten.
Courtesy of Hocken Library, c/nE1815/37

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1879 - 1890.

Children are to be found everywhere. All classes of society need kindergarten.... 'Take heed that ye despise not *one* of these little ones,' said our great Master, and all kindergarten enthusiasts long to see this right and holy education brought within reach of all under the age of seven.

'Phoebe', June 16, 1894¹

Introduction

The growth of the loosely formed kindergarten movement occurred in New Zealand during the second half of the nineteenth century in the context of a society with broad educational and egalitarian goals. Its members were teachers and advocates for the new system and philosophy of the kindergarten and its founder, Prussian born Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852). The movement has its origins in the global spread of Froebel's ideas following his death. The New Zealand story is one of both individual and collective action, drawn from a network of men and women active in a range of political, educational, religious and social spheres, who recognised the need for education and social reform for the betterment of women and young children. In the 1870s and 1880s Dunedin supporters of Froebel's teachings, having also borrowed ideas from the United States and England, found in these a philosophy and experience which appeared relevant to broader debates occurring around its religious and education systems and the changing roles of women and children, in particular the growing needs of the children of the poor.²

This monograph describes the origins of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association, using the experiences of key founding members to explore a fuller understanding of the thinking that encouraged changing beliefs around childhood and the provision of early education in colonial New Zealand. It focuses on the educational and political activism of three founding members of the nineteenth century kindergarten movement – Rachel Reynolds, Mark Cohen and Lavinia Kelsey – whose work as advocates and agents for change place them central to

the establishment of provision of kindergarten education for young children in Dunedin. The relationships formed in their work are identified and examined to provide glimpses of the web of interconnected relationships within the movement and the shared membership of other social and educational groups.

In March 1879, Dunedin resident and activist Learmonth Dalrymple presented a petition to the Colony's parliamentary houses calling for implementation of Froebel's system of infant education:

There is no need to remind readers that the Colony is well provided with schools, both private and public, the latter being state institutions; and that all are so well appointed, and ranging from the district school, at which it is understood primary education begins, up to the university, where the most abstruse subjects may be studied, that to many the questions will occur, What, then, is there wanting?³

To Dalrymple, 'what, then, is there wanting' was kindergarten methods in the education of young children. A new, more 'natural' education was called for. As one local paper explained two years earlier

Kindergarten is founded on the fact that children must *do something*, and it endeavours to turn their ceaseless activity to good account; it furnishes the child with play, and so directs that play that it should form a part of the child's education. It is intended for very young children – even beginning before the child can leave the constant care of the mother, and goes on until the child is old enough to be taught from books and in the regular school.⁴



Figure 1: Learmonth Dalrymple. Courtesy of Hocken Library, Dunedin

Dalrymple opposed the current system of schooling on two grounds: first, the lack of the provision for children under five years – the minimum age under which children were admitted into school and the second, the nature of the instruction offered. Education, she argued "has already begun its work long before the age of five, and without any doubt that impressionable period of life ought to be utilised to the highest advantage for the child, and in a wider sense, for the common well-being of the race".⁵

In Dalrymple's view, schools were not, under their present arrangements, suitable for young children and further they operated an inappropriate pedagogy. Promoting kindergarten to operate in place of the infant school, quoting the English Froebelian Emily Sheriff, she argued 'Ordinary schools make it their great business to impart knowledge; the kindergarten aims at developing the human being'.⁶

Dalrymple's aim was to popularise the kindergarten as a pedagogical system, appropriate both for the education of young children, and for the unique place it offered women as 'the true educators' of young children – both in the classroom and for mothers in the home. It was argued that women, because of their sex, had a natural rapport and intuition with young children that justified a female presence in their schooling.⁷

While women may possess a particular set of instincts based on their 'natural' traits, as Froebel, stated, women nevertheless needed to be educated and trained before they were fully capable of teaching young children:

A mother does this naturally and spontaneously without any instruction or prompting, but this is not enough. It is also necessary that she should influence the child's growing awareness and consciously promote the continuity of his development, and that she should do this by establishing a positive and living relationship with him. So it is our concern to arouse intelligent parental love, and show the modes in which childhood expresses itself.⁸

Such ideas about women had significance in the new and rapidly expanding Colony. According to Dalrymple, Froebel's kindergarten model would provide professional opportunities for middle class women and promote social transformation through the use of women's maternal gifts in the public sphere. It would bring teachers of young children into the public education arena. In short, proper education, along with the promotion of women's natural role, could redeem a society that had gone morally astray.

On July 11, 1879 another event of significance was brought to the kindergarten movement: a meeting to discuss the establishment of a Crèche Association to set up an institution in which "women could place their children to be looked after, whilst they themselves were occupied away from home."⁹ To be set up as a charity, the new venture was presented as being, "really a means of helping people to help them."¹⁰ One speaker, Mr Cargill explained:

If any person took a walk up Stafford or Walker Street he would see crowds of children running around in a pitiable and neglected state, with no one to take care of them during the day, and a little help of this sort would be eagerly accepted by the mothers.¹¹

A motion from the Chairman, H. S. Walter (Dunedin's Mayor) was passed:

That the practical utility of the *Crèche* and Kindergarten systems having been demonstrated in many places, and the circumstances of our community being such as to make it highly probable that a similar institution would be a boon to many struggling families here, this meeting approves generally of the proposal to inaugurate such an institute in Dunedin, and pledges to give the supporters all possible assistance and encouragement.¹²

The women to be helped were the “deserving poor” – those seen to be of good moral character and with a real need for assistance, who “commanded the entire sympathy of all benevolent people”.¹³ The provision of a crèche was chosen as a preparatory step towards the introduction of a kindergarten system of teaching.¹⁴

The support given towards children and to women workers seeking childcare by those at the meeting was strong. A large committee of over 40 mainly women members, from medical, educational and welfare backgrounds, was appointed to act. Fundraising began immediately – a performance of a play to a woman-only audience. Whether or not a crèche was established is unknown although one newspaper report refers a new crèche having been set up.



**Figure 2: Assyrian Quarters off Walker Street.
Printed with permission of Otago Witness, February 10, 1904, 40.**



TYPICAL ASSYRIAN CHILDREN, WALKER STREET.



AN ASSYRIAN FATHER AND CHILDREN.

**Figure 3 and 4 : Assyrian children in Walker Street.
Courtesy of Otago Witness, February 10, 1904, 40.**

Underpinning this concern was the larger public concern with the so-called ‘gutter children’, an inescapable fixture of the nineteenth-century industrial city. Lacking formal education, adult supervision, and sometimes even a home, such youths, street children by necessity, “developed a confrontational and oppositional subculture relative to adult authority, while simultaneously adopting certain entrepreneurial behaviors as a survival strategy”.¹⁵ The new society hoped that removing young children from the dirt and immorality of streets into the protection of a crèche or kindergarten would provide children with a different path to travel.

Interest in kindergarten pedagogy also arose within the public schooling community. The 1877 Education Act made schooling compulsory for all children between ages of seven and 13. The common enrolment of children from the age of five raised questions around how young children should be taught. Reformists were concerned at the harmful nature of infant schooling and the lack of the specific syllabus for young children. They promoted pedagogical reform of the infant school along Froebelian lines and proposed the need for the kindergarten system to be attached to public schools.

Concern was also expressed regarding children who did not attend school. At one meeting in 1883 it was proposed that one or more truancy officers be appointed and a truant school provided. Mark Cohen seconded the proposal, arguing “it was necessary to gather the gutter children, as they had been called, and to keep them for a term on probation in a truant school until such time as they should be admitted into the public schools. [T]hese children who, if they were allowed to roam about the streets doing nothing, would most assuredly give the authorities in years to come a great deal of trouble”.¹⁶

Another solution to the truancy was proposed: that such children should attend kindergarten until the age of seven years. Such provision, it was argued, would take care that they not be gutter children, and would train them far better than under the current public school system. It was an argument that was to be regularly debated over the coming years.

By the mid 1880s a loosely formed education reform movement was emerging in the city from amongst Dunedin’s social, intellectual and political elite. They shared and supported the ideals promoted in ‘New Education’ that challenged traditional methods of education, calling for the adoption of new approaches that recognised children as powerful rather than passive learners (May, 1997). Their vision and work was to influence and shape the nature of

education of the young over the next decade. These included educational stalwarts such as Rachel Reynolds, Lavinia Kelsey and local MP, Robert Stout and his wife Anna. Rutherford Waddell, a Presbyterian minister came to Dunedin with strongly held progressive ideals and interests in things literary. James Allen returned to Dunedin from England with a degree from Oxford, bringing his bride, Mary Jane Hill Richards; Sarah and local journalist Mark Cohen, both locals, married in 1879. These individuals, and others who joined them, combined their respective talents and interests in progressive education, Froebel's teachings, and their skills and resources to bring about the establishment of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association in 1889.

This coming together of social need, educational change, particular individuals and the interests and the influences they exercised during the 1880s in Dunedin form the following three stories. The work of early kindergarten pioneers Rachel Reynolds, Mark Cohen and Lavinia Kelsey, attempting to realise their individual and collective dreams and aspirations in the face of economic reality and prevailing social and political conventions, is explored next.



Rachel Reynolds



Figure 5 Rachel Selina Pinkerton (Reynolds)¹⁷

Rachel Selina Reynolds, 1838-1928

Education in the nursery, and for years after leaving it, is inevitably women's work and in no one thing in the whole order of the Universe has Nature spoken more strongly than in this.¹⁸

Learmonth Dalrymple, 1879.

In the history of kindergarten in New Zealand, Rachel Reynolds is noted for her long-term work as a founding and prominent member of the kindergarten movement, as a philanthropist, and as the first president of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association.¹⁹ Less well known is the breadth and scale of the earlier work she undertook in parallel social and political campaigns in Dunedin, and the networks and strategies she employed to champion causes to improve the educational and social position of both women and children in Dunedin - work that helped prepare her for her contribution to the kindergarten cause. This first story

examines her work within women's campaigns and organisations which emerged in response to growing demands by some women for 'an enlarged sphere and voice' during the second half of the nineteenth-century.²⁰ Two aspects are addressed. The first considers the sources of influence available to Reynolds through her marriage into a middle-class world of privilege, and the strategies she used to step outside the prevailing bounds of domestic exclusion and isolation in order to participate in the public sphere. The second explores her work, and that of others, in the emergence of a separate culture within the culture shared with men.

Within the constraints of nineteenth-century notions of femininity, Reynolds gained and exercised influence in three interconnected spheres: marriage and motherhood, religious affiliation, and early women's groups seeking education and social reform. It is important to appreciate the legal and social constraints women faced in New Zealand's colonial society, and the courage they needed to confront their subordinate status. Women who sought to challenge aspects of the role of women also frequently colluded, whether consciously or unconsciously, in the maintenance of such constraints.

Prevailing social conventions, built around gendered and class beliefs, assigned particular roles to men and women on the basis of biological determinism. These ideas created a specific gender order in which men held dominance over women in formal public positions. Men chaired committees and public meetings; most committees consisted totally of males. Few women spoke in public; men, it was argued, represented their viewpoints. Female influence, lay – and remained – in the home. A powerful code of gendered and class behaviour operated in a variety of ways to shape the daily lives of both men and women in society. Women had limited financial means at their disposal. To succeed in their objectives, they had to strategize carefully to ensure that they made effective use of the resources they did have. They needed to find ways to be “both collaborators and saboteurs in a world that enabled their very existence as women intellectuals”.²¹

Rachel Selina Pinkerton was just 18 years of age when in 1856 she married William Hunter Reynolds, a 34-year-old merchant and member of Otago's Provincial Council. For Rachel it was a 'good' marriage offering financial security, respectability, social position, and a comfortable home, in conjunction with social responsibility. William honoured his financial responsibilities to his dependants, and Rachel, in turn, managed the household with support from servants and oversaw the care for the couple's nine children, five girls and four boys.

Reynolds worked as a partner alongside her husband, acting as his hostess at political functions and engaging in effective action in a variety of political arenas.²² Among their acquaintances were many of the Colony's most politically influential figures, and many active supporters of electoral and public education reform, including supporters of the emerging kindergarten movement. These new friendships enabled the young Rachel to build networks and resources needed to access entry into public life, and to establish and sustain her increasing involvement in campaigns for educational, electoral and social reform. William shared and supported her commitment to social justice based upon egalitarian principles. Throughout their marriage, they frequently worked together in social campaigns of mutual interest.

Reynolds also functioned, increasingly in her own right, in public arenas. Her entry into public life began in the 1860s when, still in her twenties, she joined Learmonth Dalrymple in a campaign to establish a public secondary school for girls in Dunedin (the first in the new Colony). Early in the campaign, Dalrymple gathered together a supportive group of prominent ladies from the area. These early campaigns attracted a particular breed of radical women: those sufficiently confident to look beyond prevailing norms in order to extend their role beyond their nineteenth-century destiny. Rachel Reynolds was one such woman.

Male assistance was sought. Dalrymple's campaign may have been a women's cause, but it was one fought by both men and women. Early in the campaign Dalrymple gained the early support of her friend and neighbour, Major, later Sir, John Richardson, Member of Parliament for Clutha and Speaker of the Provincial Council. Richardson, along with Rachel's husband, William Reynolds worked within the Council to gain acceptance for the idea of secondary education for girls.

Dalrymple proposed a public meeting open to ladies. The meeting, reported to be the first attempt to hold a ladies meeting in Dunedin, was not without difficulties. Dalrymple's decision to challenge social conventions and to seek a woman to chair the meeting was met with expressions of disapproval. As one of the town's church leaders (unknown) declared, "it would be impossible for any body of ladies to conduct a meeting properly unless they had the assistance of a gentleman to preside".²³

As an unmarried woman, Dalrymple felt her place was in the background and that a married woman was needed to chair the meeting. After numerous refusals from Dunedin's leading women, Eliza Dick, wife of the then Superintendent of Otago Province Thomas Dick, reluctantly agreed to take the chair, on condition "that Miss Dalrymple do all the talking and that it be clearly understood that she did so because of her husband's office".²⁴

Dalrymple gained the support of the province's superintendent, James Macandrew, who agreed to set up an Education Committee that would prepare a report on an upper school for girls. William Reynolds served as chair for what was, as customary for the times, an all-male committee. However, a break with tradition came with an acknowledgement that the matter was a female cause, and so a 'Ladies' Committee', consisting of prominent women interested in the cause was formed. Dalrymple accepted the role of honorary secretary. Rachel Reynolds was a committee member. Following an extensive round of campaigning, letter-writing and speech-making, success finally came in 1871 with the opening of the Otago Girls' High School. The first state secondary school for girls' in New Zealand and Australia, it became a model for further girls' secondary schools in Nelson and Wellington.

Reynolds continued to work with Dalrymple in her second campaign: to gain admittance for women to Otago University on the same basis as men. This was partially gained in 1871. Women were allowed to attend classes alongside their male peers, but having completed their studies, were initially awarded certificates rather than the degrees awarded to male graduates. The first woman to graduate from Otago University was Caroline Freeman in 1885. She chose a teaching career and was a member of the kindergarten movement.

Religion was an area in which Rachel Reynolds further developed, shaped and gave expression to her expanding social conscience and religious convictions. Both Rachel and William were prominent members of the congregation of St Andrews Presbyterian Church from its inception in 1863. From the beginning Rachel Reynolds found opportunity to further extend her role into the public arena within St Andrew's Church. In 1862, it was her early gift of land that allowed the congregation to build their first permanent church.²⁵ Given that prior to 1884 the property of non-Māori married women became legally that of their husbands on marriage, it is not known how she gained the land in question or whether William was involved in her action.²⁶ It does suggest that she had access to and control over a private income.

St Andrew's positioned itself on the liberal end of the continuum, especially following the arrival, in 1879, of the Rev. Rutherford Waddell, who later became involved in moral reform movements, focusing on specific social evils including poverty, crime, sexual promiscuity and drunkenness. Rachel Reynolds' social conscience matched that of Waddell, who believed that "no one can be living a truly Christian life who does not mingle with the poor".²⁷ St Andrew's Church provided the context for the social causes Reynolds would eventually engage in, and was instrumental in the development of the free kindergarten movement.

It was her commitment to female philanthropy that made Rachel Reynolds a figure of authority. Her early involvement in the church was a combination of philanthropic and evangelical work undertaken within the poverty-stricken areas surrounding St Andrew's Church, (including Walker and Stratford Streets, later home of the first free kindergarten). As the level of poverty grew in the new settlement of Dunedin, so too did the level of social services offered by the church; these prompted the formation of the Ladies' Association, with its specific role for the church's women. Reynolds took a leading role in organising the distribution of clothing and relief, and the visiting of the many people in the area living in considerable poverty. In 1873 the church established a 'Collection for the Poor' at each communion service. A year later, in 1874, this work was placed on a more organised footing, with the formation of the first 'Ladies' Association' in which Reynolds was a committee member. The association later developed into the 'Friendly Aid Society', with Reynolds in a leadership role.²⁸

Rutherford Waddell's appointment as Minister of St Andrew's brought a significant change of direction for Reynolds. Waddell's belief that the Christian gospel should be actively interpreted through social justice offered women a vital place, because it emphasised their moral qualities and recognised that women had an important and specific role to play as moral guardians.²⁹ Over the next decade, Waddell promoted and strengthened the focus on benevolence as women's work. For Reynolds Waddell's approach allowed her to take on more leadership roles in the church. In 1882, she set up a Sixpenny Clothing Club, to which subscribers donated 6d a month and material to make clothing for poor families. She also held weekly mothers' meetings where she taught young mothers to sew for themselves and their children.

The involvement of women through social campaigns in exercising influence was the second area in which Reynolds was to work closely with Waddell. Given her social position, her philanthropic work and her earlier experience in Dalrymple's campaigns for women's education, it was perhaps inevitable that she became involved in the late nineteenth-century temperance, industrial and suffrage campaigns. This work provided Reynolds with opportunities to expand her interest in female-led organisations, and brought exposure to a new level of involvement in political and social issues.

Ideas promoting a female culture were boosted in 1885 when Mrs Mary Leavitt arrived in Dunedin from San Francisco. Mrs Leavitt was travelling around the colonies of Australia and New Zealand promoting the newly formed Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Union's dual message of the social benefits of Protestant values and women's emancipation. Over the next year, branches of the WCTU sprang up in all the main cities, making it the first national women's organisation in the Colony. Temperance groups were already in existence, but the WCTU was the first of these associations with a special appeal to women and the first to bring the "American women's movement's goals and strategies to these British outposts".³⁰ They preached women's rights to a political citizenship as a means of both protecting women's homes and bringing into the public arena the moral values of women as mothers, or as the 'mother-hearted'.

Waddell moved quickly to ensure St Andrew's was the first church in Dunedin offering to host a meeting to hear Mrs. Leavitt, which he chaired. Waddell urged women's involvement in the temperance movement, appealing to their experience as mothers to link Christianity and the increasing respect for women in society. It was their mission, one that appealed to women's natural characteristics of compassion and sensitivity needed for the work. What they needed was the motivation and means to do so. Dunedin women who, like Rachel Reynolds, had previously been involved in philanthropic activities through their churches, now united in the temperance cause under the umbrella of the World WCTU.

In conjunction with Waddell, Rachel Reynolds was also involved in campaigns against sweated labour. The 1880s economic depression in New Zealand had generated major social ills: unemployment and the resulting poverty saw more women join the paid workforce to contribute to diminishing family incomes. Exploitation was common and in 1888, Waddell brought the existence of 'sweated labour' in the clothing industry to the attention of the

Colony. Waddell, assisted by Reynolds, Harriet Morison and others, joined together to raise public awareness of the poor working conditions suffered by women tailoresses. It seemed that the conditions which the settlers had endured in the old country, were being reproduced in “this young fair land”.³¹ In 1889, a Tailoresses’ Union was established; the first women’s trade union in the Colony. Although it was a women’s organisation, Waddell became the union’s first president.

Increasingly women, whether as paid employees or voluntary workers, began to look to political action to achieve their aims. In particular, they questioned how much political pressure they could exert when they had no vote. The women’s suffrage movement grew during the 1880s and into the 1890s, moving outside Parliament to become a mass movement. In Dunedin, campaigns both for and against female suffrage were earnestly mounted.³² Membership of the WCTU included many of same people who later became part of the free kindergarten association: Rachel Reynolds, Sarah Cohen, Lady Anna Stout, Caroline Freeman and Lavinia Kelsey. By the 1890s, an organisation solely devoted to suffrage was proposed. In April 1892, Harriet Morison, vice-president of the Tailoresses’ Union of New Zealand, argued this case at a public meeting of over 1200 people, saying:

We want the franchise, not because of any special thing, but because we are women and consider we have the right to vote on all social and political questions affecting the community.³³

The clarification of the philosophy of women’s suffrage provided a counter to the anti-suffrage campaign of the local MP, Henry Fish.³⁴ Rachel Reynolds, Cohen, Freeman and Kelsey now rejected the WCTU, preferring to join the newly established Women’s Franchise League in Dunedin. Anna Stout was elected as nominal leader, while Rachel Reynolds accepted the role of vice-president.³⁵ Success came in 1893 when women in New Zealand were granted the right to vote.

In her quest for equality, Rachel Reynolds, like others in the campaigns for educational and social reforms, did not seek to discard the Victorian notion of womanhood, but rather to rewrite it. It was argued that higher education of girls would educate, in the true sense of the word, the future woman. Women’s proper sphere remained the home, and from this basis women claimed the maternal moral authority to promote full citizenship and a legitimate place in public life for women. This rationale for male and female difference and promotion

of women's unique realm were central to Reynolds' work – and that of others such as Dalrymple, across their various spheres of influence. Such agitation helped pave the way for women's greater participation in public life.

In 1889, Rachel Reynolds accepted an invitation from Mark Cohen to assist in raising interest in the provision of free kindergarten education for those whose parents were unable to pay. Encouraged by Waddell, she accepted the role of president of the fledgling free kindergarten association, a position she held, with the exception of a two-year break, until 1906.

.....

Mark Cohen

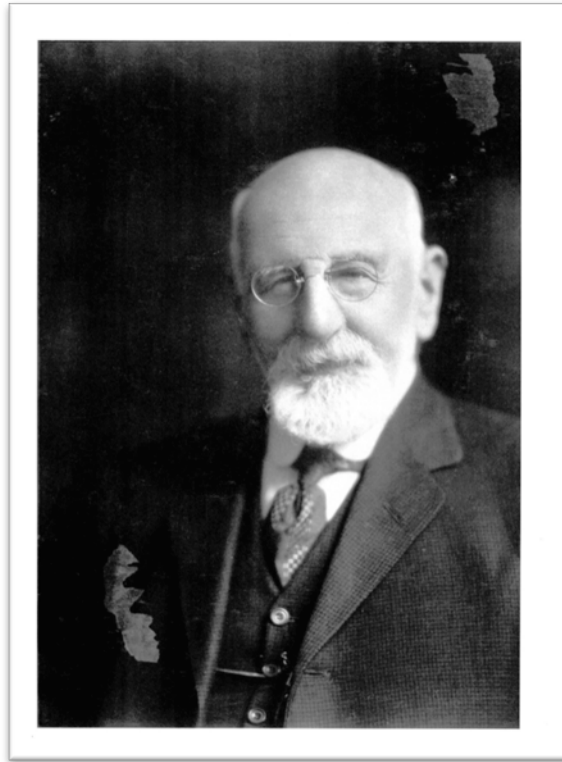


Figure 6: Mark Cohen, courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library

Mark Cohen, 1849-1928

“Untiring in his labours with pen and voice”³⁶

Mark Cohen was active in many social and educational causes, “untiring in his labour with pen and voice”.³⁷ This second story examines his involvement in the establishment of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association specifically throughout 1888 and into 1889 – the period in which the association was being established. This was a significant period for the emerging association in which men such as Cohen played a significant public role in shaping the philosophy and structure of the new organisation. This is not a story of one man alone, but of a group of men who were involved collaboratively in the kindergarten movement and other educational and social campaigns of the time. Cohen’s story illustrates how kindergarten development was both a colonial and a transnational venture dependent upon global connections as well as local initiatives.

In the late nineteenth-century, Dunedin had an abundance of male educational figures who were interested in kindergarten methods and were willing to become involved in the provision of free kindergarten in the city. Alongside the Rev Waddell were a number of influential husband and wife teams supporting the kindergarten movement at the time of the establishment of the free kindergarten association in 1889. Sarah (Sara) Cohen and her husband were an example of such a team. Other couples included Mr and Mrs James Allen, Sir Robert and Lady Stout, and Mr and Mrs David White. Three couples, the Cohens, Waddells and Allens, took an active role in the association up to and beyond its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1915. Robert and Anna Stout moved to Wellington, where they continued to support kindergarten activities.

The men involved in the Dunedin kindergarten movement had a number of common characteristics. Kevin Brehony's study of male founders in kindergarten in Britain found that the early pioneers differed from the vast majority of their male contemporaries. For the most part, the men in his study were 'cultural outsiders'; that is "they were nearly all excluded in some way from the hegemonic ruling bloc of landed capital, Tory politics and the Church of England".³⁸ In varying degrees, the men discussed here in New Zealand fit Brehony's category of 'cultural outsiders'. Mark Cohen was born into a working class Jewish family in Stepney, England, a country then dominated by the Church of England; his family lived largely on the outer edge of society. Within Dunedin's predominately Presbyterian society he was certainly a 'cultural outsider'.³⁹ Others were religious outsiders. Stout was an agnostic who, while he enjoyed and often led theological debates, fervently opposed sectarian and dogmatic religion. He promoted ideas of free thought and rationalism, "often giving particular offence by lectures in which he expressed sceptical views on the stories of miracles and the divinity of Christ".⁴⁰ These men believed in political and economic democracy, self-improvement and the values of individualism. Both Stout and Waddell showed interest in Unitarianism, a leading group of enlightenment rationalists at the forefront of education reform in Britain and America, attracted by a shared belief that religion is best understood as morality.

These men also shared a deep interest in new education, were involved in reform of the education system and mostly had professional experience in education. Robert Stout, having begun his own education in kindergarten around the age of five, later acquired qualifications in law and teaching. Mark Cohen followed his children into schooling to serve on school

boards. Each devoted large parts of their lives to social action within movements composed overwhelmingly of women, in kindergarten and as shown in the previous section, the women's movement.⁴¹

Mark Cohen's contribution, largely invisible in kindergarten histories, deserves greater recognition. His objective was to reform the education of the young in Dunedin, and Froebel's kindergarten system inspired him to achieve that. "I am," he stated in 1887, "an ardent advocate of the kindergarten system which I hope yet to see the initial grade of our education system".⁴² His contribution to the debate concerning the relationship of kindergarten and school began in the 1880s, extending up to and beyond 1912 when he served as chairman of the 1912 Education Commission. Cohen's recommendations became the basis of the Education Act 1914, which largely shaped New Zealand education until the 1940s.⁴³ His work illustrates the significance of the press in the dissemination of information about kindergarten reform in nineteenth-century society, as well as providing insights into the nature of the role of men in kindergarten in relation to that of women.

Cohen worked as a reform journalist in a public newspaper and made frequent submissions to educational committees. He corresponded with Mrs Sarah Cooper of the Golden Gate Free Kindergarten in San Francisco in the 1880s and 1890s. This writing provides an invaluable opportunity to catch glimpses of Cohen as a person and help us to understand the nature of his contribution in education – in particular that of kindergarten education. Cohen's writing also allows an exploration of the gendered nature of the qualities which men brought to the kindergarten movement, their aspirations to join what was a woman-led organisation and the relationships they formed with women in the process.

For such men, the 'New Education' affirmed their strengthening belief that the early years were the most important for setting the pattern of future learning and development.⁴⁴ During 1887-1888, Cohen wrote a series of articles outlining the benefits of kindergarten training for children. In 1887, he gave evidence that supported his claims before a parliamentary select committee concerned with proposed school cuts, particularly for young children, chaired by Mr J. G. Wilson. Cohen advocated the use of kindergarten methods within primary schools, supporting those seeking to liberate the young child's nature from tradition and external authority:

I am an ardent advocate of the kindergarten system, which I hope yet to see as the initial grade of our education scheme. My reading on this subject and study of such *markedly* imperfect methods as have been brought under my notice have convinced me that the kindergarten is the best plan for the training and teaching of infants.⁴⁵

Cohen also made contact with international organisations, movements and ideas, showing awareness of the global spread of kindergarten and the adoption of kindergarten work into school systems in places such as America, Canada and Australia.

Cohen and others, including Waddell, looked to America for inspiration and guidance. Cohen had become aware of the establishment of free kindergartens in America, including New York and San Francisco.⁴⁶ The growth of interest in kindergarten education there was matched by the New Zealand women's groups which had emerged since a visit in 1885 from Mary Leavitt, particularly the newly formed WCTU which was promoting kindergarten provision as an educational issue. Within a year of its foundation in 1887, Auckland's Jubilee Kindergarten and Crèche committee had organised a kindergarten employing four teachers and a matron. An average of 90 children a day were fed a hot meal, six days a week.⁴⁷ The time seemed right for a similar scheme in Dunedin. The first step was to seek guidance on the best way to proceed.



Figure 7: Sarah Cooper, San Francisco

With the assistance of his brother-in-law who lived in San Francisco, Cohen made contact with kindergartener Sarah Cooper who, as Cohen later wrote, “was induced to write to me a very arresting and informative account of her methods of juvenile instruction...”⁴⁸

From the first, Cohen found Cooper's letters inspirational. In January 1888 he wrote to her saying “I have taken fresh courage since rising from a study of these and God sparing me I shall on every convenient occasion urge the claim of the kindergarten to a place in the national provision of education in this country”.⁴⁹

Mark Cohen used all available means to gather support for Froebel's teachings and to bring about the implementation of kindergarten pedagogy. Within the year, using his position as a journalist he had a series of articles advocating the introduction of kindergarten published in

the *Evening Star*.⁵⁰ Cohen wrote to Cooper telling her of this work. He wrote many more articles for the cause, attended public meetings, promoted kindergarten whenever he could and carried out this task with tenacity. Such was the spread of his work he became known as an “enthusiastic advocate of kindergarten”, who “never ceased to urge upon the authorities the advantage of the system”.⁵¹

Cohen was able to access Dunedin’s political and educational power base of people and institutions, particularly its reforming arm. He regularly used all possible opportunities to send family, friends and business contacts brochures, reports and articles promoting the benefits of kindergarten. When he received the annual report of the Golden Gate Association from Sarah Cooper, he promptly sent copies to prominent people interested in education, The report provided the reader with ‘in-depth how to’ guides on opening and operating kindergarten, and included reprints of press reports and magazine articles recommending its moral, social and economic benefits.⁵²

Not everyone supported the cause. Overcoming apathy and open opposition from opponents was a regular task for Cohen. In January 1888, he wrote to Cooper about the difficulties they had to contend with and to what extent prejudice stopped the way to educational reform.⁵³ The Rev. Dr. Stuart of Knox Church was named as one such opponent. “I can never forget his utterance on one day after I had addressed a meeting of teachers. He would far sooner see the children playing in the gutters, and making mud pies there, than be brought under this new-fangled Yankee notion”.⁵⁴ Cohen was crushed by such a comment, coming as it did from such a prominent man who had previously lent his support to education campaigns, but he doubled his efforts.⁵⁵ “It was hard to counter such a blow from such an influential quarter but I stuck to my guns, wrote more articles based on further information supplied from Mrs Cooper, and little by little the small seed I planted grew into a pretty vigorous plant.”⁵⁶ In the face of opposition, Cohen continued with his strategy to educate, inform and to gather support. In a subsequent newspaper article, he wrote, ‘I turned to Dr Waddell...and poured into his ear the story of my troubles. He took me to Mrs W. H. Reynolds, ... who was already familiar with the work of Mrs Cooper’.⁵⁷

Rachel Reynolds agreed to a meeting, where Cohen and Waddell outlined the free kindergarten philosophy and practices to her. Reynolds wrote later:

There were many and persuasive arguments; still I hesitated to undertake about which I knew so little. On rising to leave, Mr Cohen produced two or three copies of Mrs Sarah B. Cooper's kindergarten reports. I promised to read them, and if satisfied I undertook to interview Bishop Suter, who had lately been on a visit to San Francisco and was shortly to be here, and, we were told, was quite convinced of the importance of the work.⁵⁸

After some consideration, Reynolds agreed to become involved. The first joint committee decision made was to hold a public meeting on September 28, 1889 to promote free kindergarten ideals in the city. Ex-premier Sir William Fox gave the opening speech explaining to the audience the finer points of kindergarten. An elated Cohen wrote to Cooper in San Francisco that he had "enlisted the sympathy of some ladies resident here, who move in our best circles".⁵⁹

The newly formed committee held a series of private meetings to discuss kindergarten matters over the next few months, many taking place in the drawing room of Rachel Reynolds' home. A proposed constitution was drawn up, and when the committee had determined the qualities needed in a suitable teacher and the sources from which such a person could be found, it was decided to hold another public meeting. Bishop Suter was invited from Nelson to share the understandings of kindergarten he had gained from his recent San Francisco visit. "I can see victory clearly before me",⁶⁰ a jubilant Cohen wrote to Cooper. He was right. Cohen later wrote that March 4, 1889 became 'the date on which the movement to found a kindergarten in Dunedin may be fairly said to have materialised'.⁶¹

The Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association (DFKA) constitution set in place a gendered organisational structure – it was to be a women-led organisation, with women holding positions of president, secretary and other committee positions. But men had a role also. An Advisory Committee was formed of men who had responsibility for the management of financial matters. There was much for the newly formed committee to do. Progress had been made in alerting the advocates of the scheme to the 'need for education for the young', but now the new committee had to establish ways and means to achieve a kindergarten in Dunedin. A venue, the requisite furnishings, and appropriately qualified staff all needed to be found.

But first came the urgent question of finance. How could the necessary funds to meet the costs of establishing and maintaining a kindergarten be acquired? Cohen, who was aware of Auckland's financial difficulties in raising sufficient funds for a kindergarten, only to see it

eventually close, was determined to avoid a similar fate. In October, Cohen wrote again to Cooper, asking for:

Any information that tends to prove that the kindergarten can be operated as cheaply, if not cheaper, than the primary infant school. The question of finance is after all the great one if I can successfully show by the experience of other large places that the new system costs no more than the old one.⁶²

Such concerns were realistic in a largely unresponsive community, which was already resistant to paying the costs of universal education, and which had little interest in the doctrines of 'New Education'.

With much effort from the new committee results were soon achieved and sufficient startup funds raised. Cohen wrote to Cooper: "We have just funds enough to carry us over the year but have no fear when once the merits of the scheme are understood we shall get the requisite measure of support from the philanthropically and charitably disposed."⁶³

This proved a temporary respite; the need for funds continued to be a constant concern for the association for many years to come. There was an ongoing need, through whatever means, to attract support from business and philanthropic members of the community with an interest in the movement. The first step was to attract their interest, and then for that interest to generate the necessary funds.⁶⁴

A venue was found with the assistance of Waddell. Concerned about the growing needs of many children in the area, Waddell offered the use of the area's new Mission Hall free of charge. The hall, said Waddell, was to be a "direct centre for working upon the people round about, and so bringing them intellectual, moral, and spiritual food so as to build them up to that complete Christianity set before us".⁶⁵ He planned evening classes for the purpose of teaching girls domestic economy, to establish penny readings for the poor, and to build a nucleus of a free public library for their benefit. The kindergarten committee, weighted as it was with members of St Andrew's congregation, accepted the use of the Walker Street Mission Hall and the opportunity to work closely with families in the area.

Having found the venue, the next and crucial step was to find a suitably qualified teacher. In accordance with Froebel's philosophy, the teacher had to be female; and she had to be qualified for kindergarten work. Writing again to Sarah Cooper, Cohen expressed his concern

that securing a competent teacher would be difficult; that kindergarten teachers were not accepted within the education profession, and that the community was not responsive. “Kindergarten is very imperfectly understood in this Colony, I find, and I am inclined to think that our teachers view the new departure with coldness, if not with absolute disfavour”.⁶⁶

Despite Cohen’s despondency, one ‘suitably qualified, experienced and compassionate teacher’ was found.⁶⁷ Miss Wienike had studied kindergarten methods in Germany and had taught a kindergarten in one of the suburbs of Christchurch. She was described as “a lady who had been trained for the work in Froebel’s land, and seemed endowed with a special love for the poor and with patience for the weak”.⁶⁸

On June 10, 1889, the Dunedin Kindergarten Association “planted the first free kindergarten in Dunedin”.⁶⁹ The kindergarten opened with 14 children, and by December, 55 children were enrolled with an average attendance of 41 over the previous quarter.

In July, Cohen wrote to Cooper:

So far the lady in charge has given satisfaction to those immediately concerned, and she appears to be conscientious. We have granted her a young assistant⁷⁰ who served a short apprenticeship to her in neighbouring city of Christchurch. The outlook is very promising indeed....⁷¹

.....

Lavinia Kelsey



Figure 8: Lavinia Jane Kelsey. Courtesy of Hocken Library

Lavinia Jane Kelsey, 1856-1948

The kindergarten concerns itself more with the development of faculty than with the mere imparting of knowledge.... It does not ask so much, “What does the child know?” as, “Has the child learned how to learn?”

Sarah B Cooper, San Francisco, 1894⁷²

This third story explores the early kindergarten work of the association’s long term stalwart: Lavinia Kelsey. Kelsey was 32 years of age when, in 1889, she accepted the role of secretary for the newly established association. Her interest in Froebel’s work arose on a visit ‘home’ to England in 1883, during time spent with her sister-in-law who had qualified from the Froebel Education Institute (FEI) in London, under the guidance of its leader, Madame Michaelis.⁷³ On her return home, Kelsey implemented Froebelian ideas in her own teaching, adapting his belief “of appealing to children’s imaginations rather than just concentrating on facts”.⁷⁴

Colonial life offered middle-class, single women little scope beyond the domestic realm. As a spinster, Kelsey did not fit the feminine domestic norm for women of her time or class, and neither did she have access to the professions or public world as men had. In adulthood, she was constrained in what she could do both by social conventions based on class and gender, and by her own lack of the skills required for employment.

Within the gendered and class rules of propriety, there existed a certain fluidity which women such as Kelsey used to challenge and negotiate what power and influence they could in the public arena, while still meeting prevailing feminine expectations. Kelsey fashioned for herself a life that encompassed work in three areas open to her – the arts, literature and education — and she became a highly respected figure in Dunedin’s intellectual and reform circles.⁷⁵ To supplement her income, Kelsey entered one of the few occupations available to middle-class women; working as a governess by taking girls into her home as pupils. In the 1900s she set up her own school in Dunedin, with premises in Moray Street, offering classes in literature, history and French.

Kelsey’s educational aspirations should be considered in conjunction with her strong religious faith. As a member of St Andrew’s Church she became involved with Rachel Reynolds, Rutherford Waddell and others, who formed the basis for the kindergarten movement in the city. Kelsey shared their commitment to social and educational reform based on a belief in the personal acceptance of community responsibility. Her faith was intertwined with a belief in the power of education to effect change; her work, whether with children or women, was driven by that belief. It was here that her involvement with the free kindergarten movement was established.

Kelsey used opportunities that arose to advocate for the success of the association’s work and to loosen the pockets of citizens. She wrote enthusiastic reports about the work of the association, promoted the value of its work and championed the cause, all to raise the necessary operating funds. The association annual reports, which she typically wrote, claim the success of kindergarten work, producing glowing endorsements of the work from parents, teachers and visitors.

Three key principles were regularly promoted. The first was that young children needed a different pedagogy to that of older children. The second was the importance of kindergarten

pedagogy as preparation for school and the need for qualified kindergarten teachers and on-site training. Froebel's teachings were readily reformulated in accordance with prevailing beliefs and needs. Kelsey explained that by kindergarten, she meant "kindergarten as Froebel would have if he was living at the present day":

He [Froebel] left his work largely unfinished. He did not live to apply his methods to the higher stages of education. The sense of colour and influence of colour never appealed to him. Biology was at the time he lived a quite undeveloped science.... We must take Froebel's spirit, adapt it to our modern life, and carry his work to larger heights and finer issues.⁷⁶

Her early annual reports regularly include 'before and after' vignettes of poor children "who needed an environment of joy and kindness combined with education most suited to cultivate such habits as thrift, obedience, cleanliness and self help".⁷⁷ Examples are used of children who on arrival are full of dullness and apathy but who within a few months are transformed. "Their legs, hands, voice, brains, sympathies, all were active in their appointed seasons".⁷⁸ Heart-warming tales were relayed. In the same report, readers were encouraged to talk with the children:

Ask them about "Johnny". They will tell you how they loved the delicate boy who came into their midst for five short months and then went to God's heaven, how he lay so patiently in his cot through days and nights of pain, toying with the flowers around him, and talking repeatedly of the happy hours amongst them all.⁷⁹

"Johnny" may be Tom Pridham, a kindergarten child reported to have died in the first year of operation.⁸⁰

Community endorsements were frequently claimed to demonstrate success of the work undertaken in the cause of kindergarten. In 1897, Kelsey wrote:

We halt once more and ask from outsiders: What promises of fruit? The answer comes to us both from the home and from the school. Our testimony from the homes is a very strong one. Mothers and fathers, elder sisters and brothers, doctors and hospital nurses all testify to character developed, energies directed, thrift cultivated, and education commenced.⁸¹

Although the association, with its eye firmly on the cause that would attract the public pocket, tended to give greater emphasis to its social mission, it did have strong educational aspirations.

Cohen, Kelsey and Reynolds regularly pledged support for Froebel and his teachings in personal and public media. Similarly, association endorsement of Froebel is shown in the frequent references to him in early annual reports.

During Lavinia Kelsey's time as secretary of the DFKA, support for kindergarten as an educational cause emerged from within the wider education community. In 1889, kindergarten was included in the education bay of the 1889 New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition held in Dunedin.

The exhibition was important for association members as an opportunity to advocate for kindergarten, to promote the value of their work and to champion the cause for the financial backing critical to cover operating costs. The stakes were high. They may have embraced the idea of kindergarten principles but the general community had not. Apathy was widespread and a matter of great concern for these advocates whose social and financial future lay in demonstrating that kindergarten provision had long-term benefits for children as citizens, for the Colony and even for the Empire. This entailed the recasting of kindergarten pedagogy from a specifically middle class and largely private institution into one thought appropriate for all young children, and in particular for the education of the poorer sections of the working classes. For the DFKA, financially dependent on community support, it was a matter of survival. Without funding there could be no kindergarten provision.

Responsibility for the South Seas Exhibition education bay was given to Mr. W. S. Fitzgerald, Rector of Dunedin Normal School, who had lent his public support to kindergarten in an earlier address to the Education Institute in April 1889:

The kindergarten school is one the merits of which is not fully understood and consequently not fully appreciated, not by the general public – not even, perhaps by the teachers. Many are inclined, when informed of the virtues, which it undoubtedly possesses, to look on it as an educational 'fad', and in this belief to dismiss it from attention. But for all that the fact remains that some of the most eminent teachers throughout the world have, after studying it, given their allegiance to its worth; and coming nearer home, some of the foremost teachers.⁸²

Figure 9: Otago Daily Times, Issue 8527, 22 June 1889, Page 4

THE WALKER STREET KINDERGARTEN

For some time past the idea of establishing public kindergartens in Dunedin has been entertained by a number of gentlemen in the community. The idea was first mooted about 12 months ago, when Sir William Fox gave a lecture in Dunedin on the subject of kindergartens. It was not, however, until Bishop Suter was in Dunedin, in March last, that any definite steps were taken to bring about what many had desired. At that time a meeting was held in the Town Hall, and addressed by Bishop Suter and other gentleman. It was subsequently resolved to form a kindergarten association, and a large committee of ladies and gentlemen was appointed to give effect to the resolution. The outcome of the appointment of this committee was that it was decided to start a kindergarten in Walker street, the St. Andrew's Church congregation having agreed to grant the Mission Hall in the neighbourhood of the church free of charge to the committee for the purpose. Subscriptions were afterwards set on foot, and enough money was raised to pay the expenses connected with the proposed kindergarten for 12 months. An experienced teacher was then obtained, in the person of Miss Wienike, and the services of Miss Creswell as assistant teacher were also secured. Miss Wienike, who, by-the-way, has taught kindergartens formerly in Germany and lately in Christchurch, commenced her duties in the Mission Hall in Walker street a little over a fortnight ago. Since then she has had from 12 to 20 of the poorer children of the neighbourhood to instruct. The ages of these children vary from four to six years, but it is proposed shortly to admit children three years of age, and also to increase the number to 30. It is, however, not intended that children over six years should attend the kindergarten, as the committee do not wish to interfere with those who are entitled by reason of their age to attend the State schools. Although only a short time has elapsed since the kindergarten was opened, the children appear to have learnt a number of things in a small way. A representative of this paper visited the Mission Hall yesterday in company with the Rev. Mr Waddell, and had an opportunity of seeing the little folks go through their performances. After a short lesson in writing — in which the blackboard on to their slates — there were

some singing and simple gymnastic exercises. The children were then given a lesson in the discrimination of colours, combined with one in elementary geometry. The teacher sat at one end of a table, surrounded by the pupils, and held up some red, blue, and yellow squares of paper. The children were taught to name the colours as they were exposed to their gaze, and subsequently each child had one of the squares of paper placed before it. Then all were instructed as to the properties of a square by being made to count the corners and sides, and then to repeat to formula: "My square has four corners and four sides." They were afterwards taught the properties of a triangle in a similar way. Marching, singing, and various other exercises were also gone through, and the children evidently regarded their occupations in the light of recreation, and appeared to thoroughly enjoy themselves. It was somewhat surprising to observe, considering their age and the short time they have been under discipline, how attentive the majority were to their lessons. One or two, as might be expected, evinced a laughable, parrot-like proclivity to repeat things without thinking. For instance, one little fellow, who showed a decided tendency to stare about him, and apparently regarded the visitors to the hall with a more interest than the principles of geometry, persisted in saying that his triangle had four sides after having previously learnt the number of sides to a square. The lessons, it may be stated, are varied from day to day. The children are taught among other things how to construct houses and various geometrical designs out of blocks of wood. Their different senses are trained and they become intimately acquainted with the properties of bodies. In the course of time they have "object" lessons, and they are also taught to weave, to knit, and to sew. All their young faculties are in fact trained; and a great feature of the system adopted in the kindergarten is that learning is made pleasant, the children gain their knowledge first-hand — that is, from the things themselves, instead of second-hand, through books. The establishment of the kindergarten in Walker street will no doubt prove a great boon to the neighbourhood; and as it is quite unsectarian and provides healthy exercise, recreation, and education for poor children free of cost, who would otherwise spend their time playing in the streets and gutters, it is an institution worthy of support of all interested in the cause of education.

Despite this acceptance, the official records for the exhibition gave little recognition of any kindergarten display. Information recovered subsequently came from newspaper reports of the time, written by a supporter of the new innovation:

The kindergarten system, by which instruction and amusement is combined, somewhat on the *principle of the jam concealing the powder administered as a medicine*, is also fully represented, and there is an excellent set of exhibits showing the course of artwork carried out at the South Kensington School of Science and Art... those who care to inquire into this coming method of child instruction will on visiting this bay, find everything placed in such a way that they will be able in a very short space of time to understand all that the kindergarten system aims at.⁸³

The newspaper article reports that children attending the Walker Street free kindergarten had numerous articles on show including: “paper plaiting, specimens of first steps in embroidery, and ornamental little nick-nacks [*sic*], all very nicely done, and together making a very pretty collection, which is sure to be admired by visitors”.⁸⁴

The work of the children attending the Walker Street Free Kindergarten is enthusiastically described and praised, and recognition is given to the work of the association’s founders and to the children’s newly arrived teacher, Miss Weineke.⁸⁵

If anything is needed to prove that she is capable for her onerous duties, the character of the work shown by the children in the exhibition is more than sufficient.... The ages of the children who made all these fancy things range from four to six – a fact that speaks volumes for their cleverness as well as for the good training they must have received to enable them to turn out such articles.

Kelsey recounts how the kindergarten children were granted free entry to the exhibition. Drawing on a reference to George Eliot’s hero Adam Bede, she describes how visitors that day might have seen a group of small boys standing before the New Zealand woods.

These are the young ‘Adam Bedes’, calculating the height and contents of a tree to a nicety. Another object of interest were the different cereals. The shapes, sizes, and personalities of these seeds were for some time an all-absorbing topic for conversation. Here our young farmers felt at home.⁸⁶

Such inflated narratives were common in cash-strapped free kindergartens across the Western world at the time. America historian Barbara Beattie describes them as “the stock in trade of

charity kindergarten lore,”⁸⁷ The ‘gutter child’ had become the productive worker for the Colony’s future, evidence of the success of free kindergarten.

Kelsey, like Mark Cohen, actively added her voice to those arguing for kindergarten influence within state schools. For example in 1889 she wrote: “The committee have decided to regard their school as an adjunct to the State schools, and therefore aim at preparing pupils for the latter”.⁸⁸ Later, in an address to the WCTU, Kelsey argued:

Let a true kindergarten for children from four to six be attached to every public school; let each pupil-teacher go through at least one year’s training with a fully qualified kindergartener; and let every headmaster so link together kindergarten and school that the development should be continuous and the chain of impressions perfect and unbroken.⁸⁹

It was a message she continued to promote. In a submission to the 1912 Education Commission – chaired by Mark Cohen – she continued to emphasise the need for the extension of the true principles of Froebelism within infant schooling, and that children be retained in the kindergarten till six years old.⁹⁰ These arguments were similar to those first made by Cohen over 30 years earlier.

Throughout the early twentieth-century Lavinia Kelsey continued to advocate for kindergarten education and to work for the association. After some years, her own teaching demands forced her to resign as secretary, although she remained on the committee, and in 1912 she accepted the role of president. Recognition of her services to the DFKA came in 1912, when she was made a life member of the association, an honour then held by no other woman in Dunedin.⁹¹ She took a leading role in the unsuccessful attempts in 1913 to create a Federation of Kindergartens and in the later establishment, in 1926 of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union.

In 1890 such events were in the future. On December 21st that year Lavinia Kelsey, along with Mark Cohen, Rachel Reynolds and other association members, attended the second end-of-year distribution of prizes at the Walker Street Kindergarten. The children entertained the gathering. Games were played and songs sung with enthusiasm. Prizes were awarded to several children for general progress, attention, progress in knitting, clean hands, sewing and obedience. Books were presented to those who had not gained a prize.⁹² In the many public speeches, praise was heaped upon the association and its valued work and a fruitful future was

predicted. Kelsey was pleased but somewhat cautious. In her report for that year she wrote, “We have enthusiasm among the few; what we want is enthusiasm amongst the many”.

Cohen also had concerns. In a letter to Sarah Cooper, he bemoaned the lack of progressive ideals, and expressed concern at the lack of understanding of Froebel’s pedagogy, seeing these as a blow to the kindergarten movement:

None of our people have any practical acquaintance with any real kindergartener. We are all well-meaning enough, and each desires to do the right thing, but we are all quite helpless on this important matter.... I fear if we turn out a number of indifferently instructed young women, many of them, finding their occupation a profitable one, will establish kindergartens with such unsuitable results that our methods will fall into dispute, and that the New Education will get a setback that may take years to recover.⁹³

The times ahead continued to test the spirit and commitment of the association as they battled the many trials and difficulties they faced. But in the short term, there was already a second kindergarten under way, students in training and children aplenty. Support for kindergarten activities in infant classes was growing and soon to become a reality in a few state schools.⁹⁴ It was a significant start, even if for the members, the future was uncertain and at times seemed unachievable.

Conclusion

Historian Helen May argues, “Getting the right balance between charity and self-respect, education and childcare, reform and religion was not easy”.⁹⁵ Nineteenth century kindergarten movements were connected with, rather than separated from, related movements for educational change and the pursuit of democracy. Kindergarten services in Dunedin became part of a broader struggle between philanthropic and democratic endeavours reaching out to assist in campaigns for the free education of children under school age, and those with emancipatory aspirations. The female-dominated movement evolved out of feminist activism and non-conformist religious beliefs, taking aspects of the care and education of young children out of the home into the public sphere. Although viewed as a women’s organisation, women and men worked – in separate roles – together on educational solutions to contemporary social problem affecting nineteenth century families and their children.

Notes

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- ¹ 'Phoebe' "Women's Outlook," *The Christian Outlook*, June 16, 1894, 215. Knox College Archives, Dunedin
- ² This monograph is drawn for my doctoral study. Bethell, K. (2008) 'Not [just] for a name that we plead: Fashioning the ideological origins of early kindergarten in Dunedin and Wellington, New Zealand, 1870-1913. A thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education. Victoria University of Wellington, 2007
- ³ Learmonth Dalrymple. "The Kindergarten being a Brief Sketch of Froebel's System of Infant Education respectfully inscribed to the Honourable the Ministry and Members of Both Houses of the Legislature of New Zealand," *Otago Daily Times*, (14 July 1879),1.
- ⁴ The Kindergarten Gifts and Occupations. *Otago Witness* , (25 November 1876, 19).
- ⁵ Dalrymple, *The Kindergarten*, 1.
- ⁶ Dalrymple, *The Kindergarten*, 8.
- ⁷ Jane Miller, *School for Women* (London: Virago Press, 1996), 17.
- ⁸ Irene Liley, *Friedrich Froebel: A Selection From His Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- ⁹ "The Establishment of a crèche in Dunedin," *Otago Daily Times*, (18 July, 1879), 1.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 2
- ¹¹ Ibid.,
- ¹² Ibid., 2.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ 'Untitled' *Auckland Star*, (14 August 1879), 2.
- ¹⁵ "School Committees Conference," *Otago Daily Times*, (8 August 1887), 4.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
Roberto Reynolds Duque. "Los Reynolds Hunter (De Gran Bretaña a Nueva Zelanda)," from Familia Reynolds Historia de la familia en Gran Bretaña, NuevaZelanda, Portugal y España, updated 16-Nov-11. URL: <http://reynolds.com.es/Los%20Rey-Hunt.htm>.
- ¹⁸ Dalrymple. *The Kindergarten*, 3.
- ¹⁹ For example, see: Dorothy Page. "Reynolds, Rachel Selina," from *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 1-Sep-10 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2r17>; Dorothy Dempster, "From Patronage to Parent Participation – The Development of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association." Dip.Ed.Thesis, University of Otago. Dunedin, 1986.
- ²⁰ Anne Else, ed. *Women Together A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand Ngā Ropu Wāhine o Te Motu* (Wellington: Daphne Brasell Associates Press and Historical Branch Department of Internal Affairs, 1993).
- ²¹ Deirdre David, *Intellectual women and Victorian patriarchy*. (London: MacMillan Press, 1987).
- ²² Page, Reynolds, "Rachel Selina 1838 – 1928,"
- ²³ "A reminiscence of the olden time – The ladies meeting and the German band", *Otago Daily Times*, (29 September, 1896), 5.
- ²⁴ Eileen Wallis, *A Most Rare Vision, Otago Girls' High School – The First One Hundred Years* (Dunedin: Otago High School Board of Governors, 1972).
- ²⁵ For example, see St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Dunedin Jubilee Souvenir 1863 – 1913.
- ²⁶ The Married Women Property Acts of 1860 and 1870 extended protection to deserted or dispossessed wives who could prove their case to a magistrate. It was not until 1884 that an act was passed permitting married women to hold property in their own right. This law did not apply to Maori women who could hold land in their own right. Patricia Grimshaw, "Colonising Motherhood: evangelical social reformers and Koorie women in Victoria, Australia, 1880s to the early 1900s," *Women's History Review*, 8, no. 2, (1999): 329-346.
- ²⁷ Page, Reynolds, "Rachel Selina 1838 – 1928,"
- ²⁸ This work was later formalised in 1906 with amalgamation with the Sisterhood of St Andrew.
- ²⁹ Rev Waddell, Quarterly, May 1888, p.3 in Eyles, *Outreach: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Parish, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Parish, Dunedin 1880-1905.* Bachelor of Divinity diss., University of Otago, Dunedin, 1984. 46.
- ³⁰ Grimshaw, "Colonising Motherhood".
- ³¹ Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin Press, 2003), 236-7.

32 For example, see Barbara Brooks, Annabel Cooper, and Robin Law, eds, *Sites of Gender: Women, Men and Modernity in Southern Dunedin, 1890-1939* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003).

33 *New Zealand Herald*, 2 June, 1892, p.3 (Miss Morison), cited in Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1972), 50.

34 Grimshaw, "Women's Suffrage in New Zealand's."

35 "Women's Franchise League," *Otago Daily Times*, (29 April, 1892), 3.

36 Ibid.

37 Golden Gate Kindergarten Association, *Annual Report* (San Francisco, 1889): 34.

38 Kevin Brehony, "Among Women: The Participation of Men in the Froebel and Montessori Societies," paper presented to the History of Education Society's Annual Conference, Winchester, 3-5 December, 1999, 9.

39 Maureen Cooper, *Chosen People: The Jewish Kiblah in Nineteenth Century Dunedin*. In *'Building God's own country: Historical essays on religions in New Zealand'*, edited by John Stenhouse and Jane Thomson. (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2004).

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41 Mark Cohen, *Submission to Education Committee*, Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1887, 1-8, 65.

42 For example, see John Ewing. *The Development of New Zealand Primary School Curriculum 1877-1970* (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1970).

44 For example see, Helen May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood: The Development of Services for the Care and Education of Very Young Children, Mid Eighteenth Century Europe to Mid Twentieth Century New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press; Bridget Williams Books with New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1997).

45 Cohen, *Submission to Education Committee*, 64-65.

46 Cohen, *Submission to Education Committee*, 64.

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About this paper

Dunedin's Kindergarten Pioneers: Some new stories provides new insight into the origins of the kindergarten movement that gained strength in the 1870s and the establishment in 1888 of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association and a year later in 1889, the association's first kindergarten in Walker Street. Newly recovered sources and the use of network approach reveals fuller stories of three key founders and their contribution to this work. *Dunedin's Kindergarten Pioneers: Some new stories* also casts light on how the loosely formed kindergarten movement in Dunedin was from the outset connected to liberal religious ideals about social responsibility, to feminist causes and to mass education. The author argues the history of kindergarten provision in New Zealand needs to be positioned within broader histories of social, political and education reform as well as within histories of women's political movements nationally and internationally.

Biographical note

Kerry Bethell is a senior lecturer in early years education at Massey University College of Education. She holds teaching and research interests around areas concerned with the historical past, the work of teachers and others in education and educational change.

Dunedin's Kindergarten Pioneers: Some new stories

The founding of free kindergarten provision in Dunedin
1879 - 1890

