

MARTHA L. HITCHCOCK

Miss Hitchcock was born on July 2, 1869 in Galesburg, Illinois, the daughter of Professor Henry Ethan and Margaret Gale Hitchcock. Professor Hitchcock was then Professor of Mathematics at Knox College, and later, in or about the year 1878, he removed to Lincoln, Nebraska to accept the Chair of Mathematics in the University of Nebraska. During the years 1882-1884 when there was a vacancy in the office of Chancellor, he was Acting Chancellor of that University. Miss Hitchcock's maternal grandfather was the Rev. George Washington Gale (1789-1861) who, in 1836, led a company of upstate New York families living in or near Whitesboro to the State of Illinois and founded the Town of Galesburg, Illinois and Knox College.

After spending several years of study in the east, principally in Boston, at the Massachusetts Normal Art School and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, in or about the year 1895 Miss Hitchcock came to Ithaca to live in the family of her sister Margaret and her brother-in-law the late Professor Charles Edwin Bennett, head of the Latin Department of Cornell University from 1892 to 1921, and then residing at No. 1 Grove Place on the University Campus. In 1896, Miss Hitchcock was

requested by several members of the Cornell University Faculty to establish a private elementary school primarily for the benefit of the numerous small children then living on the Cornell Campus, whose parents wished to be spared the inconvenience and risk (as some mothers considered it, although there were then no automobiles) which was involved in the long walk to the only available school, the East Hill School located at the corner of State and Quarry Streets. At that time and for many years thereafter, there were some 38 Faculty residences on the Campus, 5 on South Avenue, 5 on Central Avenue, 18 on East Avenue, 5 on Grove Place, 4 on Reservoir Avenue and 1 on Sage Avenue. When Miss Hitchcock's private school opened in 1896, the "schoolroom" was a room in Professor Bennett's house at 1 Grove Place. The following year, the University placed at Miss Hitchcock's disposal some space then available in Barnes Hall. For several years, Miss Hitchcock was the only teacher in this school, which she named the "Campus School".

The Campus School continued to occupy its quarters in Barnes Hall for a decade, more or less. The "student body" continued to grow, and in the early

1900's, Miss Hitchcock was offered the use of a schoolhouse which the College of Agriculture had designed and built as an example of a model rural district schoolhouse. This "model" schoolhouse was located 100 yards, more or less, directly east of President Andrew D. White's stable, now the "Old Red Barn". The Campus School continued in the "model" schoolhouse for several years, until 1916 when, with the shift of the residential center of the "student body" to Cornell Heights, the Campus School made its third and final move to a house on Wait Avenue^{*} which was placed at Miss Hitchcock's disposal by one of the parents who had several children in the School. Here the Campus School stayed until 1924 when, with the development of the new residential area in Cayuga Heights, the residents of that area decided to establish a public school to be called the "Cayuga Heights District School". They asked Miss Hitchcock to become the head of the proposed new school. Miss Hitchcock agreed to accept the position but very soon there appeared a serious obstacle. As this was to be a New York State public school, it was necessary that Miss Hitchcock

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apply for a New York State Teachers Certificate, which she did, only to learn that she was not qualified to receive a Certificate, because, although she had then been teaching children, and teaching them with marked success, for more than 28 years, she had never passed a Normal School course in Child Psychology. A number of the parents expressed the opinion that Miss Hitchcock was fully qualified to conduct a course in Child Psychology. It was at about this time that Miss Hitchcock was able to boast that no pupil who had completed the full course of study of the Campus School had ever failed the New York State Regents examination required for admission to High School. In spite of the vigorous support and insistent pleading of a large number of admiring parents, including a number of Cornell University Professors, the matter hung fire for many months with no apparent prospect of solution, until, by great good fortune, it became possible to make a direct personal approach to a prominent New York City lawyer who had recently retired from active practice and had become a member of the Board of Regents. As soon as he heard the whole story, this lawyer took an active and

vigorous interest in furthering Miss Hitchcock's application for permission to teach, and expressed great concern that a teacher of Miss Hitchcock's recognized skill and proven experience should be precluded from making it available to the children of Cayuga Heights. He immediately telephoned the State Department of Education and ascertained that there was no statutory bar to Miss Hitchcock's becoming a teacher in a New York Public School, that the Child Psychology requirement had been established by Departmental rules and regulations, and that the Department had the legal right, in its discretion, to issue a Teachers Certificate to Miss Hitchcock; and this is what the Department eventually did. Miss Hitchcock then became the first Principal of the Cayuga Heights School and continued as such for 20 years until she retired in June 1944 at the age of 75, after a distinguished career of some 48 years as a teacher of children. Since her retirement, Miss Hitchcock has lived at her home at 211 Eddy Street, except for two extended visits (in 1948 and again in 1956) to her niece Mrs. Helen Bennett Hall, in Johannesburg, South Africa. On both occasions, she traveled by airplane.

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The foregoing was written by Miss Hitchcock's nephew Lawrence Bennett.