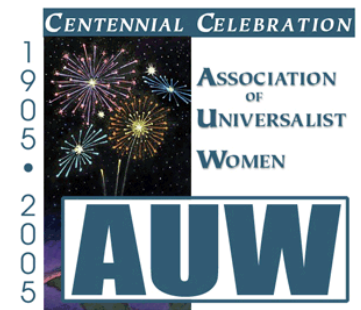


AUW Centennial Chronicle

The Association of Universalist Women (AUW) continues the celebration of its 100th anniversary, featuring a brief historical note by decade and the profile of a distinguished member from that time.



AUW and Unity Settlement House: Decade 5: 1945-1954¹

Unity Settlement House was the first settlement house in Minneapolis with origins dating back to 1897 when a committee formed to organize free kindergarten. Members from Church of the Redeemer (predecessor of First Universalist Church of Minneapolis), including the Women's Association, contributed to its support both in time and financial resources. The house functioned like a very personal social service agency providing services to families in need. Features were added including a day nursery enabling mothers to work, a sewing school, a gymnasium, and a library. In 1964, Unity Settlement House was torn down to make way for Highway 94. With funds from the sale of the house, Unity Settlement Association continued as an adjunct of the church until May 15, 1983, when it was named First Universalist Church Foundation.²

Biography of Mary E. Wilkinson Shutter (1854-1954)

Past president and trustee of Minnesota Universalist Women's Association, Mary Wilkinson Shutter, along with her husband, Rev. Dr. Marion D. Shutter, helped found Unity Settlement House. Mary served as one of its directors for more than fifty years.

Mary E. Wilkinson moved to Minneapolis from the East and married Marion D. Shutter who first came to Minneapolis in 1881 to serve as pastor of Unity Baptist Church. Rev. Shutter worked at the Baptist church for five years before becoming a Universalist and taking employment as assistant to Dr. James H. Tuttle at Church of the Redeemer. Rev. Dr. Shutter became pastor in 1891 when Dr. Tuttle retired. Together, Mary and Rev. Shutter served the congregation until 1939 when Rev. Shutter died and Rev. Carl Olson became minister. Mary continued with her social service work for many years.



During her five decades as a director at Unity Settlement House, Mary fostered programs that benefited the needy, especially women and children. She founded the Unity House Mothers' Club, which is credited with starting the first "vacation" playground in Minneapolis and paying the salary of the playground supervisor. Club members also worked for the Red Cross during both wars. In addition to her Settlement House work, and leadership of the Universalist Women's Association, Mary nurtured a printing club at Church of the Redeemer.

A year before Mary's death in 1954 (at the age of 100), St. Olaf Church (the building that housed our congregation before the move to 50th and Girard) had a devastating fire. Despite her ninety-nine years, Mary visited the site of the burned church where she recalled to a reporter an earlier fire when she was a new bride. Mary had come to watch the fire and stood in the cold for so long that her cheeks became frostbitten. Her left cheek remained notably red in the succeeding years, such that she said she had "saved" on rouge over the years.

¹ Biography by Mary Junge, edited by Jennifer Thomas.

² "A Century of Social Action, 1897-1997, Unity Settlement House and the First Universalist Foundation, Part 1 written by John Addington from a paper by Chris Bremer and from research by Dave Juncker (1995-96).