Biography

Although Lenora E. Clark diligently recorded her daily activities in her personal diary for five years, her entries do not reveal much specific information about her connection with the Northwestern University Settlement, or about Clark herself. She lived at 2303 North Kenmore Avenue in Chicago, and celebrated her birthday on July 28; her father had died in 1902, and she may have lived with her mother, but other facts are hard to determine. The diary entries are very brief, and Clark often used initials instead of names. The number of social activities -- theater, opera, motoring, fraternity parties, summer vacations two years in a row -- and flirtations which are recorded in the diary suggest that she was a young woman. Since her daily entries referred to teaching (subject unspecified) and to taking music lessons, she may have been a music teacher. The amount of time she spent in social pastimes seems to have exceeded the hours she spent teaching, so she probably had a sufficient, if not extravagant, income from other sources.

During the time period covered in this diary, at least, Clark was not a resident at the Northwestern University Settlement, but almost invariably went to the Settlement on Saturday. Since she several times referred to recitals, she probably gave music lessons at the Settlement. In addition to her Settlement work, she attended an unnamed church every Sunday, was involved in projects at the YMCA, and helped organize a branch of the “Westminster Guild,” which may been another philanthropic organization.

The diary, while not at all instructive as to names, details, or the workings of the Settlement, presents a colorful snapshot of a young Chicago woman’s life in the early years of the century. While the names of friends and family are obscure, some locations and theatrical performances or performers are clearly identified. If she did not reveal her aspirations, or even her reasons for keeping this diary, she told a little about her feelings. Sometimes wonderfully happy, sometimes blue as indigo, Lenora Clark ended each year hoping that the next would be better.

Description of the Diary

Clark’s diary is a four-by-six, bound book. The printed title page describes it as “Ward’s ‘Line a Day’ Book, A comparative record for five years” (copyright 1892). The ‘comparative’ format is unusual: each page is printed with a month and date, and is divided horizontally into five sections; the diarist fills in the events of each date five years in a row, resulting in a unique retrospective view. In order to fit so many entries on each small page, each entry is allotted only four short lines.

Clark wrote her name and address in the front of the diary. Entries began with January, 1906 and ended with December 31, 1910, although the first several weeks of 1906 were blank or incomplete and there are a few other blank dates. A few entries and end-of-year reflections continue into the ‘memoranda’ section at the end of the diary. Over the years, Clark wrote in several colors of ink and pencil. Clark’s handwriting is hard to read, and when she referred to critical points in her romances she resorted to cryptic notes, exclamation points and dashes. Entries made during the last year of the diary, 1910, were even briefer than usual, and Clark’s handwriting became even less legible.

Provenance: This diary was separated from the Northwestern University Settlement Records, donated to the University Archives by Doris Overboe on behalf of the Northwestern University
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT RECORDS
LENORA E. CLARK DIARY, 1906-1910
Series 41/10
Box 1 of 1 (half-size box)

Settlement, as Accession 94-70, on June 7, 1994.

Restrictions: None.

Separations: None.

Processor: Janet C. Olson, March 1997.

Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder Title</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lenora E. Clark Diary</td>
<td>1906-1910</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>