

## NINA MAY KENAGY PAPERS

Nina May Kenagy was born in East Lynn, Missouri, on February 9, 1878. The oldest of four sisters with two older brothers, she was the daughter of David P. and Catherine Kensinger Kenagy, both of German decent. In 1888, the Kenagy family moved to Crete, Nebraska. Nina Kenagy attended public schools, graduating from Crete High School on June 4, 1897. By February 7, 1899, Ms. Kenagy was a certified teacher in the Kindergarten Department of the city schools in Lincoln, Nebraska, teaching at the Elliott School.

Nina Kenagy attended the Chicago Kindergarten College in Chicago, Illinois, whose name was changed to National Kindergarten College and later the National College of Education with headquarters in Evanston, Illinois. She was awarded a Bachelor of Education degree on June 9, 1910, and a Master of Education degree on May 31, 1912. Upon returning to Lincoln, Ms. Kenagy obtained a professional city/state kindergarten certificate on November 13, 1914, from the State of Nebraska's Department of Education. She also set up model kindergarten classes in teacher training at Nebraska Wesleyan University and taught in McCook, Nebraska.

In 1915, Nina Kenagy moved to California to work with pre-school children. There she undertook a special project of integrating children of oriental parentage with those of American families in an Oakland public school. She later became a faculty member in charge of student teaching at the San Francisco Normal School.

Upon returning to the Midwest, Ms. Kenagy entered the State University of Iowa to study with Bird T. Baldwin, director of the Child Welfare Center established by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund. While there, Ms. Kenagy observed Bird's psychological pre-school clinic at the university as well as research being conducted at nursery schools. On June 9, 1925, she was awarded a Bachelor of Arts in Education and a Bachelor of Science in School Supervision.

It was fortuitous for Nina Kenagy that the National College of Education was seeking a director for the Mary Crane Nursery School at Hull-House in Chicago, Illinois. As recorded by Edna Dean Baker, the College wanted to hire an individual who understood the needs of both a kindergarten and a nursery school and who had experience in both areas. Nina M. Kenagy was particularly well-suited for this position as she had worked with the poorer city neighborhoods and with children of varied nationalities. She was also an individual who understood children and parents and who had the creative ability to solve problems, while at the same time, meet the needs of children, parents, and student teachers. Hired by Jane Addams and Edna Bean Baker, Ms. Kenagy developed and directed from 1925 to 1946 the Mary Crane Nursery School. As the

Mary Crane Nursery School was a training center for teachers who attended the National College of Education, Nina Kenagy held regular group conferences with student teachers, giving them specific instruction in the nursery school program and in child guidance. Over the years enrollment of children (ages 2-6 years) increased from 40 to more than 100. She initiated classes for mothers, fathers, and student teachers, for child care volunteers, nurses' aides and others. As the creative central figure of the school, she developed good relationships with numerous organizations, some of which included Hull-House, the Infant Welfare Society who was responsible for the health care of the children, the Institute of Juvenile Research, the Family Welfare Society, the McCormick Fund, and United Charities.

After retiring in 1946, Ms. Kenagy returned to Lincoln, Nebraska. She began another career of teaching retarded children to read. By 1954 she, with support from parents, founded the Lancaster Association for Retarded Children's School. Her services as a teacher and as a member of the Advisory Board were recognized in 1954 by the Lincoln Exchange Club. She was also a member of the Nebraska's Cozad School for Retarded Children Advisory Board.

In 1961, the National College of Education conferred on Nina Kenagy the distinguish Alumni Achievement Award at their 75th anniversary commencement. Through her work and administration, the Mary Crane Nursery School grew in stature and professional status throughout the country.

Nina M. Kenagy died on March 18, 1971 at the age of 93. She was survived by her sisters, Addie Lee and Inez Kenagy, and nephews Wyman Kenagy and Max Halderson.

Processed by:  
Mary Ann Bamberger  
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The Nina M. Kenagy Papers are filed under the following titles:

1. Baby's book - notes and photograph captions  
ca. 1930s
2. Baby's book - photographs  
ca. 1930s
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Biographical data and tributes  
1946; 1961
7. Certificates and diplomas. See also: Folder 18  
1900-1914
8. Correspondence to Nina M. Kenagy  
August, 1911-October, 1946
9. Inspirational poems and prose  
n.d.
10. Mary Crane Nursery School and Mary Crane League-historical  
sketches  
1941-1962
11. Mary Crane Nursery School - photographs  
1925-1930s
12. Ibid.  
1930s-1949
13. Nursery school book - notes  
n.d.
14. Nursery school book - photographs  
n.d.
15. Oakland, California School Project: Chinese and American  
pre-school children - correspondence and photographs  
ca. 1915-1918
16. Photographs: Nina M. Kenagy  
1930s; 1940s

17. White House Conference on Child Health and Protection-  
presidential invitation and thank you  
1930

Oversize material

18. Certificate and diplomas  
1897-1899; 1925

Nina M. Kenagy, 1878-1971

Papers, 1897-1971

.5 ln. ft. + 1 oversize folder (.2 ln. ft.) = .7 ln. ft.

Kindergarten teacher and director of the Mary Crane Nursery School, Hull-House, 1925-1946. Includes correspondence, certificates and diplomas, notes, photographs, historical sketches, biographical data and tributes, newspaper clippings, and an invitation. The papers pertain to Nina Kenagy's pre-school teaching career, the Mary Crane Nursery School at Hull-House and the Mary Crane League, Jane Addams and Edna Dean Baker, and the role of the National College of Education in pre-school education.

Accession records 70-101 and 71-7.

Subject tracings:

1. Kenagy, Nina May, 1878-1971
2. Addams, Jane, 1860-1935
3. Baker, Edna Dean
4. Child welfare - Chicago, Illinois
5. Hull-House, Chicago, Illinois
6. Kindergartens in Chicago
7. Mary Crane League
8. Mary Crane Nursery School, Hull-House
9. National College of Education, Evanston, Illinois, formerly National Kindergarten and Elementary College, Chicago, Illinois
10. Oakland, California School Project: Chinese and American pre-school children
11. Pre-school education of children