

**Wiggin, Isa McBean. Excerpts from “Report as Delegate from the Chicago Home for Girls to the Chicago Woman’s Club for 1920.” Chicago History Museum. Chicago Woman’s Club Records. Box 26, Folder 2.**

“...The Chicago Home for Girls, in dealing with a delinquent girl, endeavors to approach the problem from a rational standpoint. It’s our part to save the delinquent girl from being the potential criminal of later years. One dislikes the word – the fact remains.

To study and reconstruct the delinquent girl, to get her mind turned to things worth while, is a difficult task; and, too, we have the unmarried mother to train in the best way of caring for her child. She is taught to sew its clothes, to wash and iron them, to keep her room clean and orderly, and to prepare the baby’s food, --the responsibility of motherhood. When she leaves us she is pretty well prepared to care for the baby.

A full course of household instruction, in cooking, cleaning and laundry work – as well as reading, writing and spelling – is not possible in the short time they are with us. We endeavor to approach an average reconstruction that will give the girl some idea of taking care of herself when out in the world again. The Board of Education have had the entire control of their schooling for the past four years. The greater number of our girls fully appreciate the benefits received. A quotation from two will prove this:

“Dear Miss Welch:

I know I did not appreciate your past guardianship, but I am reasonable enough that when I know someone has done me a favor and helped me, I am ready to thank them for it. You could not have done anything better for me than just what you did. I can never thank you enough for placing me in the Chicago Home for Girls. I have only been here a little over three months, but I have entirely changed, and there is not a happier girl in Chicago than I. Mrs. Stewart is so kind; she is a mother to all of the girls for that matter. They are putting in a three business course for the girls who have graduated from eight grade, and I see a bright future ahead of me. I am busy all the time and everyone knows that ‘industry is happiness.’ I have nothing to worry over but my own future, and it is so bright I smile when I think of

it. I owe the greater part of my happiness to God and the rest to you, because when you put me here you made me happy, and any girl who is sentenced here is exceedingly lucky.

I remain A once bad but now happy girl.”

This girl, dressed as a boy, joined the army and after a varied and unhappy career found herself under the protection of Miss Welch, and finally of us.

“...Scores of interesting cases keep us intent in aiding the delinquent girl. The community usually misunderstands the wayward one, and she misunderstands those who undertake her direction. Mrs. Stewart says it takes some poise of mind to keep one’s balance in the face of many irritating phrases of the work. The public, on the outside, as well as the girl on the inside must be considered.”