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# "The lady took me to the end of the world!" The Life of Mrs. N.A. Courtright

by Marcus Walker

When N.A. Courtright graduated from the Law Department of the University of Louisville, she was notable—even at the time—for being the first woman to do so. Yet the diploma was only a sliver of her accomplishments: by the time she earned her law degree, Courtright had already garnered considerable acclaim as a teacher and social worker, traveled throughout Europe and South Asia, and given numerous lectures about education and religion.

The woman better known as Nellie Almee Courtright was likely born as Nell Amanda Morehead<sup>1</sup> on September 11, 1869 to Joseph Warren and Amanda (*née* Baer/Bear) Morehead in Metropolis, Illinois, their third of five children and the first of three girls. The family moved at least twice before finally settling in Cairo.<sup>2</sup> Nellie kept her social circles wide as she came of age, becoming involved in her local social scene while maintaining her friendships in Metropolis (and at least once, combining both).<sup>3</sup>

Nellie married William Arthur Courtright on November 14, 1889,<sup>4</sup> and evidence suggests they spent around the following half-dozen years together in Cairo. The only Courtright that appears in the 1889-90, 1893, and 1895-96 Cairo City Directories is listed as W.A. or Wm. A.<sup>5</sup> In her published diary,



A sketch of Mrs. Courtright during her time in Chicago used in the syndicated feature "Woman's World." This specific one was taken from the July 31, 1899 Carlisle, Pennsylvania *Sentinel*, found through *Newspapers.com*.

1. A record in the U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index through Ancestry Library (the form of Ancestry used in research throughout) revealed a Nell Amanda Courtright (*née* Morehead), born to Joseph Morehead and Amanda Baer in Metroplis [sic], Illinois with a birthdate of September 11, though a birth year of 1890. A Freedom of Information Act inquiry (2021-14243) and appeal (2021-15208) to the Social Security Administration were both determined closed with no results, as I originally inquired about a Nell (or Nellie) Courtright/Morehead born either in 1869 or 1870, and despite the appeal including the Ancestry record and noting the discrepant birth year.

2. United States Census, Metropolis, Massac County, Illinois, June 2, 1870, p. 10; United States Census, Supervisor's District 7, Enumeration District 101, Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois, June 12, 1880, p. 10, and United States Census, Supervisor's District 16, Enumeration District 6, Cairo, Alexander County, Illinois, June 9, 1900, p. 11; "Courtright, N. A. (Mrs.)," *Who's Who in Louisville* (Louisville Press Club/Louisville Anzeiger Press, 1912), p. 89. Nellie's siblings were William (born c. 1864), Joseph Harry (m. Julia Boicourt) (1867-1914), Fannie (m. Phillip Irby) (1872-1946), and Corena (m. Arthur Thistlewood [Sr.]) (1880-1969). The connections between the other four siblings as well as the younger sisters' married names can also be found in, e.g., "Briefly Mentioned," *The Evening Citizen* (Cairo, IL), February 15, 1901, p. 3; "Woman Law Graduate," *Cairo Bulletin*, April 26, 1911, p. 1 and "Harry Morehead Succumbs To Throat Cancer," *Cairo Bulletin*, October 8, 1914, p. 1.

3. "Wedded," *Cairo Bulletin*, December 27, 1883, p. 3; "General Local Items," *Cairo Bulletin*, August 22, 1884, p. 4; "Society News," Cairo, Illinois, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 24, 1887, p. 10; "Society News," Cairo, Illinois, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 14, 1888, p. 10; "Society News," Cairo, Illinois, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 18, 1888, p. 10.

4. Marriage License, State of Illinois, Mr. William A. Courtright and Miss Nellie A. Morehead, November 12, 1889, Vol. H, p. 400 (available from the Illinois Regional Archives Depository, Southern Illinois University); "Local News," *The Citizen* (Cairo, IL), November 21, 1889, p. 1, col. 4 (thanks to Teri Barnett at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library); John Howard Abbott, *The Courtright (Kortright) Family, Descendants of Bastian Van Kortryk, A Native of Belgium who Emigrated to Holland about 1615* (Tobias and Wright, 1922), p. 68.

5. E.E. Ellis, *Daily Telegram's Cairo City Directory for 1889-90*, p. 66 (W.A.); E.E. Ellis, *Daily Telegram's Cairo City Directory for 1893*, p. 78 (Wm. A.) (Nellie was still listed as Morehead, see p. 128); E.E. Ellis, *Daily Telegram's Cairo City Directory for 1895-96*, p. 76 (W.A.). According to their

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Cairo native Maud Rittenhouse recounted her interactions with a “Mrs. Courtright” as fellow members of a Music Club in entries from January 18, 1894 and March 15, 1895, which correspond with a “Mrs. W.A. Courtright” hosting the Cairo Musical-Literary Club in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* Society News around the same time, with the specific day of the March 1895 meeting at the Courtrights being the Monday before. Rittenhouse also mentions a suitor by the name of Goodspeed who worked for Phoenix Life Insurance and was “a friend of Mr. Courtright’s,” and the W.A. Courtright in the 1895 Cairo City Directory was indeed employed with Phoenix Mutual Life Company.<sup>6</sup> Courtright and Rittenhouse were also simultaneously members of the local Woman’s Christian Temperance Union chapter, lending more credence to the coincidences.<sup>7</sup>

Two later profiles report Mrs. Courtright’s career

began under social reformer Jane Addams, the latter of them providing enough information to deduce Courtright was likely employed at Addams’ Hull House settlement in Chicago in 1894 or 1895.<sup>8</sup> That would align with two 1915 articles crediting her with twenty-one years of working with children, although neither of the pieces mentioned the employer or location she started.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever the case may have been, it is clear by 1896 Nellie had begun a life without William.<sup>10</sup> In autumn of that year, Mrs. Courtright enrolled in the University of Chicago and became a resident under Mary McDowell in the University’s settlement house the following year.<sup>11</sup> By 1898, Courtright was a teacher in her own right at the downtown Jones School, living within a short walk of the disadvantaged children to whom she devoted much of her time.<sup>12</sup>

Observations of and empathy with the plight of

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title pages, these editions are the first three issues printed (of the *Daily Telegram* version). No Courtright appeared in the editions immediately before or after those above: H. Thornton Bennett, *Bennett & Co.’s Cairo City Directory for 1887–88*, p. 45 and E.E. Ellis, *Daily Telegram’s Directory of the City of Cairo, Mound City, Alexander County and Pulaski County, for 1898*, p. 68 (which is the fourth *Daily Telegram* issue). Images originally received from the Cairo Public Library for the 1889–90 directory; all others received from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Illinois and Lincoln History Collections.

6. Isabella Maud Rittenhouse (Mayne), *Maud* (edited by Richard Lee Strout; Macmillan, 1939), pp. 571, 587 (The latter page is where Goodspeed is mentioned; a “Mr. and Mrs. C.”, as they are referred by Rittenhouse alongside their full names on 587, are also mentioned on pages 588 and 591, both near in proximity to Goodspeed. It should be noted, however, March 15, 1895 was a Friday, not a Thursday as published in the journal.); “Society News,” Cairo, Illinois, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 16, 1895, p. 13; “Society News,” Cairo, Illinois, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 18, 1895, p. 12.

7. E.g., “To the Voters of Cairo,” *The Citizen* (Cairo, IL), March 22, 1888, [p. 8]. (The same letter was reprinted the next four weeks.) The two yet-to-be wed women were listed toward the end of the signatories as Miss Maude [sic] Rittenhouse and Miss Nellie Morehead.

8. “Courtright, N. A. (Mrs.),” *Who’s Who in Louisville* (Louisville Press Club/Louisville Anzeiger Press, 1912), p. 89; “Woman’s Fellowship Club to Broaden Relief Work,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, August 11, 1918, sec. 4, p. 4. Although no evidence was found for an earlier date, entries in a Hull House ledger from August and September 1897 do include a “Mrs. Courtright” (University of Illinois at Chicago Special Collections and University Archives, Hull-House Collection, Series VI, Box 58, Folder 171, pp. 76, 79; scanned by Marla McMackin, Ph.D. Candidate and Graduate Assistant at the University of Illinois at Chicago). No specific dates were given for any event in the *Evening Express* article beside one degree, yet corresponding dates to nearly all her other accomplishments were found independently.

9. “Detention Home Matron Resigns,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, June 15, 1915, pp. 1, 2; “Resigns Because Of Much Criticism,” *Louisville Times*, June 15, 1915, p. 2. Both state Courtright had “been engaged in children’s work for twenty-one years.”

10. The 1900 Census (Supervisor’s District 1, Enumeration District 17, City of Chicago, South Division, Cook County, Illinois, June 14, 1900, p. 11) lists a “M.A. Courtwright” who is listed as single female born in 1870, employed as a superintendent, and a native of Illinois who lived at the Grand Central Passenger Station Hotel. Although the details are obviously not exact for “M.A.,” according to the 1899 *Lakeside Annual Directory of the City of Chicago* published by Reuben H. Donnelley, the hotel was located at the southwest corner of Harrison and 5th Avenues (p. 730). In the 1899-1900 (p. 120) and 1900-1901 (p. 157) directories created by the Chicago Board of Education, N. Almee Court[*w*]right lived at 375 5th Avenue. According to the *New Map of Chicago* (Rufus Blanchard, 1897) (available online in the University of Chicago Map Collection) Harrison Avenue was just north of the 400 block of Fifth Avenue. (Even in census records where her name is recorded correctly, Courtright’s marital status changes, and I will mention them in cited censuses below.)

11. Mrs. N.A. Courtright, Record of Work, University of Chicago, created October 6, 1896 (she withdrew but re-enrolled in the following quarter) (provided by the University of Chicago Library Special Collections Research Center); “University of Chicago Settlement,” *University Record*, University of Chicago, December 10, 1897, v. 2, no. 37, pp. 299-300; “Woman’s Fellowship Club To Broaden Relief Work,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, August 11, 1918, sec. 4, p. 4.

12. “Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago,” July 27, 1898, p. 55 (Courtright being awarded her certificate to teach manual training); “Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago,” September 7, 1898, p. 90 (Courtright’s assignment to Jones School); Board of Education of the City of Chicago, [“Directory”], 1899–1900, p. 120. The Jones School can be found, e.g., on the 1897 Blanchard *New Map of Chicago* (note 10) at the southeast corner of Harrison and Plymouth Avenues, a few blocks east of Fifth Avenue.

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her students led Courtright to find and create recreational spaces for them.<sup>13</sup> She initiated the clearing of an abandoned lot across from the school for the construction of a playground as a summertime “breathing spot” in the neighborhood<sup>14</sup> and, despite continual funding concerns, arranged a countryside vacation school during the late spring and summer, providing an opportunity for her students to create their own gardens as well as play and experience a world outside the city.<sup>15</sup>

Courtright also spearheaded a free night and weekend industrial arts school. After petitioning the Board of Education to fund the cost of after-hours utilities in the Jones School building, Courtright devoted not only her own time, but recruited other teachers to volunteer their expertise. Courses and clubs catered to a wide variety of interests and skill levels including, though not limited to dance, dramatic arts, painting, sewing, Venetian iron design, debating, mechanical drawing, cooking, clay mod-

eling, and basketball.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond the recognition Courtright’s work received within and outside Chicago,<sup>17</sup> she had also been noticed by Theosophical Society president and co-founder Henry Steel Olcott. (The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 and by this time had become a worldwide organization.)<sup>18</sup> In the latter half of 1901, Olcott reported his pleasure at her acceptance of his invitation to become supervisor of the Panchama Free Schools he founded in Madras (now Chennai), India.<sup>19</sup> Despite the larger role, there were superficial similarities to her previous position: the students in both places were poor and disadvantaged (if not even more so in India as the children were of Dalit status), and the Olcott Schools relied on donations just as her extracurricular programs at Jones did.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, Courtright again found a way to make it work.

The Olcott Schools had already begun to make some impact on the lives of the children and the

13. An account of her philosophy can be found in “New Methods in Public Schools,” *Child-Garden* (Publishers Child-Garden, Morgan Park [Chicago], Illinois), October 1899, v. 7, no. 11, pp. 393–395.

14. “Playground In The Slums,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 11, 1899, p. 12; “Will Open New Playground,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 15, 1899, p. 8; “Mrs. Courtright’s Open Air ‘Gym’ For Children,” *Chicago Times-Herald*, June 18, 1899, pt. 3, p. 7 (many thanks to the Wisconsin Historical Society). Another account in Courtright’s own words can be found at “The School and the Community,” *The School Journal* (E.L. Kellogg & Co., Chicago, Illinois), April 28, 1900, v. 60, no. 17, p. 453. (Also note, in reference to notes 10 and 12, that Courtright mentions having “moved into the district, a few blocks from the school-house, in which place I am still living.”)

15. “Help Poor Children,” *The Inter-Ocean* (Chicago, IL), July 17, 1899, p. 12; “Pupils To Use Hoes,” *The Inter-Ocean*, April 29, 1900, p. 18; “Plans Farm Vacation School,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1900, p. 5; “Children Given An Outing,” *The Inter-Ocean*, May 3, 1900, p. 14; “School Children Gardening,” *The Inter-Ocean*, July 18, 1900, p. 9; “Need Money for Vacation School,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1901, p. 3.

16. “Andrews Leaves City,” *The Inter-Ocean*, November 18, 1899, p. 12; “Night School For The Arts,” *Chicago Record*, November 18, 1899, p. 3 (thanks to Gayle Martinson, Reference Librarian, Wisconsin Historical Society Library); “Board May Try Dr. Andrews,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1899, p. 4; “Will Teach Industrial Art,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 3, 1899, p. 8; “Wood Carving Done By Jones School Pupils,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 4, 1899, p. 4; “To Hold Classes On Sunday,” *The Inter-Ocean*, December 5, 1899, p. 6; “New Fads In The Jones School,” *The Inter-Ocean*, December 18, 1899, p. 5; “Devotes Life To Pupils,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1900, p. 41.

17. “Miss Courtwright’s [sic] Summer School,” *The School Journal* (E.L. Kellogg & Co.), May 12, 1900, v. LX, no. 19, p. 533. The June 18, 1899 *Chicago Times-Herald* article from note 14 was syndicated in “Woman’s World” columns that appeared in, e.g., *Hornellsville* (NY) *Weekly Tribune*, July 14, 1899, [p. 7]; *Columbus* (IN) *Republican*, July 21, 1899, p. 3; and *The Sentinel* (Carlisle, PA), July 31, 1899, [p. 3]. The April 29, 1900 *Inter-Ocean* article in note 15 was syndicated as “To See, Learn, And Be Happy” in at least three other newspapers: *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, May 11, 1900, p. 4; *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 15, 1900, p. 6; and *The Kansas Optimist* (Jamestown, KS), May 25, 1900, [p. 2].

18. As with any philosophical, spiritual, or religious organization, the history is not that simple. See, e.g., James A. Santucci, “Theosophy and the Theosophical Societies: An Overview,” *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of New Age Religions* (edited by James R. Lewis; Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, 2004), pp. 25–49.

19. The August 11, 1918 *Los Angeles Express* article from note 8 states that rather than being recruited, Courtright went to India “for rest and quiet” and then “her own energy urged her to take up the work of teaching the pariahs.” Yet, under “News Notes” on page 162 in the August 1906 issue of *The Theosophic Messenger*, Courtright describes the life in India “like Heaven, the quiet, tranquil beauty of it, with nothing to do but work and think,” so perhaps the contradiction is not quite as severe as it might seem. That issue, like most—though not all—of the sources directly printed by The Theosophical Society was provided by Janet Kerschner, archivist at The Theosophical Society of America. Courtright’s involvement with The Theosophical Society goes rather deeper than this article will cover and would be better handled by someone more intimately familiar with Theosophy.

20. “Colonel H.S. Olcott...,” *The Englishman* (*Weekly Summary*) (Calcutta [Kolkata], India), v. XXXVIII, no. 48, November 28, 1901, p. 6; H.S. Olcott, “Panchama Education,” *General Report of the Twenty-Sixth Anniversary and Convention of the Theosophical Society*, December 27–28, 1901, p. 13; “The President’s Return,” *The Supplement to the Theosophist*, v. 23, no. 3, December 1901, p. vii; H.S. Olcott, “Col. Olcott’s Appeal to His Countrymen for the Pariahs,” *The Supplement to the Theosophist*, v. 23, no. 3, December 1901, p. viii; *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society* (edited by C. Jinarajadasa; The Theosophical Publication House, 1925), p. 230.

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**Courtright among the Junior Class of the University of Louisville Law Department in 1911. As she enrolled in both courses simultaneously, Courtright was in fact a member of the Junior and Senior Classes. (*The Colonel 1911* [University of Louisville yearbook], p. 31)**

erstwhile Madras State. In the three years prior to Courtright's first full year as administrator, the students passed the statewide examinations at a rate five percent higher than the all-caste state average.<sup>21</sup> Yet Courtright's adaptation of Froebel-style Kindergarten to the local culture made her a name in Indian education. Within a year of her arrival,<sup>22</sup> Courtright had been invited by a local teachers' organization to address means of improving Kindergarten methods.<sup>23</sup> In 1903, she gave at least two more speeches regarding the importance of early education.<sup>24</sup> The following year, the nearby Mylapore Hindu Girls School named her as an Honorary Superintendent.<sup>25</sup>

In the four schools Courtright supervised in 1904, ninety-five percent of the "nearly 600 students" earned passing scores on the government examinations, including one school where each of its 116 students passed.<sup>26</sup> The improvement on "even the excellent results" from before her tenure and the successive questions

21. C. Paramarthalingam, *Religion and Social Reform in Tamil Nadu* (Rajakumari Publications, Madurai, India, 1997), pp. 87, 130 (Be aware the source of these statistics is the H.S. Olcott pamphlet "The Poor Pariah," which is reproduced as an appendix within this book [and where the second page of this reference falls within]).

22. Courtright arrived in Madras in November 1901, but did not start as supervisor until after February 1902: see "The Theosophical Society," *The Madras Weekly Mail* (Madras [Chennai], India), v. LIII, no. 22, November 28, 1901, p. 583 (She and Olcott arrived in Madura on November 23 and "left for Madras the same afternoon"); C. Paramarthalingam, *Religion and Social Reform in Tamil Nadu*, pp. 127, 136 (The reproduction of "The Poor Pariah" stated Courtright's predecessor, Miss S.E. Palmer left "February last"; the pamphlet dated June 17, 1902); "The Panchama Education Movement," *The Theosophist*, v. 24, no. 4, January 1903, pp. 15–16 (the resignation of Sarah Palmer, her replacement with Courtright, and "The Poor Pariah" are all mentioned within the report).

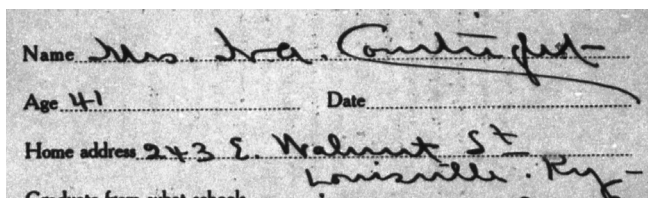
23. "Improved Methods of Primary Education," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LV, no. 19, November 6, 1902, p. 505.

24. "Madras News, 31st March: The Madras Primary Teachers' Association," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVI, no. 13, April 2, 1903, p. 341; "Madras News, 8th December: Madras Primary Teachers' Association," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVII, no. 24, December 10, 1903, p. 619; "The Importance of Primary Education," *The Theosophist*, v. 24, no. 9, June 1903, p. 569 (The pamphlet "contain[ed] the substance of a lecture delivered by Mrs. N. Almée Courtright" and was described as "the first of a series to be delivered... during the year.")

25. "The Mylapore Girls' School," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVIV [sic], no. 5, August 4, 1904, p. 113. ("Honorary" in British English can mean unpaid but functional, rather than merely in name only.)

26. "Madras News, 31st October: Theosophical Society's Panchama Schools," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVIV [sic], no. 18, November 03, 1904, p. 463; "Some Points from the Official Report of the Convention at Benares," *The Theosophic Messenger*, v. 6, no. 6, March 1905, pp. 83–84.

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**Courtright's signature and address from her application data form from the Stout Institute (now University of Wisconsin-Stout) from Summer 1911. Credit to the University of Wisconsin-Stout Archives.**

about her methods led her to write a popular article and pamphlet describing her courses and methods.<sup>27</sup> While Courtright's chastisement of other schools' methods of instruction received some criticism of her own from other educators,<sup>28</sup> the expanded and revised version of her manual earned significant praise and was retained by the Indian government for use by their teachers.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, the instructional courses Courtright

held for the teachers under her supervision soon after drew interest from and were attended by persons outside of the Olcott Schools.<sup>30</sup> Courtright held demonstration Kindergarten classes for larger gatherings, while allowing individuals and smaller groups to observe an actual class at one of the schools—even insisting they visit.<sup>31</sup>

Her hard work, however, may have taken a toll, as poor health led to Courtright leaving the Olcott Schools after five years. She remained in South Asia another year to recuperate and, once recovered, help recruit new teachers.<sup>32</sup>

Courtright returned to the United States and Illinois around March 1908, stopping in Chicago before making extended stays in Cairo with her brother Harry and sister Corena, alongside visiting with her aunt Sarah Gott in Washington (near Peoria),<sup>33</sup> the last all but certainly as she attended summer manual training courses at Bradley Polytechnic Institute.<sup>34</sup>

27. N.A. Courtright, "How We Teach the Pariahs," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVIV [sic], no. 20, November 17, 1904, pp. 522–523; N.A. Courtright, "How To Teach The Pariah?," *The Indian Journal of Education* (V. Kalyanarama Iyer & Co., Esplanade, Madras, India), October–December 1904, pp. 616–623 (available from The British Library); N.A. Courtright, *How We Teach The Pariah* [sic], (Thompson and Co., Madras, India, July 1906) (This edition is available through several facsimile publishers).

28. E.g., J.H. Stone, "In Mrs. Courtright's interesting account of her Pariah Schools..." (letter), *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVIV [sic], no. 20, November 17, 1904, p. 523 (immediately follows Courtright's article); A. Furnell, "How We Teach The Pariahs" (letter), *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVIV [sic], no. 21, November 24, 1904, p. 541. Courtright's critiques can be found in the middle of the third and fourth columns on page 522 of the earlier *Weekly Mail* article.

29. "Reviews: How We Teach The Pariahs," *Prabuddha Bharata*, v. X, no. 105, March 1905, p. 55; "Reviews of Books: How We Teach The Pariahs," *Siddhanta Deepika*, v. VII, no. 7, October 1906, pp. 266–268. "How We Teach the Pariah, By Mrs. N.A. Courtright," *The Indian Spectator*, v. XXIV, no. 38, September 22, 1906, p. 892; "The Pachaiyappa Charities," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LXIII, no. 18, November 1, 1906, p. 475 (The chair of the covered meeting, Justice Sir Subramania Iyer, brought copies of Courtright's pamphlet for attendees); Government of India, "Catalogue of the Library of the Bureau of Education, Simla" (Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta [Kolkata], India, 1918), p. 64.

30. C.V. Shaminathaiyar, "Hindu Social Reform" (letter), *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LX, no. 3, January 19, 1905, p. 62; N.A. Courtright, *How We Teach The Pariah* (1906), pp. 36–37.

31. N.A. Courtright, "How We Teach the Pariahs," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVIV [sic], no. 20, November 17, 1904, p. 522 ("Those who put the questions [regarding the nature of work and method employed] have not yet visited the schools, although the schools are open for inspection at any time, whether by appointment or not."); "How We Teach The Pariahs," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVIV [sic], no. 21, November 24, 1904, p. 541 (In the second letter, a visitor recounts their visit to one of the schools); "Up-to-Date Primary Teaching," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LXII, no. 10, March 8, 1906, pp. 247–248 (a detailed description of a demonstration of a class done for the Council of Native Education).

32. "The Olcott Panchama Free Schools," *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LXIV, no. 4, January 24, 1907, p. 114; "Social and Personal: Coming From India," *Cairo Bulletin*, November 19, 1907, [p. 4] (Courtright had left Madras for Kashmir); "Report of the Olcott Panchama Free Schools," *The Supplement to the Theosophist*, v. 29, December 1907, p. 66; "Social and Personal," *Cairo Bulletin*, December 25, 1907, [p. 4]; Hari Om, *Muslims of Jammu & Kashmir: A Study in the Spread of Education and Consciousness, 1857–1925* (Archives Publishers, New Delhi, India, 1986), pp. 37–39 (Two officials recommended the Board of Education enlist the assistance of Courtright in regards to educational reform due to what the author called "splendid work" [p.38, fn. 3], as Mrs. Courtright "happened to be in Kashmir in 1907.").

33. S.S. Prinzess Irene, List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States Immigration Officer at Port of Arrival, Sailing from Genoa, February 6, 1908 (available on Ancestry; note the destination was Cairo, Illinois, but is scratched for Chicago); "Social and Personal," *Cairo Bulletin*, April 5, 1908, [p. 4] (announces her arrival in town after "a few days" in Chicago); "Social and Personal: Fortnightly Musical Club," *Cairo Bulletin*, April 29, 1908, [p. 4]; "Social and Personal: Wednesday Club," *Cairo Bulletin*, May 1, 1908, [p. 4]; "Social and Personal: Wednesday Club," *Cairo Bulletin*, May 14, 1908, [p. 4]; "Personal and Impersonal," *Woodford County Republican* (Eureka, IL), July 16, 1908, p. 1; "Around Home," *Paxton (IL) Daily Record*, July 18, 1908, p. 2; United States Census, Supervisor's District 7, Enumeration District 157, Washington, Tazewell County, Illinois, April 22[?], 1910 (determining Mrs. James R. Gott was Sarah F. Gott).

34. "Bradley Polytechnic Institute, The School of Arts and Sciences, Register 1908–1909, Announcements for 1909–1910" (Edward Hine & Co., Peoria, Illinois, May 1909), pp. 45–46 (what and when the Summer School courses consisted of), 69 (Courtright listed as a student). Confirmation

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That autumn, Courtright began as the supervisor of the Cheerful Home Settlement in Quincy. A month after her arrival, the writer of a local report marveled how rapidly she familiarized herself with the sociological needs of the city and how much she accomplished in a short time.<sup>35</sup> By May, a wide range of classes and clubs led and assisted by volunteers around the community were available at the settlement, and she had arranged an all-day picnic for the “several hundred children” of both the Cheerful Home and the public schools.<sup>36</sup>

Yet Courtright’s time in Quincy was already approaching an end. She tendered her resignation to the Cheerful Home effective July 1, becoming managing director of the Board of Children’s Guardians Detention Home in Louisville, Kentucky the following month.<sup>37</sup> From the outset, Courtright endeavored to “conduct [the] Detention Home as a ‘home’ rather than as a ‘public institution.’” Her policy quickly found favor; in May 1910, Louisville Mayor William O. Head appointed Courtright to the city’s delegation to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in St. Louis.<sup>38</sup>

That October, Courtright began her double course at the Law Department at the University of Louisville, having passed the exam permitting her to take junior and senior classes concurrently over six calendar months.<sup>39</sup> Courtright, however, at the time saw her new knowledge as merely another tool to better help the children under her care.<sup>40</sup> That attitude might be best proven by her enrollment into elementary nursing, sketching, and pottery courses at Stout Institute in Wisconsin almost immediately afterward.<sup>41</sup>

EMERGENCY PASSPORT APPLICATION.

No. 86

NATIVE

Mrs. Najan A. Courtright, born March 14, 1913

is a Native and Loyal Citizen of the United States, hereby applying for an emergency passport for myself, at Rome, Italy, for minor children, as follows:

I solemnly swear that I was born at Metropolis in the State of Illinois on or about the 11th day of September 1869. I am a native citizen of the United States; that I was domiciled in the United States, my permanent residence being at Louisville in the State of Kentucky where I follow the occupation of Superintendent, that I left the United States on the 27th day of November 1912, and am now temporarily sojourning at Rome, Italy.

I intend to return to the United States within three months with the purpose of residing and performing the duties of citizenship therein; and that I desire the passport for the purpose of proving citizenship and identification to travel. I have not applied elsewhere for a United States passport or for consular registration, and so request.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Further, I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion.

American Embassy at Rome, Italy

Given before me, this 14th day of March 1913

2nd Secretary of the American Embassy Rome

Age: 42 years, Height: 5 feet 5 inches, Build: medium square, Forehead: broad and high, Hair: black grey streaked, Eyes: brown, Complexion: dark, Nose: regular

IDENTIFICATION

I hereby certify that I know the above-named person, and know him to be the wife of a native-born citizen of the United States, and that the facts stated in his affidavit are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Identifying documents submitted as follows: Cards, letters, letter of credit.

Mrs. N. A. Courtright is the Managing Director of the Board of Children's Guardians, Detention House, 245 East Walnut st, Louisville.

**Courtright’s March 14, 1913 passport application from the American Embassy in Rome. Compare the signature and address with the Stout Institute application. Also notice the name she gave—Najan. Available through Ancestry.com.**

Courtright was a student given in an e-mail from Lacey Schwindenhammer, Bradley University Office of the Registrar, April 21, 2021 at 10:49 AM. (Bradley does not release records of previous students except to the student or their direct descendants regardless of time elapsed. As Mrs. Courtright did not have children, her records are effectively sealed.)

35. “The Needs of Quincy,” *Quincy (IL) Daily Herald*, December 7, 1908, p. 2. She evidently had changed her mind about settlement homes; see, e.g., “Is Opposed to Settlements,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 12, 1900, p. 10.

36. “Work Done By Classes,” *Quincy Daily Herald*, May 1, 1909, p. 10; “Cheerful Home Facts,” *Quincy Daily Journal*, May 1, 1909, p. 5; “Had Picnic in Highland,” *Quincy Daily Herald*, May 31, 1909, p. 1; “The Cheerful Home Picnic,” *Quincy Daily Journal*, May 31, 1909, p. 8. Additional information about Courtright in Quincy can be found in “The Christmas Spirit Reigned in Quincy,” *Quincy Daily Journal*, December 26, 1908, p. 5 and “The League Heard From,” *Quincy Daily Herald*, March 8, 1909, p. 9.

37. “The Cheerful Home Picnic,” *Quincy Daily Journal*, May 31, 1909, p. 8; “Detention Home of the Louisville Juvenile Court,” *Lexington Herald*, August 28, 1910, p. 4. This is a half-page transcript of a speech Courtright gave about the Children’s Detention Home on February 23, 1910, all but certainly given to the Louisville Kindergarten Alumnae Club, “Club Programs,” *Kindergarten Review* (Milton Bradley Co., Springfield, Mass.), v. XX, no. 5, January 1910, p. 330. (For any UofL/Law School historians, find Mr. Lafon Allen under “Playgrounds” under May 25, *ibid.*)

38. United States Census, Supervisor’s District 5, Enumeration District 104, Fifth Ward, Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky, April 15, 1910, pp. 2-3 (Courtright is listed as widowed); “Louisville Will Be Represented,” *Louisville Times*, May 14, 1910, p. 1; “Mayor Head Appoints Charity Worker Delegates,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 15, 1910, sec. 2, p. 3; “Detention Home of the Louisville Juvenile Court,” *Lexington Herald*, August 28, 1910, p. 4.

39. “Law Department of the University of Louisville, 1910–11” (Morton Atwood Printing Co., Louisville, KY), pp. 10–16 (class schedule), 18 (requirement of exam needed for simultaneous junior/senior enrollment); *The Colonel 1911*, University of Louisville (J. Wade Conkling, editor-in-chief), pp. 30–31, 33 (Courtright as member of junior class), 35, 42 (Courtright in the senior class); “Matriculation Book, Law Department, University of Louisville,” 1885–1911, p. 227 (available from the University of Louisville University Archives); “Matriculation Book, Law Department, University of Louisville, Beginning with 66th Annual Session, 1911–12,” p. 12 (available from the University of Louisville University Archives).

40. *The Colonel 1911*, pp. 35, 42.

41. Stout Institute Form D – Data for Office Use: Mrs. N.A. Courtright, 1911 (available from the University of Wisconsin-Stout Archives); “Stout Institute Bulletin: Announcement 1911–12,” March 1911, pp. 4, 12 (the timeframe of the summer session) (the Bulletin is called the Courses of Study on the front cover; available from the Internet Archive); Stout Institute Department of Manual Training Student Record: Mrs. N.A. Courtright, September 1, 1911 (provided by Heather Stecklein, Director of the University of Wisconsin-Stout Archives).

## THE LIFE OF MRS. N.A. COURTRIGHT

A snag in scheduling during a November 1911 conference of juvenile judges and officers unintentionally provided Courtright another stage to display her aptitude with children. The Children's Home had invited conference attendees to a banquet, but conflicting invitations meant many dinner seats were left open. As such, the children became the fortunate recipients of the meals and left several officials impressed with their comportment at the table.<sup>42</sup>

In May 1912, Courtright attended the Southern Sociological Congress in Nashville as a designated representative of Kentucky Governor James McCreary.<sup>43</sup> That summer, forty of the Children's Home charges participated in a typical example of the Courtright experience, living on a fruit farm south of the city.<sup>44</sup>

Courtright was also involved in the planning of a "Child and the Law" showcase at the Kentucky Child Welfare Exhibit held in downtown Louisville that November,<sup>45</sup> yet she missed the exhibition itself: having been asked to return to India by Theosophical Society president Annie Besant, Courtright took leave from the Children's Home,<sup>46</sup> although it is al-

most certain she made additional travel plans, likely meeting with Dr. Maria Montessori along the way.<sup>47</sup>

About a year after Nellie returned to the United States,<sup>48</sup> her brother Harry was stricken with throat cancer; he even visited Louisville, where doctors provided some hope when physicians elsewhere could not. Nevertheless, Harry succumbed to the disease in October 1914, sending Nellie home to mourn her loss.<sup>49</sup>

Courtright looked to be firmly establishing herself in Louisville, co-founding the Theosophical Educational Society in the city in early 1915.<sup>50</sup> However, despite her work being lauded before and even commended afterward, charges of inefficiency and mismanagement led to a split between members of the Board of Children's Guardians. An expired term of a board member turned support slightly in her favor and nullified the initial request for Courtright to step down, but the continued conflict with other members of the board due to her Theosophical beliefs and her resultant ill health nonetheless led Courtright to resign.<sup>51</sup>

Courtright left Louisville for Southern California,

42. "Disagree With Indiana Judge," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 16, 1911, p. 5.

43. "Local Woman To Attend Sociological Conference," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 5, 1912, sec. 3, p. 1. Also see "Interest Growing In Sociological Meeting In May," *Nashville Tennessean and Nashville American*, April 15, 1912, p. 12 (her opinion on the upcoming conference and then-tentative attendance).

44. "City Urchins Become Wood Elfs [sic] For Summer," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, September 15, 1912, sec. 4, p. 12. (Although it is impossible to say if Courtright visited the farm herself, it was the assistant director at the time, Mrs. L.W. Thompson, who was in active charge of the camp.)

45. "The Kentucky Child Welfare Exhibit," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, November 3, 1912, sec. 4, pp. 1, 12. Nearly identical articles are available around the same time in many other Kentucky newspapers.

46. Joseph E. Ross, *Krotana of Old Hollywood, Volume I, 1866-1913* (El Montecito Oaks Press, Montecito, CA), p. 179; "Mrs. Nellie Courtright, Former Cairo Woman, Goes To Far Off India," *Cairo Bulletin*, November 23, 1912, p. 3 (article mentions the "steamer Mauritana" [sic]); Cunard Mauretania, Names and Descriptions of Alien Passengers, New York to Liverpool, December 2, 1912 (available through Ancestry); Margaret F. Chase, "From Lodge Reports: Louisville Lodge," *The American Theosophist*, v. 14, no. 6, March 1913, pp. 513-514; Emergency Passport Application No. 86, American Embassy at Rome, Italy, March 14, 1913 (available through Ancestry). Also see notes 47 and 48.

47. The article "Woman's Fellowship Club To Broaden Relief Work" (see note 8) states Courtright spent time in Rome "to study the methods of Mme. Montessori." Joke Verheul of the Maria Montessori Archives at the Association Montessori Internationale on September 1, 2020 and May 15, 2021 stated no record of a visit by Courtright exists or remains, as the case might have been; however, Ms. Verheul provided an article about a class taught by Dr. Montessori in Rome the day after Courtright visited the embassy ("Learn Montessori Method," *New York Times*, March 16, 1913, p. C5). Also see the following note.

48. The list of American citizens for the S.S. Majestic, arriving at the Port of New York on April 17, 1913 (available on Ancestry) includes a Nora A. Courtright who presented passport #36 (versus #86) dated March 14, 1913, and issued by the American Embassy in Rome. (The boarding manifest of alien passengers from the British side is also available at Ancestry, if with a week discrepancy in departure—April 2nd rather than April 9th—from Southampton.) Additionally, a report in the March 8, 1913 *The Homeward Mail* (v. LIX, no. 2850) lists a "Mrs. Courtright" among the passengers of the P&O S.S. Egypt having left Bombay for London on February 22 (p. 316).

49. "J.H. Morehead Being Treated In Louisville," *Cairo Bulletin*, May 31, 1914, p. 1; "Harry Morehead Succumbs To Throat Cancer," *Cairo Bulletin*, October 8, 1914, p. 1; "Personals," *Cairo Bulletin*, October 10, 1914, p. 4.

50. "Incorporation Articles," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, February 25, 1915, p. 6. (More specifically, Courtright along with George H. Wilson filed to incorporate The Theosophical Education Society in Louisville, which makes it seem unlikely she had planned on leaving the Children's Home in a matter of months.)

51. "Detention Home Board Is Split," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 15, 1915, pp. 1, 6 (where objection to her Theosophical leanings were initially mentioned); "Detention Home Is The Subject Of Dissension," *The Evening Post* (Louisville, KY), April 15, 1915, p. 2 (where her supporters claims of



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taking both a position as the head of the Krotona School and a different first name—Najan.<sup>52</sup> (Although she had referred to herself as “Najan” rather than “Nellie” before—for an official document, no less—it became the primary, though not exclusive name she went by in California.)<sup>53</sup> After a short stint at Krotona,<sup>54</sup> Courtright returned to the classroom as a student once more, graduating from the Santa Barbara State Normal School with a degree in vocational home economics in August 1917.<sup>55</sup>

As she did in Chicago, Madras, and Louisville, Courtright rose to prominence in Southern California.<sup>56</sup> After returning to Los Angeles, Najan made a name for herself socially, quite possibly the most obvious instance being an August 11, 1918 *Los An-*

*geles Times* feature on the city’s Woman’s Fellowship Club which, despite its title, consisted heavily of a biography of Courtright.<sup>57</sup> In addition to her previous achievements, the article reported future plans beyond direct social service or educational work: Courtright had taken civil service examinations for both Los Angeles and the State of California, and at the time was considering applying for admission to the Bar, which she was indeed granted the following month.<sup>58</sup> (As the roster of Second District of California Court of Appeal noted Courtright was being admitted due to already being licensed in Kentucky, which in turn means she had taken and passed the bar exam in a Kentucky court sometime before.)<sup>59</sup>

Courtright was presented to the court by Clara

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her opposition’s objection to Courtright’s religion are more clearly stated; thanks to Kelly Dunnagan at the Louisville Free Public Library for the clip file and Laura Hall at the Young Library at the University of Kentucky for providing the page number); “Meeting Secret,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 17, 1915, p. 4; “Detention Home Matron Resigns,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, June 15, 1915, pp. 1, 2 (there was “friction, described later as being due to her refusal to give up work in connection with the Theosophical Society”); “Detention Home Head Resigns,” *The Evening Post*, June 15, 1915, p. 2 (“The resignation was accepted by the Board of Children’s Guardians, three members of which, some weeks ago, objected to continuance in office of Mrs. Courtright, due partly to her refusal to give up her work with the Theosophical Society.”); “Resigns Because Of Much Criticism,” *Louisville Times*, June 15, 1915, p. 2 (“She is a devout Theosophist... and her activities in this respect Mrs. Courtright believes is responsible for some criticism of her work as superintendent of the Detention Home.”).

52. “From The National President: Krotona Day School,” *The Messenger* (Theosophical Society of America), November 1915, p. 172. See also Index To Register Of Voters, Los Angeles City Precinct No. 439, Los Angeles County, California, 1916 (available on Ancestry), where Courtright is listed as an educator (‘edctr’) living at Krotona Court. See also note 54.

53. Emergency Passport Application No. 86, March 14, 1913 (see note 46; Najan’s occupation was given as “Managing Director of the Board of Children’s Guardians, Detention House”). This was the only use found prior to her relocation to California. The Register of Voters immediately above was the first found afterward.

54. Theosophical Society Membership Card #01890 (a digital copy of the microfilmed original provided by Janet Kerschner) gives a Santa Barbara address for Courtright as of April 1917. Rather than its current location in Ojai [see <https://www.krotonainstitute.org/>], Krotona at that time was in Hollywood; see, e.g., Hadley Meares, “The Creation of Beachwood Canyon’s Theosophist ‘Dreamland,’” *Curbed Los Angeles*, May 22, 2014, 2:30 PM PDT, <https://la.curbed.com/2014/5/22/10099768/the-creation-of-beachwood-canyons-theosophist-dreamland-1>, or Alfred Willis, “A Survey of Surviving Buildings of the Krotona Colony in Hollywood,” *Architronic* (Kent State University School of Architecture and Environmental Design, Kent, Ohio), v. 8, no. 1, 1998/1999.

55. “State Normal Graduates 1917 Class,” *Santa Barbara Morning Press*, August 23, 1917, p. 3; “Woman’s Fellowship Club to Broaden Relief Work,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, August 11, 1918, sec. 4, p. 4. Santa Barbara State Normal School is a predecessor to University of California at Santa Barbara; see <https://www.ucsb.edu/about/history> if you trust the “Normal School” is the same as the “Teacher’s College,” or <https://www.alumni.ucsb.edu/about/history> if you prefer more exact detail. (Both sites were accessed last April 21, 2021.) Thank you to the UCSB Alumni Association and Office of the Registrar for their attempted assistance.

56. Courtright is literally called “prominent” or something synonymous in the following articles: “Woodman is Indorsed: Civic Leaders Heard,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, June 2, 1919, p. 7 (“Mrs. N. A. Courtright, prominent clubwoman, attorney, and vigorous worker in the Liberty loan campaigns”); “Noted Woman Lawyer Visits In San Pedro,” *San Pedro* (CA) *Pilot*, October 5, 1920, p. 8; “In the Political Arena,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, October 27, 1920, p. 16 (Courtright listed among “Prominent women of Los Angeles” supporting the campaigns of George E. Cryer and Charles S. Burnell). See also note 70.

57. Peggy Royal, “Clubs,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, July 17, 1918, sec. 1, p. 7 (Courtright was in charge of the Big Sisters’ League picnic); “Woman’s Fellowship Club to Broaden Relief Work,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, August 11, 1918, sec. 4, p. 4; “Clubwomen Prepare For Active Year Of Service, Home-Makers’ Art Is Studied,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, September 8, 1918, sec. 3, p. 3.

58. “Admitted to Bar,” *Los Angeles Evening Herald*, September 21, 1918, sec. 2, p. 1; “Yesterday’s Proceedings, District Court of Appeal, Second District,” *The Recorder* (San Francisco, CA), September 26, 1918, p. 1; District Court of Appeal, Second District, “Roll of Attorneys Admitted to Practice in the Supreme Court of the State of California,” v. 1, p. 42 (available on Ancestry). It is also possible to search for Najan Courtright on the State Bar of California website at <http://www.calbar.ca.gov>.

59. Kentucky Statutes (John D. Carroll, Preparer; Courier-Journal Job Printing Company, Louisville, KY, 1909), §98. Crack researchers at the Jefferson County Court (Lisa Pisterman) and the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives (Lance Hale) unfortunately were unable to locate any corroborating files from those remaining from that period.

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Shortridge Foltz, who had made history in 1878 by becoming the first female lawyer on the West Coast.<sup>60</sup> Later that fall, Courtright joined Mrs. Foltz and more than forty other women as the founding members of the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles.<sup>61</sup>

Courtright's extensive background in social work meant her opinion still carried weight in that field as well: When she took up the cause of finding fairly priced housing for women and girls in Los Angeles, her opinion was sought,<sup>62</sup> and when she declared divorces to be rooted in spoiled childhoods, it was syndicated in newspapers across the United States.<sup>63</sup>

She finally fulfilled her goal of entering civil service when she became the secretary of the City of Los Angeles Social Services Commission in December 1920, yet Courtright's expertise did not allow her to retain the job long: according to both the *Los Angeles Times* and *Los Angeles Evening Express*, she was removed in October 1921 under allegations she used Commission stenographers for her private practice, failed to attend meetings, and would not obtain the cooperation of other social agencies, although Courtright claimed her ousting was due to not approving two charities she "refused to recommend for indorsement" [sic]. The *Express* and the *Times* also reported the entire membership of the Commission had changed between the time Courtright was selected and her dismissal, with the *Express* further noting the election of a new mayor in the meantime.<sup>64</sup>

The Volunteers of America using her endorsement as Commission Secretary nearly a year after her remov-

### The VITAMINE CAFETERIA

Serves Natural Foods

The Life Giving Value in Nature's  
Foods are Left in—Not Cooked Out

Phone VAndike 4259

Mrs. N. A. Courtright, Owner

713 So. Figueroa Street  
Los Angeles, California

An advertisement for Courtright's Vitamine Cafeteria from the October 13, 1924 *Los Angeles School Journal*. Journal provided by the Los Angeles Public Library.

60. Barbara Allen Babcock, *Woman Lawyer: The Trials of Clara Foltz* (Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 31; Jill Norgren, *Rebels at the Bar: The Fascinating, Forgotten Stories of America's First Women Lawyers* (New York University Press, 2013), p. 110; "The First Woman Lawyer," *The Daily Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), September 6, 1878, p. 1.

61. Peggy Royal, "Bar Members' Organization Is Outlined," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, December 15, 1918, sec. 3, p. 1.

62. Gertrude M. Price, "Big Downtown Hotel For Girls Planned By Community Council; Many Firms Are Cooperating," *Los Angeles Record*, March 1, 1920, p. 6.

63. As examples: "Divorces Are Due To Spoiling Of Children," *Reno (NV) Gazette-Journal*, May 5, 1921, p. 1; "Spoiled Children Real Divorce Germ Says Expert; Cure Starts at Cradle," *The Columbus (GA) Ledger*, May 11, 1921, p. 7; "Spoiled Children Real Divorce Germ Says Expert," *Santa Cruz (CA) Evening News*, May 11, 1921, p. 5; "Spoiled Children Cause For Divorce," *Perth Amboy (NJ) Evening News*, May 13, 1921, p. 2; "Expert Says Spoiled Child Is Real Divorce Germ," *Sacramento Star*, May 13, 1921, p. 9; "Spoiled Children Real Divorce Germ," *The Brooklyn (NY) Citizen*, May 23, 1921, p. 7; "Spoiled Children [sic] Real Divorce Germ, Says Expert; Cure Starts At Cradle," *Pittsburg(h) Press*, May 24, 1921, p. 6; "Spoiled Child Put On Carpet," *Paducah (KY) News-Democrat*, June 9, 1921, p. 8; "Children Real Divorce Germ Says Expert" [sic], *The Journal and Courier* (Lafayette, IN), June 30, 1921, p. 11. (Incidentally, in the 1920 Census, Najan A. Courtright is listed as divorced [United States Census, Precinct 304, Los Angeles Township, Los Angeles City, Los Angeles County, California, p. 15B, January 16, 1920].)

64. "Mrs. Courtwright [sic] Will Make Fight To Retain Office," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, November 4, 1921, pp. 3, 6; "Social Service Body Ousts Its Secretary," *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 1921, pt. 1, p. 19; *Los Angeles Times* Staff, "Pen Points," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1921, pt. 2, p. 4; "Hearing Demanded by Dismissed Secretary," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, November 9, 1921, p. 21; "Demands Probe On Being Ousted," *Los Angeles Record*, November 9, 1921, p. 2; "Woman Demands Hearing In Social Row," *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 1921, pt. 2, p. 1; "Ouster Of Secretary Approved," *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1922, pt. 1, p. 6; "Mayor Orders Social Service Ouster Airing," *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 1922, pt. 2, p. 1; "Mrs. N.A. Courtright's Dismissal Is Probed," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, January 22, 1922, p. 3; "Dismissal of Woman Upheld by Commission," *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1922, pt. 1, p. 22. The turnover of membership of the Board of Social Services Commissioners can be confirmed at <https://cityclerk.lacity.org/chronola/> and searching the tab for Appointed Officials under the June 7, 1921 election (link functional as of April 16, 2022).

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al notwithstanding,<sup>65</sup> the charges brought a halt to her social cachet,<sup>66</sup> although her career as a lawyer survived.<sup>67</sup>

Courtright soon returned to serving the people of Los Angeles, opening The Vitamine Cafeteria in 1922. A restaurant offering “unfired” foods may seem stereotypically fitting for Los Angeles today, yet then perhaps the market was not quite ready, as it closed by 1926.<sup>68</sup> Sometime while still in business, Courtright was joined by Margaret F. Chase, her assistant from the Children’s Detention Home back in Louisville.<sup>69</sup>

In a December 1929 article, the *Oceanside*

*Blade-Tribune* reprinted a letter Courtright sent to the president of the local beautification club, crediting the “prominent lawyer” with the suggestion of the adopted (former) name of the city’s first park, Parnassus.<sup>70</sup> The same month also saw Courtright elected to the executive committee of the California Progressives, a position she would retain at least into 1931.<sup>71</sup> Courtright was also selected as a founding secretary of two talent unions: the Musical Artists’ Guild of America and the Singers’ Guild of America.<sup>72</sup>

Despite her newfound roles, Courtright moved again, this time to Panama.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, in Chica-

65. E.g., “The Volunteers of America Ask for Your Help,” *Santa Ana* (CA) *Register*, August 10, 1922, p. 10; “The Volunteers of America Merit Your Consideration,” *The Orange County Plain Dealer* (Anaheim, CA), September 25, 1922, p. 2. (Of note is that the only ads found through Newspapers.com were from Orange County newspapers. Perhaps the relative distance from Los Angeles made her removal from office and/or the circumstances less of a factor.)

66. It is admittedly difficult to definitively quantify social prominence—let alone a century later—for a myriad of reasons, but in Newspapers.com searches between Fall 2020 and Summer 2021, Courtright’s name appeared at least three times in some Southern California newspaper between 1916 until 1921. After her dismissal was upheld in May 1922, with the exception of the abovementioned advertising for Volunteers of America and lectures given on the behalf of the Get Acquainted Society in 1927, the next time her name appeared multiple times within a year period was between December 1929 and October 1930.

67. Courtright’s residential listing (as Najan A.) in the Los Angeles City Directory Company’s *Los Angeles City Directory* can be found on the following pages: 1921, p. 818; 1922, p. 835; 1923, pp. 928; 1924, p. 748; 1925, p. 686; 1926, p. 698; 1927, p. 660; 1928, p. 698; 1929, p. 683; 1930, p. 687; 1931, p. 497. In both 1921 and 1922, she was listed as the Social Services Commission executive secretary and as an attorney-at-law every year from 1921 to 1926, except for some reason in 1922. From 1927 to 1931, she was instead listed as a lawyer, which likely did make a difference, as ‘attorney-at-law’ indicates a lawyer who is able to represent clients in court. (Directories sourced from the City of Los Angeles Public Library website.)

68. E.g., ‘Suzanne,’ “Suzanne Suggests,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, July 22, 1922, p. 4 (An advertisement section with a promotional blurb of the cafeteria: “Unfired foods, from soup to nuts, is the order at the VITAMINE CAFETERIA.” [Capitals in original.]); “Vital Food Means Health!” *Los Angeles Times Illustrated Magazine*, June 3, 1923, p. 35 (Another ad for the eatery); “The VITAMINE CAFETERIA Serves Natural Foods,” *Los Angeles School Journal* (Principals’ Club, High School Teachers Association and High School Principals Association, Los Angeles, California), v. VIII, no. 6, October 13, 1924, p. 33 (one of a number of ads by the former teacher in a teacher’s periodical; thanks to Kelly Wallace of the Los Angeles Public Library); “Miscellaneous—For Sale: Auction,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1926, pt. 2, p. 20 (A classified ad for the sale of restaurant equipment at the same address as the cafeteria). An example of some of the foods served is mentioned in Harry Ellington Brook, “Care of the Body: A Raw Food Dinner,” *Los Angeles Times Illustrated Magazine*, August 13, 1922, p. 25. An article that placed Courtright and her cafeteria at the same address is “No Letup In Fight For ‘Tuffy,’” *Los Angeles Record*, July 3, 1924, p. 14.

69. United States Census, Supervisor’s District 5, Enumeration District 104, Fifth Ward, Louisville, Jefferson County Kentucky, April 15, 1910, p. 2; *Los Angeles City Directory 1927* (Los Angeles City Directory Company), p. 596 (Margaret [Margt] F. Chase’s work address is 713 S. Figueroa, the same as that of the [former?] Vitamine Cafeteria, and her home address was 2300 Gower, the same as Courtright’s [p. 660]); United States Census, Assembly District 55, Los Angeles City, Los Angeles County, California, p. 1B, April 2, 1930 (Both Courtright and Chase live at the same address, and Courtright is listed as widowed); Theosophical Society Member Ledger Cards Microfilm Roll 2, #00758 (Margaret F. Chase living at 2300 N. Gower on August 18, 1924 according to a handwritten entry). For any distant family of Chase who might be reading this article, I would be doing you an immense and possibly unforgivable disservice by not directing you to the following: “Woman, 77, Wins Tangle With P.E. Car,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 24, 1945, pt. 1, p. 2.

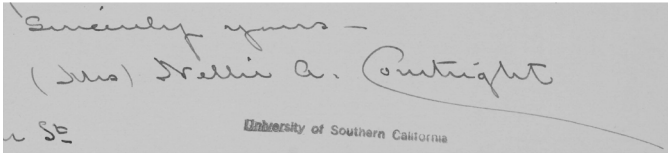
70. “Public Names The Proposed City Park Parnassus,” *Oceanside* (CA) *Blade-Tribune*, December 21, 1929, p. 4. The park is now named for fallen World War II veteran John “Buddy” Todd; see <https://www.ci.oceanside.ca.us/gov/ns/parks/amenities/parks.asp#24> (Last checked November 27, 2021; also compare the story of the naming of the park to the *Blade-Tribune* article.)

71. “Progressives Swat Brooks Appointment,” *Los Angeles Record*, December 18, 1929, pp. 1A–2A (list of members on 2A); “Progressives O.K. Council Recalls,” *Los Angeles Record*, January 8, 1930, p. 2A (her name is misspelled “Cortright,” but she is referred to as with “Mrs.”); “Parker Says He Is Anti-Porter,” *Los Angeles Record*, December 17, 1930, p. 3. Although Courtright is never referred to by her first name, she had been a registered Progressive; e.g., Index To Register Of Voters, Los Angeles City Precinct No. 439, Los Angeles County, California, 1916.

72. “Musicians Pick Name, Officers,” *Hollywood Daily Citizen*, August 21, 1930, p. 5; “Singers In New Union Move Here,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 14, 1930, pt. 2, p. 9; “Singers’ Guild Organized by Local Talent,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1931, pt. 3, p. 21.

73. “Bright Sayings,” *New York Daily (Sunday) News*, June 5, 1932, p. 50 (or Second Edition, p. 20); Letter from Nellie A. Courtright to Hamlin Garland, September 23, 1935, pp. 1–2 (mentions she “was in the Canal Zone for approximately three years” and lived there “as a result of nervous

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**Courtright's signature as Nellie A. Courtright from her September 23, 1935 letter to Hamlin Garland (credit to the University of Southern California Digital Library). Despite living in Southern California for twenty-five years, she was in Cairo, Illinois at that time.**

go, some three decades after she last worked there, a neighborhood park was dedicated to “the mother of playgrounds.” The honor may have been even greater than the organizers intended, as the park was dedicated on the day before Courtright’s 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday.<sup>74</sup>

In the latter half of 1934, Courtright suffered a medical condition consistent with the symptoms of a stroke. Arrangements were made for her to return to Cairo to convalesce in the home of youngest sister Corena and her husband.<sup>75</sup>

By the end of 1937, the “world traveler” had gotten back on her feet and relocated to Fort Myers, Florida, where she had “just about decided to hang up her hat for ‘good and all.’”<sup>76</sup> Yet by 1940, Courtright returned to Los Angeles, and, if the voting registries are any indication, back to work.<sup>77</sup>

Courtright lived the rest of her days in Southern California. In the winter of 1948-1949, Nellie suffered another stroke, but that one ultimately proved fatal, and she passed away in Los Angeles General County Hospital on March 21, 1949.<sup>78</sup>

### CRITIQUES OF COURTRIGHT

It would be disingenuous for me to ignore the two most negative sources on Courtright, both regarding her tenure as superintendent at the Olcott Panchama Free Schools, even if these sources mention Courtright only in passing.

In *The White Buddhist*, Stephen Prothero accuses Henry Steel Olcott of implementing “racial condescension and [a] socially reactionary reading of karma” in the Panchama Schools that he felt “Superintendent Courtwright [sic] assented to” under her administration.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Herman de Tollenaere in *The Politics of Divine Wisdom* believed Courtright upheld and/or espoused “paternalistic ideas” in the schools.<sup>80</sup>

The source both authors cite is an article in *The Theosophist* which they directly attribute to Courtwright.<sup>81</sup> Rather, *The Theosophist* reprinted a review

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prostration”) (available from the University of Southern California Digital Library Hamlin Garland Collection); Theosophical Society Member Ledger Cards Microfilm Roll 2, #01889 (has Courtright with a mailing address in Ancon, Canal Zone as of August 4, 1933).

74. “Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Chicago, Illinois,” July 28, 1932, p. 2801 (an order for a water fountain to be installed in front of the playground); “Wicker Park Opens Playground,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 11, 1932, pt. 7, p. 3.

75. List of United States Citizens, S.S. Cefalu, Sailing from Cristobal, C.Z., October 10, 1934, Arriving at Port of New Orleans, LA, October 15, 1934 (Note the address given in the manifest matches the one at the bottom of the Garland letter); Letter from Nellie A. Courtright to Hamlin Garland, September 23, 1935, p. 2 (She “had a serious breakdown when [she] lost the power of speech” and that “there [was] still a clot that prevents a ready conversation” at the time of the letter. Symptoms of a stroke available at, e.g., Mayo Clinic, “Stroke: Symptoms and Causes,” <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/stroke/symptoms-causes/syc-20350113>).

76. “World Traveler Picks Fort Myers,” *Fort Myers (FL) News-Press*, December 28, 1937, p. 1.

77. United States Census, Fifth Ward, Block 26, Los Angeles City, Los Angeles County, California, April 20, 1940, p. 15A (The widowed Courtwright is recorded without an occupation, and, notably, as Nellie); Index To Register Of Voters, Los Angeles City Precinct No. 571, Los Angeles County, California, 1940 (at the same address as the census); Index To Register Of Voters, Los Angeles City Precinct No. 1063, Los Angeles County, California, 1942; Index To Register Of Voters, Los Angeles City Precinct No. 1063, Los Angeles County, California, 1944. (All the above voter registers list Mrs. Courtright as Najan and as an attorney.) Theosophical Society Member Ledger Cards Microfilm Roll 2, #01889 gives a Los Angeles address for Courtwright as early as February 17, 1939, although she does not appear in the 1939 Los Angeles City Directory Company’s *Directory* (p. 504). No information is available from Theosophical Society member cards after 1939.

78. Index To Register Of Voters, Glendale City Precinct No. 105, Los Angeles County, California, 1946; Index To Register Of Voters, Los Angeles City Precinct No. 750, Los Angeles County, California, 1948; Certificate of Death, Nell A. Courtright, March 22, 1949 (informational certificate prepared by the County of Los Angeles Clerk, September 17, 2020). Her cause of death was given as cerebral thrombosis and bronchopneumonia. There are two notable discrepancies: Courtright’s birthdate is given as September 11, 1870 (rather than 1869) and she was listed as a housewife rather than an attorney (somewhat understandable, as she practiced as Najan, not Nell or Nellie); however, her parents are Joseph Warren Morhead [sic] and Amanda Bear. The 1946 and 1948 Registers do not list occupations. The 1948 Register gives her name as Nell.

79. Stephen Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 138-139.

80. Herman A.O. de Tollenaere, *The Politics of Divine Wisdom: Theosophy and Labour, National and Women’s Movements in Indonesia and South Asia, 1875-1947* (Uitgeverij Katholieke Universiteit, Nijmegen, Netherlands, 1996), p. 133.

81. “Instruction in the ‘Olcott Panchama Free Schools,’” *The Theosophist*, v. 26, no. 3, March 1905, pp. 383-384 (“A recent issue of the *Friend of India*, has the following notice of Mrs. Courtwright’s pamphlet which was republished from her article that first appeared in the *Madras Mail* and subsequently in the *Indian Journal of Education*...”). De Tollenaere miscites *The Theosophist* as sourcing directly from the *Madras Mail* (“N.A. Courtright,

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published in *The Friend of India* publicizing “How We Teach the Pariahs,” and as such were not her own words, but the secondhand interpretation of Courtright’s article by the author of *The Friend of India* piece.<sup>82</sup>

A simple, and honestly simplistic rebuttal to claims Courtright was operating under any form of bigotry is to restate the reason she was initially asked to write “How We Teach The Pariahs”: in the all-caste Government Examinations of 1904, ninety-five percent of the Olcott School students passed, compared to the collective pass rate in Madras of seventy-five percent.<sup>83</sup> (It should be said de Tollaenere did in fact mention the students’ success within his footnote, albeit in response to Courtright’s alleged beliefs.)

An example with somewhat more nuance, however, is the expansion of the Olcott Schools to a fifth community under Courtright’s oversight in 1906. The first four schools were conducted in Tamil, as it was the language of the students in those locations. In the school opened in Krishnampet, however, Courtright wrote they were “compelled to teach in Telugu also” as it was “the predominating language spoken” in the village, distinguishing between the two sub-castes the school served. Separate constructions were erected for instruction in Tamil and Telugu, and the majority of teachers hired spoke both languages.<sup>84</sup>

While there is certainly room to further discuss the attitude she may or may not have had toward the Dalit students—and doing so would be an article unto itself—one should also consider evidence of her positive and supportive relationships with other non-white students.

In the August 1918 *Los Angeles Times* feature discussing her career, it was reported that in her work



Even after she took on a new career and advanced in age, Mrs. Courtright kept a place in her heart for children. Courtesy *New York Daily News*.

in Chicago, Courtright “came into contact with 20 nationalities and three distinct races.”<sup>85</sup> While the particular origins of Courtright’s charges would be impossible to verify, there is evidence elsewhere for the multitude of races.

After Courtright founded the night and weekend industrial arts school in Chicago, the *Chicago Tribune* stated that “the Jew, the Gentile, the Catholic, the Protestant, even [a native of] the far Pacific finds a glad welcome. There are no social lines, no question of birth. All meet together equally in a temple for mutual improvement.”<sup>86</sup> When a young Black student by the name of Charles Warren proved to have talent as a playwright, actor, and director, Courtright provided encouragement and arranged

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superintendent of the Olcott Panchama Free Schools wrote in the *Madras Mail*, as quoted *TT* [*The Theosophist*], Mar. 1905, 383–4. “Mrs. Courtright begins by adopting the biological standpoint...”

82. While the review directly sourced from *The Friend of India* has proved elusive (immense gratitude to Alikei Arkomani at the British Library for her attempts at finding it), one found under “By The Way,” *The Civil & Military Gazette* (Lahore, [now Pakistan]), v. XXIX, no. 9608 (New Series), February 3, 1905, p. 5 eliminated details about the class bazaar (and, to be technical, includes “interesting” in describing Courtright’s published account), but is otherwise identical to the review quoted in *The Theosophist* above. Also note a comparable though distinguishable review in “How We Teach the Pariah, By Mrs. N.A. Courtright,” *The Indian Spectator*, v. XXIV, no. 38, September 22, 1906, p. 892.

83. N.A. Courtright, “How We Teach the Pariahs,” *The Madras Weekly Mail*, v. LVIV, no. 20, November 17, 1904, p. 522, col. 1; “How To Teach The Pariah?,” *The Indian Journal of Education* (V. Kalyanarama Iyer & Co, Madras, India), October–December 1904, pp. 616–623 (this is materially identical to the previous); N.A. Courtright, “Report of the Olcott Panchama Free Schools,” *General Report of the Thirtieth Anniversary and Convention of The Theosophical Society*, December 27–28, 1905, p. 67; N.A. Courtright, *How We Teach The Pariah* [sic], (Thompson and Co., Madras, India, July 1906), p. 3.

84. N.A. Courtright, “The Fifth Panchama School,” *The Theosophist*, v. 27, no. 9, June 1906, pp. 692–694; N.A. Courtright, “Report of the Olcott Panchama Free Schools,” *General Report of the Thirty-First Anniversary and Convention of the Theosophical Society*, December 29–30, 1906, pp. 70–71.

85. “Woman’s Fellowship Club to Broaden Relief Work,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, August 11, 1918, sec. 4, p. 4.

86. “Devotes Life To Pupils,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1900, p. 41 (If you’re interested in the *exact* quote, please find it in the newspaper itself).

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for venues to stage his performances.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, in a letter penned to a teachers' magazine, Courtright wrote of another Black student in the after-hours school: "I find that graduate pupils from this school hold the evening classes better than more experienced teachers. I have in mind a young colored lad, now in first year in the English high and manual school, who has classes here. The boys respect and obey him better than other teachers."<sup>88</sup>

Courtright was also notably agreeably disposed to assisting a young African-American girl who traveled up to Quincy during her time there,<sup>89</sup> and although it could be argued the Detention Home in Louisville housing children of various ethnicities under one roof was simply a matter of necessity, revealing that she conducted the home "as a 'home' rather than as a 'public institution'" or treating multiracial children as a single family likely was not.<sup>90</sup>

Few, if any persons from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century would likely satisfy modern cultural progressive sensibilities. Yet Courtright had not only been repeatedly reported – in different locations – to be quite forward-thinking in relations with people of other races, but on multiple occasions went out of her way to support persons of different ethnicities at a time when, unlike today, there was little if any positive social stature to be earned by either. Further, her implementation of educational techniques specific to local culture and even making adjustments for specific villages suggest that she cared enough about the children under her supervision to ensure they were in as familiar and comfortable of a learning environment as possible, whatever their backgrounds. Courtright certainly had flaws, but there is clearly much more depth to and thoughtfulness in her teaching and social service career than being merely someone hired to enforce

and reinforce paternalistic, racially condescending curricula onto desperately poor Indian children.

### WHY NELLIE?

My research began with the intention to clarify who was the earliest female graduate of the law school. The Law Department portion of the 1911 university yearbook dedicated an entire page and half the senior class history to Mrs. Courtright being the first, yet her name did not appear among the list of graduates in the back of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century departmental catalogs. Besides the Board of Trustees minutes (which are missing for that year) and student records (which are no longer extant and could have been lost in any number of moves or floods within thirty years afterward, let alone until now), the graduate list would seem to be about the most definitive source available as they were updated with the new class each year;<sup>91</sup> however a similar investigation brought the completeness of those graduate rosters into question.<sup>92</sup>

Fortunately, her case was able to be resolved. An early matriculation book in a collection of assorted School of Law materials in our University Archives listed Courtright as a "double course" student, yet its records (naturally) ended in 1911 with no mention of her graduation status. The successive and separately filed volume, however, included a note from November 20, 1912 recognizing the receipt of a letter from Courtright's professor of Constitutional Law confirming she passed her exam, and that in light of her passing marks in all her other exams, the faculty of the Law Department recommended Courtright for her degree retroactive to the previous year.

With her graduation status at last settled, a sec-

87. "Plans Farm Vacation School," *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1900, p. 5; "Children Given An Outing," *The Inter-Ocean*, May 3, 1900, p. 14; "Child Stars In Eclipse," *Chicago Tribune*, May 11, 1901, p. 3 (or "Child Stars In Eclipse," *The St. Paul (MN) Globe*, May 12, 1901, p. 8, but this version is not completely identical to the former). Thanks to Morag Walsh of the Chicago Public Library in my attempts to find mention of the plays in the annuals of the women's clubs mentioned as hosts.

88. "The School and the Community," *The School Journal* (E.L. Kellogg & Co.), April 28, 1900, v. LX, no. 17, p. 453.

89. "The Needs of Quincy," *Quincy (IL) Daily Herald*, December 7, 1908, p. 2.

90. United States Census, Supervisor's District 5, Enumeration District 104, Fifth Ward, Louisville, Jefferson County Kentucky, April 15, 1910, pp. 2-3 (Courtright, her two assistants, and the children of the home are listed); "Detention Home of the Louisville Juvenile Court," *Lexington Herald*, August 28, 1910, p. 4.

91. Well, almost every year until the last such list in 1929. However, those for the 1910–1911 to 1912–1913 school years all did: *Law Department of the University of Louisville 1910–11* (Morton-Atwood Printing Company, Louisville, Kentucky, 1910), pp. 23–39; *Law Department of the University of Louisville 1911–12* (John P. Morton & Company, Louisville, Kentucky, 1911), pp. 23–39; *Law Department of the University of Louisville 1912–13* (John P. Morton & Company, Louisville, Kentucky, 1912), pp. 23–40. That reason may also be why Courtright is not credited as the first in some sources for School of Law or University history—the three female graduates from 1914 are found in every successive School of Law Announcements alumni list.

92. Shameless plug warning: Marcus Walker, "The Mystery of Missing Marvin: Determining the Alumni Status of a Century-Old Student," *Unbound: A Review of Legal History and Rare Books*, Summer/Fall 2020, v. 12, no. 1, pp. 80–90.

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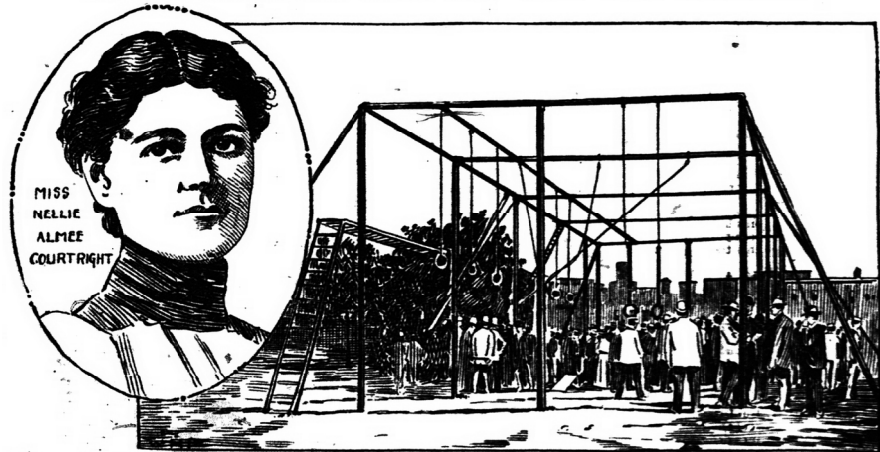
ond issue had become apparent. Even with the advantage of digital databases, much of Courtright's life before her work in Chicago and after leaving Louisville remained a mystery. This is my attempt to rectify that, not just for the School of Law and the University of Louisville, but for her distant family and anyone else who may find her life and career worth learning about.

Nellie Courtright believed the failure of education was its inability to hold children's attention;<sup>93</sup> hence she took the time to get to know the young people she oversaw, creating activities that retained their interests, and encouraged them in the skills they had.

At an age many people currently begin counting the months toward retirement, Courtright started a successful second career as a lawyer, becoming an inaugural member of the Women's Lawyers Association of Los Angeles and trusted enough to be part of the founding of two trade unions. She even began a third occupation that, had it been a few decades later, may have found more success.

Indeed, The Vitamine Cafeteria may be the best allegory of all for Courtright—ahead of her time. She had the freedom to travel to pursue employ-

MRS. COURTRIGHT'S OPEN AIR "GYM" FOR CHILDREN.



A sketch of Mrs. Courtright along with her "open air gym" from the June 18, 1899 *Chicago Times-Herald* (sec. 3, p. 7). The microfilm of this issue is available at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

ment, follow her religious beliefs, and further her education<sup>94</sup> when many would have expected her to settle into (or for) marriage. Likewise, Courtright also chose to support and nurture children of various and multiple ethnicities at a time when choosing to be the bigot that later critics superficially portrayed her as would have been very much more than acceptable.

Students in the University of Louisville Law Department in 1911 called Mrs. Courtright "the best ever,"<sup>95</sup> and while there may be more competition for the title now, both her extended birth and law school families can take immense pride in the accomplishments and life of Nellie—and Najan—Courtright.



**Marcus Walker is currently the Law School Archivist at the University of Louisville Law Library. One of the joys of his research is finding stories to share with others. He hopes you enjoy this one and invites you to read others at <https://works.bepress.com/marcus-walker>. He would also like to thank Kyna Herzinger, Tom Owen, and Delinda Buie for their help in locating materials in the depths of the University Archives.**

93. E.g., "New Methods in Public Schools," *Child-Garden*, October 1899, v. 7, no. 11, p. 394, col. 2; "Kindergarten Papers: I—Reading," *Indian Education: A Monthly Record* (Longmans, Green & Co., Bombay [Mumbai], India); v. 2, no. 12, July 1904, p. 608; "Kindergarten Papers: IV—Hand Work," *Indian Education: A Monthly Record*, v. 3, no. 3, October 1904, p. 115.

94. Beside the examples mentioned above, there are two additional accounts of education I could not confirm beyond the single source each appeared, neither with dates: Her *Who's Who In Louisville* profile (first reference in note 2) listed the J. Liberty Tadd School in Philadelphia among her education, and she included "special tutoring in London, England" on her data form from Stout Institute (note 41). The J. Liberty Tadd School, more properly known as the Public School of Industrial Art—which looks to be a different institution than the Philadelphia Museum [and] School of Industrial Art—closed in 1916 (David W. Baker, "J. Liberty Tadd, Who Are You?," *Studies in Art Education*, v. 26, no. 2, p. 84), and relatively little about the school, let alone its graduates, is still extant. Yet the school did have teachers' courses (e.g., John Trevor Custis, "The Public Schools of Philadelphia: Historical, Biographical, Statistical (Burk & McFetridge, Philadelphia, PA, 1897), pp. 211, 213), so there is a possibility she did attend. (Thanks to Marija Gudauskas and Sarah Mitchell at the Free Public Library of Philadelphia and Jill Riddick at the School District of Philadelphia for their help.) Yet as difficult as that may have been, "special tutoring in London" was essentially too vague to pursue. There was in fact a Froebel Educational Institute in London at the time, but there was no Nellie Courtright or Morehead in their records. (Thanks to Kornelia Cepok of the University of Roehampton Special Collections and Archives.)

95. *The Colonel* 1911, p. 33.