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Alice Bloor Goodwin

Nature Here Shows Art

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“Nature here shows art.”

Alice Bloor, East Liverpool High School Class of 1911.

The woman inside the network

The outline of my life was escaping from, and thriving outside, the Crockery Valley. Alice's is a story of creating a deeply legible identity within the Crockery City.

Alice was born in East Liverpool on August 19, 1894, the daughter of James Bloor and Annie Dennis Bloor. Her parents were English-born, and the family belonged to the large, mobile, working population that made the pottery city what it was: a place of factories and schools, churches and clubs, streets and streetcars, immigrant households and ambitious children. Alice grew up in a town whose public life was unusually concentrated. People met one another in schoolrooms, churches, shop windows, newspapers, music programs, parks, and women's clubs. The same names recur across those settings. And in the pottery world, both Bloor and Goodwin are well known.

The surviving record of Alice Bloor Goodwin begins with her spectacular eloquence in debate during high school, before graduation in 1911. Then she learned how to create a fulfilling place for herself in a community and then kept occupying it, decade after decade. She taught children, accompanied singers, entertained clubs, helped organize public programs, belonged to churches and women's organizations, raised a family, and remained socially present long after the newspaper stopped treating such work as news.

"Nature here shows art"

The line printed beneath Alice's yearbook portrait in 1911 is brief enough to be missed: "Nature here shows art." It is a quotation from Shakespeare, spoken in a scene where appearance, feeling, and perception are being tested. Strangely enough, Alice's work consisted largely of turning ordinary circumstances into forms of meaning: a lesson into a child's confidence, a club meeting into a social institution, a piano accompaniment into a public program, and a familiar town into a web of relationships.

The yearbook places her at the threshold between school and adult responsibility. By 1914, the East Liverpool city directory listed Alice A. Bloor as a teacher at 263 West Ninth Street. In 1916, the local newspaper identified her as a teacher in the East Liverpool public schools and placed her in charge of a children's story-hour program connected with the Chester Woman's Club's summer activities at Rock Springs Park. That assignment matters. It suggests that she was trusted not simply to appear, but to manage children, content, timing, and the public face of an event.

Where did she work? The available records establish the system and the level more clearly than the building: East Liverpool public schools, later grade-school or elementary work. That gap is worth pursuing through teacher rosters, school board reports, city directories, school newspapers, and the memories of people such as Brian Johnston, who attended East Liverpool schools in the years when Alice was teaching.

Sorosis as a second kind of education

Sorosis should stand near the center of Alice's story. It was not merely another club in a long list of memberships. For women of Alice's generation, a club such as Sorosis could function as a parallel civic and intellectual world: a place where women organized themselves, presented programs, maintained friendships, developed cultural interests, and exercised forms of leadership that were not always available to them through formal political or professional institutions.

Alice's connection with Sorosis helps explain why her life cannot be reduced to the occupational label "schoolteacher." The classroom was one of her places of work; Sorosis was one of the places where her wider capacities became visible. In the newspaper record, Alice appears repeatedly in the company of women who were hosting, presenting, performing, entertaining, arranging, and attending. Those activities were not decorative additions to civic life. They were civic life. Women's clubs supplied the social infrastructure through which programs happened, friendships crossed household boundaries, and local culture was carried from one generation to the next.

The Sorosis material also changes the way we should understand Alice's unmarried years. In 1920, at twenty-five, she was still single and living with her sisters Nellie and Elizabeth on West Ninth Street. It would be easy to impose a later romantic narrative on that fact - to imagine her waiting for marriage, or somehow incomplete until it arrived. The evidence points elsewhere. Alice had work, sisters, a household, a circle of friends, a public role, and a calendar. She was not standing outside adult life. She was already in it.

Marriage without disappearance

Alice married James R. Goodwin in September 1921 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. The wedding announcement described her as a local woman, a graduate of the high school, active in social organizations, and employed as an instructor in the local schools. The wording is important because it records continuity at the moment when a woman's public identity was often expected to be absorbed into marriage. Alice's marriage was a new relationship, but it did not erase the person the newspapers had already been describing.

The marriage brought children and extended family responsibilities, but Alice remained professionally active. The 1950 census identified her as a schoolteacher working in grade school, forty hours a week, as a government employee. The record does not name the building, but it makes the scale of her commitment plain. She was not a former teacher remembered vaguely from girlhood. At fifty-five, she was still working a full public-school schedule.

The social life of a teacher

The newspapers reveal the pattern more clearly than any single record. Alice appears in church and club notices, as a hostess and co-hostess, as a pianist or accompanist, as a participant in children's programs, and as a member of the Girls' Friendly Society connected with St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. In 1936, she attended a reunion of the society's early members, linking her to a history that reached back to the first years of the twentieth century. By then, she was not simply a young clubwoman. She was one of the people who carried institutional memory.

That may be the most revealing feature of her life. Alice's energy was relational. She was continually moving among people and settings, not necessarily as the principal speaker or public celebrity, but as the person who helped the event occur. She hosted the Sunday-school class, accompanied the singer, joined the committee, attended the reunion, entertained the club, and kept the network alive. The "Energizer Bunny" quality you see in the record is not a modern exaggeration so much as a recognition of the labor required to sustain a town's social world.

There is also a quiet artistic dimension here. Alice's yearbook line, her musical activities, her work with children, and her Sorosis associations all suggest a life in which art was not separated sharply from daily usefulness. Music could be a program, teaching could be creative practice, a club meeting could be cultural work, and a children's story hour could carry the values of a whole community. "Nature here shows art" becomes more suggestive when placed beside those activities - not as a solved explanation, but as a recurring possibility.

The last East Liverpool years

James Goodwin died in 1966. Alice continued to appear in East Liverpool's social record afterward. She remained connected to clubs and church life and stayed in the city until 1971, when she moved to Columbus to live with her daughter Margaret Schneider. Her obituary described her as retired after many years as an elementary-school teacher and noted her membership in St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. She died in 1977 at the age of eighty-three, after a long illness and a period in a nursing home.

Her obituary is conventional in form, but the list of survivors gives the life back its human scale: daughters Margaret Schneider, Ann Watkin, and Helen Gettelman; sisters Elizabeth Hist and Nellie Watkin; and three grandchildren. The names are not merely genealogical endpoints. They are the continuation of the network Alice spent her life inhabiting and maintaining.

A life made of continuities

Alice Bloor Goodwin's life was not dramatic because it was not organized around a single break. It was made from continuities: an English immigrant family becoming East Liverpool's family; a schoolgirl becoming a teacher; a teacher becoming a clubwoman and organizer; a single woman becoming a wife without surrendering her public self; a working mother becoming a retired elementary teacher; an East Liverpool woman carrying the town's habits of sociability into old age.

Sorosis is essential because it gives us the institutional shape of that continuity. It helps us see Alice not as an isolated individual with a job and a family, but as a participant in the women's civic culture that made East Liverpool function beyond its factories. Her life was built in the spaces between formal assignments: in rehearsals, programs, schoolrooms, church parlors, club meetings, reunions, and the homes where people gathered. Those spaces rarely survive intact. The people who animated them survive mainly as names in columns. Alice's name appears often enough to show that she was one of the animators.

The next layer of evidence may come from memory. Brian Johnston, born in 1928 and a member of East Liverpool High School's Class of 1945, was a child in the city's elementary schools while Alice was teaching. If he remembers her as Miss Bloor, he may be able to identify the school, describe the teacher, or place her within the lived geography of the city. That testimony would not replace the documents. It would do something the documents cannot: tell us what Alice felt like to the people who encountered her.

Working research questions

- Which East Liverpool elementary or grade schools employed Alice Bloor Goodwin, and during which years?
- Did she attend college or a teacher-training program, or did she enter teaching through local certification?
- How did she meet James R. Goodwin?
- What exactly was Alice's role in Sorosis, and what programs, committees, or offices can be documented?
- Can Brian Johnston remember Alice as a teacher, or identify the school where she taught?
- Are there faculty pages, classroom photographs, school programs, or teacher portraits that place Alice in the schools over time?

Working source base

- Alice Bloor yearbook portrait and 1911 quotation, East Liverpool High School yearbook, Keramos.

- East Liverpool city directory, 1914: Alice A. Bloor, teacher, 263 West Ninth Street.
- The Evening Review, East Liverpool, 1911-1936: reports on Alice Bloor's oratorical achievement, teaching, social activities, musical participation, and community programs.
- The Evening Review, September 1921: marriage of Alice Bloor and James R. Goodwin.
- United States censuses, 1900, 1920, and 1950: family, residence, marital status, and occupation.
- The Evening Review, December 21, 1977: obituary of Alice Bloor Goodwin.
- East Liverpool High School yearbook archive: eastliverpoolhighschool.org/yearbooks.html
- Columbiana County school-records and yearbook listing: ldsgenealogy.com/OH/Columbiana-County-School-Records.htm
- East Liverpool newspaper archive: newspaperarchive.com/east-liverpool

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