

WIAWAKA CENTER FOR WOMEN (Historically: Wiawaka Holiday House)

Repository: Crandall Public Library.
Folklife Center
Glens Falls, NY.

Creator: Wiawaka Holiday House / Wiawaka Center for Women, Lake George, NY

Title: Wiawaka Center for Women (Historically Wiawaka Holiday House)

Dates: 1903 -

Abstract: Wiawaka Center for Women was founded in 1903 by Mary Wiltsie Fuller of Troy, NY, on land donated by Spenser and Katrina Trask, as Wiawaka Holiday House. It was intended as an affordable vacation spot for working women.

Quantity: [2017] 1 box (1 linear foot)

Identification: A&M: Organizations

HISTORICAL NOTE

“Mary Wiltsie Fuller of Troy, New York established Wiawaka [in 1903].” It was inspired by her knowledge of the Girls Friendly Society (of which more below). The historical brochure continues: “It arose out of the women’s rights movement at the turn of the century. Radical in her day, Miss Fuller recognized the need for an affordable vacation for immigrant women working in the local textile and shirt collar factories and laundries. She approached Spenser and Katrina Trask (founders of Yaddo) who shared her vision and deeded her the land. A volunteer board of dedicated and progressive women have made sure for over a century that Wiawaka remains a haven for women.” (Reflections of Wiawaka, brochure, in Regional VF).

INDEX TERMS

Places: Lake George, NY
Troy (Rensselaer) NY

Important People: Fuller, Mary Wiltsie
King, Mrs. Edwin A.
Trask, Spenser and Katrina
Carter, Murta

Wetzel, Estelle
Collins, Deaconess

Form/Genre: Records

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation: Wiawaka Center for Women (Historically Wiawaka Holiday House)
The Folklife Center at
Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls, NY.

Accession Information: Guest book donated August 30, 2017, by Doreen Kelly, on behalf of the Board of Directors of Wiawaka Center for Women (Historically known as Wiawaka Holiday House).

Note: this is an open collection, additions will be made at the discretion of the Board of Directors of the organization.

Processing Information: Arranged and described by Erica Wolfe Burke, September 2017.

OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

Series 1: Wiawaka Holiday House Guest Registry, 1903 - 1913

The book records the name, address, church, dates of visit, and payments made, by guests at Wiawaka during the first ten years of its operation. The first year, 1903, guests came from July through September. In subsequent years guests started arriving in June. Guests stayed anywhere from one day to four weeks. This book does not contain signatures of guests – it is a record book into which names and amounts have been copied.

While many of the guests came from Troy, there were other women who came from much further away: New York City, Charleston SC, Philadelphia PA, Redlands, CA. And while many may have been immigrant garment workers, clearly the women who arrived accompanied by a maid were of the benefactress class, rather than the working class. Among the well-known names in the book are Miss M.W. Fuller, who was there frequently, Miss Georgia O’Keefe (p. 125), Mr. [Spenser]Trask (p. 124).

Some names appear in the book more than once (for example Murta Carter of Cohoes, Estelle Wetzell of Saratoga, Deaconess Collins of NYC). In fact, Murta Carter is there so much that she appears to be a volunteer or staff member. In July of 1910 there is a note after her entry which says "Meals at H.H. Room with Stantons."

Among the un-named is an Armenian peddler who shows up once a summer (at least in 1910 and 1911) and stays for a meal – and presumably some sales to guests.

One of the columns in the book is headed "Society." When there is an entry in this column it says "GFS". This refers to the Girls Friendly Society. The GFS was founded in 1874 by a group of upper class Anglican women to address the problems of working class young women. It grew rapidly and by 1878 it was wide-spread in England and had established branches in Ireland and America. Working class girls and women were members, while benefactresses were called associates. (Queen Victoria became the patroness of the organization and enrolled her housemaids at Balmoral as members.) Programs of the organization included circulating libraries, workshops and classes, and the establishment of Holiday Houses (retreat centers). In June of 1911, Mrs. Edwin A. King of Troy is listed in this column as "Manager" and Miss Fuller as "President." Others are listed as associates. Mrs. Samuel Parsons of Waterford is listed as Treasurer.

The churches to which guests belong are universally Christian, and with one exception mainstream churches: Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Dutch Reform, Presbyterian, Congregational, Friends, Universalist, Roman Catholic. The exception is a Christadelphian in July of 1912. Protestants vastly outnumber Roman Catholics, and Episcopalians seem to predominate. Not all the guests have a listed church membership.

Note: the leaf which is pp 161-162 has been removed, probably at the time the book was in use as the sequential numbering of the guests has no gap between p. 160 and p. 163. Likewise pp. 183 and 184.

The guest book measures h: 8 inches by w: 13.75 inches. I has a (damaged) black leather spine and corners and marbled covers. It was made by the Sanderson Paper Co., in Troy. The pages have 16 lines for guests names, and columns for Application/ Name/ Address/ Church/ Society/ Dates of Visit/ Number of Days of Visit/ Room No./ Payments/ and Remarks.

In each year the guests/visits are listed by number, starting at 1 each year. Addresses usually only give the city, and in some months addresses are not recorded. Room numbers are often not recorded. Dates and payments are quite faithfully recorded. Amounts are totaled at the bottom of each page, and periodically throughout the season.

The book has 300 pages of which the last 3 are unused.

Related: "Lake George – Wiawaka" folder in Regional Vertical Files, Folklife Center

Other Wiawaka records are held by the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, NY