

**Ethel Hamilton Hanson (1882-1920)** was a popular member of society circles and active in educational, political, and charitable work in the community. She began her adult life teaching math, first in Wisconsin and then later at Bloomington High School. At the age of 28, she married Frank Hanson, and while she left behind her teaching career, marriage did not stop her from continuing to be active in social and civic activities—such as campaigning for Republican candidate Charles Evans Hughes during the election of 1916. When the U.S. entered World War I, Hanson became an “ardent war worker,” working tirelessly to help organize the Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense in McLean County. The local Council of Defense did much good for the war effort in the ways of fundraising and relief work. As a “super patriot” organization, the Council also fostered an environment of suspicion and persecution that forced a large thriving German-American community into the shadows, forbidding native Germans and those of German descent from speaking or printing in their native language and convincing local school boards to remove the German language from class curriculums.

Ethel Rowena Hamilton was born on September 27, 1882 in Bloomington, IL. She was one of two children born to Franklin and Emma (Cone) Hamilton.<sup>1</sup> Ethel had a younger brother named Clair, who was born on December 5, 1883.<sup>2</sup> Around the time that Ethel was born, the family was living at 710 E. Olive Street. About two years later, the family moved to a new home located at 701 East Douglas Street.<sup>3</sup>

Hanson’s father Frank was born in Ohio in 1852. His family came to Illinois when he was about a year old, setting first near Varna, IL and then the town of Wenona in 1866. He attended Illinois Wesleyan University and afterwards Adrian College in Michigan. After graduating from Adrian College in 1882, he came to Bloomington and began studying law in the firm of Rowell and Hamilton, in which his brother Erskine Hamilton was a partner.<sup>4</sup> By 1885, Frank had completed his studies and opened his own law office at 221 N. Main Street in downtown Bloomington.<sup>5</sup> He practiced law for many years, eventually entering politics. He was elected to the Illinois state legislature as a state representative in 1886, serving one two-year term.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Ethel’s uncle, John Hamilton, was Governor of Illinois until 1885 when Richard Oglesby, winner of the 1884 election, was inaugurated. Previously he served as an Illinois State Senator from 1876 to 1881, and Lieutenant Governor of Illinois from 1881 to 1883.<sup>7</sup>

When Ethel was only five years old, her mother Emma passed away after a short illness on March 9, 1888. Emma had been visiting her husband Frank’s sister in Chicago at the time of her death. According to her obituary, she had been receiving treatment for an undisclosed ailment, though “it was not [considered] to be dangerous.”<sup>8</sup> Her body was brought back to Bloomington for burial at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Death Claims F.Y. Hamilton,” *The Pantagraph*, November 30, 1922, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob Louis Hasbrouck. *History of McLean County, Illinois*. (Topeka: Historical Publishing Co., 1924) 444.

<sup>3</sup> Gould’s Bloomington Street Directory, 1882-1883, 75; *W.F. Curtis & Co.’s Bloomington Directory*. (Bloomington: The Leader Publishing Co., 1886) 190.

<sup>4</sup> Hasbrouck, 445; *Gould’s Bloomington Street Directory, 1882-1883*, 75.

<sup>5</sup> *Chas. O Ebel & Co.’s Bloomington City Directory*. (Terre Haute: Chas O. Ebel & Co., 1885) 197.

<sup>6</sup> Hasbrouck, 445.

<sup>7</sup> *Portrait and Biographical Album of McLean County, Illinois*. (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1887) 179-180.

<sup>8</sup> “Death of Mrs. Frank Hamilton,” *The Pantagraph*, March 10 1888, 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Ethel's father went on to marry two more times. Two years after Emma's death, Frank married Olive Hudson in July of 1890.<sup>10</sup> Frank and Olive were married for about 25 years (having no children of their own) before she passed away after a year-long illness on September 29, 1915.<sup>11</sup> About a year later, Frank married for a third and final time to widow Anna Morrison at the end of October 1916.<sup>12</sup> Their marriage lasted less than four years when Anna passed away from pneumonia on February 6, 1920. Anna had contracted influenza less than a week prior, which turned into pneumonia the day before her death.<sup>13</sup>

Other than her parentage, little is known about Ethel's early life. She was educated in Bloomington schools before attending Northfield Seminary in Mount Hermon, Massachusetts. Northfield Seminary was founded in 1879 by evangelist Dwight Moody to educate women and prepare them for missionary work and further study.<sup>14</sup> In about 1893 the family moved to a new home located at 410 E. Walnut Street in Bloomington. This remained the Hamilton family home until 1915.<sup>15</sup>

After completing her studies at the seminary, Ethel attended Illinois State Normal University (now Illinois State University) where she completed the standard two-year course of study required for graduation. The standard program required 25 credits for graduation over the course of six regular terms of twelve weeks and one summer term of six weeks. Courses included in this program were pedagogy, practice teaching, mathematics, biological science, Latin, German, graphic art, and history. Ethel most likely took additional elective courses since the focus of her teaching was in the field of mathematics. Those courses would have included advanced mathematics.<sup>16</sup> Her graduating theme was "Discipline in the High School," and commencement exercises were held on June 5, 1902. *The Pantagraph* reported that the graduating class that year was comprised of 82 students, "the largest number that has ever passed out from the institution at any one time before." Illinois Governor Richard Yates presented the diplomas to the graduates and gave a closing address at the end of the ceremony.<sup>17</sup>

After graduation, Ethel began her teaching career in Arcola, IL, teaching Latin and math at the high school during the 1902-1903 school year.<sup>18</sup> After teaching just this one year, Ethel moved to Wisconsin and began teaching mathematics at the high school in Marinette. She taught there from 1903 until 1907.<sup>19</sup> It was also reported in the engagement announcement for her and her future husband Frank Hanson, that she attended and graduated from the University of

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<sup>10</sup> "Items," *The Pantagraph*, July 28, 1890, 4

<sup>11</sup> "Reaper Claims Mrs. F.Y. Hamilton," *The Pantagraph*, September 30, 1915, 7.

<sup>12</sup> "Mrs. Morrison to Wed F. Y. Hamilton," *The Pantagraph*, October 4, 1916, 7

<sup>13</sup> "Mrs. F.Y. Hamilton Died This Morning," *The Pantagraph*, February 6, 1920, 6.

<sup>14</sup> National Park Service "Historic American Landscapes Survey, Northfield Campus (Northfield Seminary for Young Ladies, Northfield School for Girls, and Northfield Mount Hermon School)," Date Accessed September 12, 2017, <http://cdn.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/ma/ma1800/ma1831/data/ma1831data.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> *Chas. O Ebel & Co.'s Bloomington City Directory*. (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1893), 222; Chas M. Samson, compiler, *Bloomington, Illinois City Directory, 1915*. (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1915), 297.

<sup>16</sup> The Illinois State Normal University, *The Normal School Quarterly Containing the Annual Catalog, Course of Study and Announcements for 1901-1902*, (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Co., 1902) 5-21, 48, 81.

<sup>17</sup> David Felmley, *Semi-Centennial History of the Illinois State Normal University 1857-1907* (Normal, IL: Illinois State Normal University, 1907), 331; "The Day We Graduate: Normal Classes Finish Work," *The Pantagraph*, June 6, 1902, 3

<sup>18</sup> Felmley, 331; "Notes," *The Pantagraph*, August 26, 1902, 3

<sup>19</sup> Felmley, 331.

Wisconsin in Madison.<sup>20</sup> While she was living and teaching in Wisconsin, it appears that she visited her parents in Bloomington on at least one occasion, coming home to stay with them for the holidays in December of 1907.<sup>21</sup>

Before the end of the 1907-08 school year, it was announced in May 1908 that Ethel would begin teaching at Bloomington High School, located at the corner of Prairie and Monroe Streets. She moved back in with her parents on East Walnut Street.<sup>22</sup> When she began teaching mathematics at the high school that fall, her annual salary was \$800 (which today would be about \$21,000).<sup>23</sup> The following year, her annual salary was listed as \$900.<sup>24</sup>

During her two-year teaching career at BHS, Hanson attended the State Music Teachers Convention and Festival in Decatur, IL.<sup>25</sup> She also became a “strenuous” volunteer worker for the Young Women’s Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.). The Y.W.C.A. had recently been founded in Bloomington in 1908 and opened its doors in rented quarters at 111-113 East Monroe Street in downtown Bloomington.<sup>26</sup> She participated in a variety of Y.W.C.A. activities that included serving as toastmistress at a banquet held for Mrs. H.J. Belschner, retiring president of the association. The banquet was held on Friday evening, January 29, 1909. It was reported that 130 women braved the worst snowstorm of that winter to take part in the evening’s activities. After the attendees enjoyed supper, Hanson “arose and assumed the duties of toastmistress.” *The Pantagraph* reported “she made a capital speaker... and her remarks brought much applause, at intervals.”<sup>27</sup> Hanson was also listed as teaching classes through the Y.W.C.A. from 1908-09. During that first year, the Y.W.C.A. offered a variety of classes in topics such as shirtwaist and skirt making, millinery, grammar, arithmetic, fiction, and choral. Hanson and six other teachers were credited to have “liberally given of their time, without remuneration” during that first year.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to volunteering her services to the Y.W.C.A., Hanson also participated in several social events held by the association. One such event was an “illustrated magazine party” where participants acted out scenes from a current magazine without saying a word. During the performance, Hanson brought to life the cover from the current issue of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, representing a girl dressed in violet carrying a big bunch of flowers.<sup>29</sup> She also participated in a mock wedding during a Japanese garden party held at the Y.W.C.A on the evening of April 1, 1910.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “Miss Ethel Hamilton to Wed F.O. Hanson,” *The Pantagraph*, July 28, 1910, 10.

<sup>21</sup> “Here For Holidays,” *The Pantagraph*, December 30, 1907, 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Bloomington and Normal City Directory, 1909*. (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1909), 292.

<sup>23</sup> “Teachers Named for the City Schools,” *The Pantagraph*, May 5, 1908, 5; Consumer Price Index, <http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2016.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> “City Teachers Elected,” *The Pantagraph*, May 4, 1909, 3.

<sup>25</sup> “State Music Teachers Meet,” *The Pantagraph*, May 11, 1909, 7.

<sup>26</sup> “Hamilton-Hanson Wedding This Evening,” *The Pantagraph*, October 15, 1910, 10; “Y’ it Matters: YWCA of McLean County turns 100,” *The Pantagraph*, September 22, 2008, D2; “YWCA fun facts and historical moments,” *Our Voice*, Fall 2008, 3.

<sup>27</sup> “Brilliant Gathering at the Y.W.C.A.,” *The Pantagraph*, January 30, 1909, 6.

<sup>28</sup> “First Year of the Y.W.C.A. a Great Success,” *The Pantagraph*, June 16, 1909, 7

<sup>29</sup> “Y.W.C.A. Girls Entertain Cleverly,” *The Pantagraph*, March 30, 1910, 6.

<sup>30</sup> “Mock Wedding at Japanese Party,” *The Pantagraph*, April 2, 1910, 13.

At seven o'clock in the evening on Saturday, October 15, 1910, Ethel Hamilton married Frank O. Hanson at her parent's home. Several social functions were held in honor of the young couple the week before the wedding including a luncheon given by two of the bridesmaids, Lena Noble and Jeanette Johnson, a stag party given for the groom by two of his groomsmen, Will and Amos Johnson; and a bridal shower during which Ethel received "many beautiful and unusual gifts to furnish her new home."<sup>31</sup> *The Pantagraph* dubbed the couple's wedding "the leading society event of the week." After the wedding, the couple made their home at 401 W. Irving Avenue in Normal.<sup>32</sup> They continued to live at this address until about 1915, by which time they had moved to a home at 613 Normal Avenue in Normal.<sup>33</sup>

Frank Hanson was also from a well-known local family. He was born on November 16, 1875 in Gridley Township. He was one of seven children born to Pleasant and Amanda (Coon) Hanson. After graduating from Lexington High School, he attended the University of Illinois and then graduated from Illinois Wesleyan University with a law degree in 1903. He began practicing law with Owen T. Reeves and, after five years, had his own practice.<sup>34</sup> His law office was housed in several locations in downtown Bloomington throughout his distinguished 46-year law career.<sup>35</sup>

Ethel and Frank had two children; a son and a daughter. Their son, Franklin Milton, was born on November 28, 1911.<sup>36</sup> Their daughter, Betty, was born on November 20, 1913 at Brokaw Hospital in Normal.<sup>37</sup> The family belonged to First Christian Church in Bloomington.<sup>38</sup>

While Ethel's marriage to Frank ended her career as a teacher (which was typical for women during this time), it did not end her active public life in McLean County. In addition to her work through the Y.W.C.A, she served as vice-president of the Illinois Parent-Teacher Association and president of District 6 (which included the counties of McLean, Ford, Iroquois, Tazewell, and Livingston).<sup>39</sup> Regarded as an accomplished speaker, she was invited to give talks at organizational meetings and events throughout the area. She participated in a program held at Second Christian Church, where a group of Bloomington men and women expressed their views on "why so many people do not attend church." Hanson stated that "[it] appears to me poverty is the reason so many people do not attend church. I know a person who was snubbed by supposed Christians because she went to Sunday school not as well dressed as some others. Churches must treat the poor, regardless of color, as equals, or the church will go out of existence."<sup>40</sup>

It could be said that Hanson's political activity was inspired by her family's political heritage. As a member and leader of the local Women's Republican Committee, she was involved in campaigning for Charles Evans Hughes, Supreme Court Justice and the Republican candidate for

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<sup>31</sup> "Hamilton-Hanson Functions," *The Pantagraph*, October 10, 1910, 12.

<sup>32</sup> *Bloomington and Normal City Directory, 1911*. (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1911), 296.

<sup>33</sup> *Bloomington and Normal City Directory, 1915*. (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1915), 299.

<sup>34</sup> Hasbrouck, 942-943.

<sup>35</sup> "Frank Hanson, Former State Senator, Dies," *The Pantagraph*, July 15, 1952, 3.

<sup>36</sup> "Have a Baby Boy," *The Pantagraph*, November 29, 1911, 7.

<sup>37</sup> "Notes," *The Pantagraph*, November 21, 1913, 9.

<sup>38</sup> "Death Summons Mrs. F. O. Hanson," *The Pantagraph*, October 30, 1920, 7; "Frank Hanson, Former State Senator, Dies."

<sup>39</sup> "Death Summons Mrs. F. O. Hanson."

<sup>40</sup> "Church Hears Some Plain Statements," *The Pantagraph*, May 5, 1913, 9.

president during the 1916 election.<sup>41</sup> Hanson was a strong supporter for Hughes and “stumped” heavily for him during the campaign. She was also the secretary of the Women’s Hughes Alliance of McLean County.<sup>42</sup> Hughes had a large following of women supporters during his campaign as he supported universal suffrage for American women. It was Hughes’s opinion that the issue of women’s suffrage needed to be “settled promptly for the entire country...that the proposed amendment should be submitted to the people, ratified, and the subject removed from political discussion forever.”<sup>43</sup>

Hughes could count on the support of many women in the State of Illinois, for on June 26, 1913, Governor Edward Dunne signed the law that granted women in Illinois the right to vote for President of the United States and most local offices. While this was a big step forward for the cause of women’s suffrage in the United States, there were stipulations to this right for Illinois women. Women had to use separate ballots and ballot boxes. Moreover, because of how the Illinois State Constitution was written, women could not vote for governor, state senators and representatives, or members of Congress. So unless a convention was called to amend the constitution (which would not happen for another fifty-seven years), women in Illinois had to accept these limitations to their right to vote. That being said, Illinois was the first state east of the Mississippi to give women limited voting rights. Full and equal voting rights would not become a reality for all women across the nation until 1920 with the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.<sup>44</sup>

Prominent, educated women across the nation supported Hughes. One such woman was Frances Kellor, a progressive activist who helped insert suffrage into national party politics. One way she did this was by organizing the Women’s Special Campaign train, which was a way that talented women, who were sometimes referred to as “Hughettes,” could get involved in politics. The Hughes Women’s Campaign Train crisscrossed the country through twenty-eight states and the women who participated gave over 1,800 speeches under circus tents, inside coliseums, movie houses, and on street corners.<sup>45</sup> The Hughes Women’s Special train stopped in Pontiac on October 31 during the last lap of “its continental trip.” The same day, Hanson, Lucia Smith, and Florence Funk gave talks on issues from the Republican standpoint at a meeting of women in Chenoa at the Rex Theater.<sup>46</sup>

A whirlwind of meetings and events were planned during the final weeks and days of Hughes’s campaign, many of which Hanson helped to plan since she was a member of the executive committee of the Women’s Hughes Alliance of McLean County. On October 6, the Alliance hosted Harriet Vittum, director of the Women’s Movement, Republican National Headquarters, Western Division, to speak to the voters of McLean County at the Coliseum.<sup>47</sup> On

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<sup>41</sup> “Death Summons Mrs. F. O. Hanson;” “Mrs. Frank O. Hanson Critically Ill with Attack of Pneumonia,” *The Pantagraph*, October 29, 1920, 5.

<sup>42</sup> “Women are Interested,” *The Pantagraph*, October 3, 1916, 8.

<sup>43</sup> “Hughes Wants Women’s Suffrage Question Settled at Once,” *Daily Journal*, August 1, 1916.

<sup>44</sup> Mark Sorensen, “Ahead of their Time: A brief history of woman suffrage in Illinois,”

<http://www.lib.niu.edu/2004/ih110604half.html>, Date Accessed September 14, 2017; Ron Grossman, “Illinois Women Win the Right to Vote,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> “1916 Hughes Women’s Campaign Train,” *An Interactive Scrapbook of Elisabeth Freeman: Suffragette, Civil Rights Worker, and Militant Pacifist*, [www.elisabethfreeman.org](http://www.elisabethfreeman.org), Date Accessed September 13, 2017.

<sup>46</sup> “Women in Many Towns,” *The Pantagraph*, November 1, 1916, 11; “Chenoa,” *The Pantagraph*, November 2, 1916, 9.

<sup>47</sup> “Men and Women are Invited to Hear Miss Harriet Vittum of Chicago,” *The Pantagraph*, October 4, 1916, 11.

the evening of October 28, Hanson helped to organize a meeting of the city's women voters at the Chatterton Opera House. A variety of speakers were planned, including Russian author and well known settlement worker in New York, Mary Antin, and Illinois Congressman John Sterling.<sup>48</sup>

It was thought that Hughes was going to win the election. Even Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic candidate for president, thought that he would lose to Hughes. However, growing fear of the war in Europe influenced voters to cast their votes for Wilson, as "he kept us out of the war" with his platform of neutrality. After a hard-fought campaign, Wilson defeated Hughes by a narrow margin of about 600,000 popular votes and twenty-three electoral votes.<sup>49</sup>

However, newly elected President Wilson would not keep the United States out of "the world war" much longer. On June 3, 1916, the National Defense Act was passed. This act granted the president the power to place orders for defense materials and force industry to comply. This act also helped begin the process of strengthening and modernizing American armed forces. Later that summer, Wilson established the Council of National Defense (C.N.D.) on August 24 in Washington D.C. It was the President's opinion that, "The country is best prepared for war when thoroughly prepared for peace."<sup>50</sup> The all-male council consisted of the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of Labor. There were a variety of goals and objectives for the council. The main objective was to coordinate resources and industry in support of the war effort. This included organizing transportation, industrial and farm production, fund raising, and keeping public morale up. All of combined would create a structure in the U.S. that would eventually support the soldiers fighting overseas.<sup>51</sup>

After the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, the C.N.D. began to spread to the local level. Starting in May 1917, individual states were asked by the "Section on Cooperation between the States" to create State Councils of National Defense to assist in carrying out the work of the national C.N.D. The Illinois State Council of National Defense was formed on May 2, 1917. Fifteen men were appointed to the council by Governor Frank Lowden to oversee numerous committees that organized a wide variety of activities to support the war effort and increase patriotism. Some of these activities included recruiting and establishing home guard militias to promote patriotism, and to provide the governor an armed military force to resist attacks and to put down riots and subversion; promoting public health and child welfare; participating in fundraising efforts, including the Liberty Loan and War Saving Stamp drives; promoting efforts to conserve food and fuel; providing financial support to the American Red Cross; organizing speakers' bureaus that would "arouse in the public a desire for service;" recruiting for the armed forces; preventing bad influences in communities, such a traveling carnivals, especially if these might have diverted money that should otherwise have been given to war fundraising drives; recruiting farm labor; shaming those who avoided the draft or who did not grow their own vegetables; and rendering assistance to returning veterans by locating

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<sup>48</sup> "Plan a Whirlwind Finish," *The Pantagraph*, October 26, 1916, 7.

<sup>49</sup> "1916 Presidential Election" results, [https://www.270towin.com/1916 Election/](https://www.270towin.com/1916-Election/), Date Accessed September 13, 1917.

<sup>50</sup> "Council for National Defense," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council\\_of\\_National\\_Defense#cite\\_note-gov-5](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_National_Defense#cite_note-gov-5), Date Accessed, September 14, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

employment and rehabilitation for wounded and sick soldiers after demobilization of the armed forces when the war was over.<sup>52</sup>

Not long after the formation of the state-level Council of National Defense, local committees for the C.N.D. began to form. When the state committee first gathered in Illinois, it was decided that outside of Chicago, temporary chairpersons would be appointed in every county, town, and city. In early 1918, John J. Condon was appointed the temporary chairman in McLean County so that he could begin working to organize a permanent county committee of the C.N.D. At a meeting held in the Association of Commerce rooms in downtown Bloomington on March 11 that year, the McLean County Committee for the Council of National Defense was formally organized with Mayor E.E. Jones as the permanent county chairman.<sup>53</sup> And just as at the state level, there were numerous subcommittees (including publicity, Liberty Loan, food and fuel, neighborhood, and Red Cross) upon which prominent citizens of McLean County were called to serve.<sup>54</sup>

In the minutes from that first meeting, the committee outlined that its main function was to cooperate with and assist the State Council of National Defense in the execution of its duties. Some of these duties included cooperating with and assisting the local draft boards, labor boards, fuel commissioners, and food administrators in performing their duties; as well as hear and investigate complaints of citizens in all matters that will affect a successful outcome of the war.<sup>55</sup> The McLean County committee also sought to bring a message of “economy and thrift” in the conservation and protection of food, curtail non-war construction and consumption, and “protect young people from serious social effects of abnormal times.”<sup>56</sup> The first big project the committee was tasked with was raising \$4 million (which would be over \$63 million today) for McLean County’s quota during the Third Liberty Loan campaign that began on the anniversary of the U.S. entering the war, April 6, 1918.<sup>57</sup>

But it was not just men who helped with the war effort on the home front. Women were asked to join the fight and support the war effort too. In February 1917, prominent women gathered in Washington D.C. and formed the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense. The Women’s Committee made it their mission to assist with the “problems of food, morals, health, education, recreation, the quality of citizenship, and the securing of a greater measure of social and industrial democracy for women and children workers.”<sup>58</sup> Shortly after that, women's committees were formed in individual states. Their job was to call local women's groups together to form a more cohesive organization. Once that was completed, permanent leadership was elected.

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<sup>52</sup> “Council of National Defense and State Defense Councils,” <https://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~wgreen/ECDnatdefcounl.html>, Date Accessed, September 14, 2017; Edward E. Pierson and J.L. Hasbrouck, *McLean County, Illinois in the World War, 1917-1918* (Bloomington, IL: McLean County War Publishing Company, 1921), 173-176.

<sup>53</sup> “Form County Body for All War Activities,” *The Pantagraph*, March 12, 1918, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> “Complete Minutes of McLean County Committee of the State Council of Defense,” p.12, *McLean County Committee State Council of Defense II Vertical File*, McLean County Museum of History Library and Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Pierson and Hasbrouck, 175.

<sup>57</sup> “Form County Body for All War Activities.”

<sup>58</sup> Final Report: Woman’s Committee State Council of Defense of Illinois and Woman’s Committee Council of National Defense Illinois Division, April 1917-July 1919,” page 7-8, <http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/ref/collection/isl8/id/2837>, Date Accessed September 14, 2017.

An important task of the Women's Committee of the C.N.D. was to register women for war service, whether it was as volunteers or paid positions.<sup>59</sup> Starting in September 1917, the Woman's Committee of the C.N.D. Illinois began the laborious task of registering women ages sixteen and older throughout the state. The state Women's Committee proclaimed that the federal government wanted to register all women to determine how much it could depend on women for assistance in the war effort and find out what each woman in the state was capable of doing. The types of "facts" that the government was interested in knowing would help them determine what type of work or service the women could provide. The lines of work were divided into agricultural, clerical, domestic, industrial, professional, public service, social service, Red Cross, allied relief work, and miscellaneous. Officials also wanted to know about women's resources, such as if they had an automobile that could be donated for certain services or a typewriter they could be called upon for use.<sup>60</sup> It was also emphasized by state officials that "the fact that a woman registers does not mean she will be taken away from her home."<sup>61</sup> If, for some reason, a woman was not able to offer service on the home front because of a dependent family, illness, age, or any reason that would keep her from doing war work, the government wanted to know that too. It was just as important "to the government to know that you are unable to assist as to know that you are able to do so."<sup>62</sup> Statewide registration began on September 17, 1917 and continued throughout the war.

Because of her skills as a leader and a speaker, Hanson was first appointed the temporary county chairperson of the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense. Upon the formal organization of the McLean County Council of National Defense, she was made the permanent chairperson of the Women's Committee on March 11, 1918.<sup>63</sup> She was assigned the task of assisting towns and cities in the area in forming their own Women's Committees. On October 15, 1917, Hanson gathered a group of sixty women, representing all thirty-three women's organizations at the city hall in Normal. She made a "fitting speech" that told the purpose of the Women's Committee and how it came into existence.<sup>64</sup> At the end of the meeting, officers were selected and the Women's Committee for the C.N.D. for the Town of Normal was officially founded. In March 1918, Hanson delivered an "interesting address" to encourage the women of Bloomington to start their own council. By the end of the meeting, the council was organized and committees were established for war work.<sup>65</sup> Hanson, along with Lena Ewing, and Bernice Hanson, went to Ellsworth, IL to help found a Women's Committee there. Hanson gave a talk about the Red Cross, defense work, and the Home Bureau during the meeting, at the end of which the council was formally organized.<sup>66</sup> It was also her responsibility to travel throughout the county and consult with representatives of the councils at various times, making sure they were all doing their part to support the war effort.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Final Report: Woman's Committee State Council of Defense of Illinois and Woman's Committee Council of National Defense Illinois Division, April 1917-July 1919," page 7-8,

<sup>60</sup> "Women Organize for War Service," *The Pantagraph*, October 16, 1917, 15.

<sup>61</sup> "Urge Women to Activity," *The Pantagraph*, September 7, 1917, 1.

<sup>62</sup> "Women Meet Today to Talk Registration," *The Pantagraph*, September 4, 1917, 7.

<sup>63</sup> "Form County Body for All War Activities."

<sup>64</sup> "Women Organize for War Service."

<sup>65</sup> "Notes," *The Pantagraph*, March 23, 1918, 12.

<sup>66</sup> "Ellsworth Organizes," *The Pantagraph*, Ma7 16, 1918, 7.

<sup>67</sup> Pierson and Hasbrouck, 508.



Hanson also assisted in the registration of the women of McLean County for war service. On October 26, 1917, she reported “that most satisfactory progress is being made with the registration of women, and the outlook for the future is bright.” Registrations were being held throughout Bloomington at locations including Withers Public Library, rural schools such as Grassy Ridge, Houghton, and Price, and even at Padgett’s confectionary store at 1415 S. Main Street to make it convenient and easy for women to register.<sup>68</sup> In addition to having given a speech in the town of Weston on October 24, Hanson was scheduled to give several more speeches on the importance of women registering for war work in the towns Le Roy on November 3 and Cooksville on November 5.<sup>69</sup> By November 24, 9,076 women in Bloomington alone had registered for war service.<sup>70</sup>

The McLean County Women’s Committee performed a variety of tasks “for the good of the cause.” They organized the registration and signing of food pledges, whereby women would promise to conserve food, especially flour and sugar, and grow surplus food for the war effort.<sup>71</sup> Members of the committee were responsible for instructing local women on canning and preserving the food they grew in their war gardens, along with organizing a municipal canning kitchen where surplus foods were donated to be preserved and sent to those in need.<sup>72</sup> They organized and aided in relief efforts by gathering clothing, surplus food, and raising funds for allied nations such as Belgium and France.<sup>73</sup>

An important task of the Women’s Committee was supporting child welfare. This included making sure that industry and businesses followed the newly enacted Child Labor Law passed by the State of Illinois, according to which children were not to be abused as workers and required that children under the age of 14 were to attend school. Additionally, the committee supported programs that encouraged proper nutrition in children.<sup>74</sup> One such effort to help better the conditions of children living in “the tenements of Chicago” was bringing a group to Bloomington for a “summer vacation” that would allow them to experience “fresh air.” Seventy children were brought down on the Chicago and Alton Railroad to spend two weeks in “good fresh air.” The Women’s Committee was still looking for a few more host families before the children’s arrival in Bloomington on August 1, 1918.<sup>75</sup> Because of her efforts to help these children, Hanson was dubbed “Lady Bountiful” by the children that she helped find “good, clean McLean County homes for a summer break.”<sup>76</sup>

The women of the committee met regularly at the Y.W.C.A. rooms on Friday afternoons, with the central headquarters located in the women’s waiting rooms on the third floor of the McLean County courthouse.<sup>77</sup>

Hanson also helped promote the United War Work Organization, which was a joint fundraising effort between seven different organizations nationally. The Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., National Catholic War Council, Jewish Welfare Board, War Camp Community Service,

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<sup>68</sup> “Women Interested in Registering,” *The Pantagraph*, October 26, 1917, 6.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> “9,076 Bloomington Women Register,” *The Pantagraph*, November 24, 1917.

<sup>71</sup> “C.N.D. Meeting,” *The Pantagraph*, November 3, 1917, 9.

<sup>72</sup> “Community Canning As It Has Been Done,” *The Pantagraph*, July 1, 1918, 9.

<sup>73</sup> “Many Reports Heard About War Work,” *The Pantagraph*, May 18, 1918, 9.

<sup>74</sup> “Must Talk so People Understand Message,” *The Pantagraph*, June 14, 1918, 8;

<sup>75</sup> “Will You Take One of Fresh Air Children?” *The Pantagraph*, July 24, 1918, 7.

<sup>76</sup> “Death Summons Mrs. F.O. Hanson.”

<sup>77</sup> “Room at Court House for Women’s War Work,” *The Pantagraph*, March 9, 1918, 6.

American Library Association, and Salvation Army in Bloomington joined forces to raise \$170,000 (which today would be almost \$2.7 million) between November 11 to 18, 1918 in McLean County.<sup>78</sup> The funds raised by the campaign would go towards providing entertainment, in the form of movies, reading and writing rooms, recreation huts, canteens that served hot coffee and sandwiches, music, and theatricals, for troops stationed overseas.<sup>79</sup> The group urged residents to give \$100 or more so that they could reach their goal. Hanson gave at least one talk to promote the fund drive. On Friday, November 8, she addressed the members of the Emerson School Mothers Club. After what must have been a moving speech, the members of the club voted to give the sum of \$100 to the cause (which today would be a little over \$1,500).<sup>80</sup> The campaign was extended by another week to allow more time for counties to reach their goals. In the end, it appears as if McLean County was just shy of the goal by \$700.<sup>81</sup>

While the Council of National Defense did a great deal of work to support the war effort, the C.N.D. also did much to turn neighbor against neighbor during the war. The Council promoted Americanization among those born in other countries. It assisted in the suppression of disloyal activity, including beating and tar and feathering those who failed to show proper spirit (which fortunately did not occur in McLean County), jailed those suspected of dissent. Members of the council were responsible for painting the buildings and residences of those suspected of disloyalty yellow. The council also carried out legal and extralegal investigations and enforced the signing of loyalty oaths. The C.N.D. also promoted English-language laws so that foreign languages could not be taught below high school level or publications could not be printed in German either. It also organized boycotts of newspapers and magazines that did not show the proper American spirit and supported vigilante activity against German language publications.<sup>82</sup>

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the German population in McLean County was large and influential with many highly visible organizations such as the Turnverein (an athletic and social club), churches (many of which whose services were conducted in German), businesses, clubs, and their own weekly newspaper. There had been a German language newspaper in Bloomington since 1868. In the 1870s, *The Bloomington Journal* began publishing and survived well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>83</sup>

Just a few years prior to the U.S. entering World War I, one of the largest celebrations of an immigrant community in Bloomington was held, celebrating German culture, history, and heritage. *Deutscher Tag*, or German Day, was a three-day festival held in mid-October 1913 which attracted 25,000 people from across Central Illinois. Highlights of the festival included a parade (complete with floats and citizens in costume), a grand concert, and a banquet. With war looming in Europe, the local newspapers (including the German-language newspaper *The Bloomington Journal*) emphasized the patriotism and allegiance of the local German-American

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<sup>78</sup> Consumer Price Index, <http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2016.pdf>, Date Accessed September 15, 2017.

<sup>79</sup> "For the Boys Over There: The 1918 United War Work Campaign," <http://unitedwarwork.com/>, Date Accessed, September 19, 2017; "Can't You Share a Bit of Your Sunshine With My Boys?" United War Work Fund Drive Poster, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/38686/united-war-work-fund--give-till-youre-proud-of-yourself>, Date Accessed September 19, 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Consumer Price Index, <http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2016.pdf>, Date Accessed, September 15, 2017.

<sup>81</sup> "County Lacks \$700 to Reach its Quota," *The Pantagraph*, November 26, 1918, 3.

<sup>82</sup> "Council of National Defense and State Defense Councils."

<sup>83</sup> Bill Kemp. "German-language newspaper under suspicion during WWI," *The Pantagraph*, April 6, 2014.

community.<sup>84</sup> Surprisingly, the German Day celebration continued and another one was held at the end of October 1915. The celebration kicked off with Professor Julius Goebel, head of the German department at the University of Illinois, giving a speech about why German-Americans continued to celebrate German settlement in the United States, and German compatriots who fought for American liberty and helped to preserve the Union. However, this appears to have been a one-night only event held at the Coliseum in downtown Bloomington, unlike the three-day celebration previously seen in 1913.<sup>85</sup>

After the United States entered the war on April 6, 1917, the same large, thriving German-American community in McLean County found itself the target of a systematic campaign of suspicion and persecution by “superpatriot” organizations like the Council of National Defense. Feeding the growing public hysteria in the community was a steady diet of propaganda against Germans, which naturally spread to include those of German descent as well.<sup>86</sup> Almost exactly one year after the U.S. entered the war, the McLean County Committee of the C.N.D. adopted a resolution on April 1, 1918 in which the council deemed it “an act of disloyalty to the United States to print any paper or publication in the German language in McLean County” and that *The Bloomington Journal* “be called to forthwith cease printing of any news or editorial or other matter in the German language.”<sup>87</sup>

At that same meeting, the committee went a step further and appointed a two-person sub-committee to “confer with the school boards of the county looking toward the abolishing of teaching German” in all of the county schools. Hanson and the superintendent of McLean County Schools, Benjamin C. Moore, were appointed to be on the committee to investigate this issue and persuade the schools to do away with the teaching of German.<sup>88</sup>

The publisher of *The Bloomington Journal* during this tumultuous time was John B. Gummerman, who had no choice but to comply--unless he wanted to shut down his newspaper. On April 5, Gummerman ran a feisty editorial (in German) announcing *The Journal's* switchover to English, making sure his readers knew of his disapproval. Gummerman proclaimed, “The Journal will keep on being a champion of true democracy and liberty. We shall make our greatest efforts to bring to light persons who claim to be patriots, but when it comes to genuine patriotism from the heart of man are found wanting, and commit undemocratic acts to cover up their own selfish motives.” Gummerman also noted that “the race hatred has reached a new point in our city...never published one word against our government...the Journal’s goose is cooked.”<sup>89</sup> Later in that same issue, Gummerman noted that the day after the McLean County Committee of the C.N.D. passed its resolution against *The Bloomington Journal*, his newspaper’s office was vandalized by “midnight patrols” that smashed windows and put paint all over the building. Gummerman stated that “this was not democracy, but on the contrary anarchy.”<sup>90</sup> *The Journal* printed in English only until August of that year, when Gummerman felt that anti-German sentiment had cooled enough to be able to begin publishing his newspaper partially in German

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<sup>84</sup> Bill Kemp. “German pride reached its height with 1913 festival,” *The Pantagraph*, October 21, 2007.

<sup>85</sup> “Coliseum filled at German Day Celebration,” *The Pantagraph*, October 29, 1915.

<sup>86</sup> Bill Kemp. “Local German Americans told to ‘get right or get out’ during World War I,” *The Pantagraph*, June 3, 2007.”

<sup>87</sup> “Complete Minutes of McLean County Committee of the State Council of Defense,” p.15.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p.15-16.

<sup>89</sup> Jason Spoor, “Loyalty, Patriotism, and Survival: The Socioeconomic Factors of German American Assimilation in the Context of World War I,” Student paper written for ISU History 490: Senior Seminar, April 26, 2000, p. 16-17.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

and partially in English. This continued until 1931 when he published the paper exclusively in English until 1939, when the paper ceased publication altogether.<sup>91</sup>

While Hanson and Benjamin C. Moore were examining the issue of ending the teaching of German in county schools, several schools in the area were already making plans to end German classes for the next school year, which would begin in the fall of 1918. On April 5, the Bloomington School Board met to discuss dropping the German language at the high school (where it had been taught for nearly 50 years) in the fall. The board decided that ending it during the current school year would not be fair to graduating seniors who needed the credit for college admission that fall, and that it was too late to make a substitute course for the graduates to take instead.<sup>92</sup> The Normal Board of Education made a unanimous decision to drop the study of German from the high school at the end of the school year as well.<sup>93</sup>

When Superintendent Moore was interviewed by *The Pantagraph* about all county schools eliminating German from the curriculum, he stated that his authority “does not permit me to dictate what shall and what shall not be taught in public schools of the county.” He admitted that, while he was a member of the committee in regard to the abandonment of the teaching of the German language in the schools, it was his belief “that the high school boards would consider the matter and take favorable action upon it as fast as they could adjust the credits of those students who will have taken the study during the year.” Moore further stated that he felt that the move to abandon the instruction of the German language was a move in the right direction. In his opinion, it was “bad to teach the language of our enemy to our people.”<sup>94</sup>

However, fall was not soon enough for some. The Heyworth School Board decided to immediately stop teaching German at its high school. The board made this decision based on a petition and from a patriotic program given by students at the high school. Immediately after the decision was made, all of the German language books that had been used in the schools were burned. It was reported that “as the flames ate into the volumes,” a large crowd that was present began singing a song of victory for America and her allies.<sup>95</sup>

The Bloomington School Board’s decision to end the teaching of German in the new school year was apparently not soon enough for some residents of Bloomington either. A citizens’ committee was formed during the Liberty Loan luncheon on April 10, 1918 that demanded, “the teaching of the German language be dropped at once at the high school.”<sup>96</sup> A special meeting of the Bloomington School Board was called the same day, and a heated discussion followed. For two hours, the board president and principal of Bloomington High School argued with members of the committee that students would lose credits and even college admission if German classes were halted (which was supported by a letter from an administrator at the University of Illinois that stated no credit would be given to students for only seven months of German). One member of the committee, John Normiel, argued that if many of the boys at the Chicago and Alton Railroad Shops could give up their jobs to fight in the war, that the students could afford to make the sacrifice of losing a few credits.<sup>97</sup> The next day, the full board met and voted to abolish

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<sup>91</sup> Kemp, “German-language newspaper under suspicion during WWI.”

<sup>92</sup> “No German in High School Next Year,” *The Pantagraph*, April 9, 1918, 3.

<sup>93</sup> “Drop German From Course,” *The Pantagraph*, April 8, 1918, 6.

<sup>94</sup> “All County Schools May Cut Out German,” *The Pantagraph*, April 6, 1918, 6.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> “Citizens’ Committee Calls on School Board,” *The Pantagraph*, April 11, 1918, 7.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

German as a course. *The Pantagraph* declared “the fire was out,” implying that the issue had been put to rest.

Reports stated that only a few of the seniors studying German had intended to go to any university other than Illinois Wesleyan University. Those students attending Wesleyan in the fall would not be negatively impacted by the loss of credits, as officials at the university cleared the way for these students and admitted them with no conditions. However, the elimination of German from the curriculum did have lasting consequences on BHS beyond the immediate impact on graduating seniors. It was reported that Miss Mengelberg, the teacher of German at the high school (who also taught French), would finish out the school term, but had no plans to return to teach in the fall.<sup>98</sup>

Following the school board’s decision, Hanson and Moore reported their findings about the successful action being taken to remove German from the local schools at the April 16 meeting of the McLean County Committee of the C.N.D.<sup>99</sup> Schools in the area continued to drop German before the end of the school year. On April 16, after receiving word from the state inspector of high schools that the school credits would not suffer if German was eliminated from the curriculum, the School Board in Normal held a special meeting and dropped German immediately.<sup>100</sup>

Hanson continued to play an active role in the work of the Women’s Committee of the McLean County C.N.D. and the county committee of the C.N.D. She worked hard to promote the continued registration of women for war work, and to help organize new committees for the Council of National Defense throughout the county. However, for unknown reasons, she resigned the chairmanship of the Women’s Committee at the end of October 1918. Alice Evans was appointed to replace her on October 31, 1918.<sup>101</sup>

The end of Hanson’s work with the Council of National Defense did not end her work in the public sphere. She actively assisted her husband in his campaign for state senator of the 26<sup>th</sup> district, which was comprised of McLean and Ford counties. Frank entered the primary race for nomination as the Republican candidate for state senator in late June 1920 and received the nomination after winning the primary on September 15.<sup>102</sup> During the campaign season, Frank traveled throughout the district making campaign stops in places such as Colfax, Cooksville, and Le Roy.<sup>103</sup> Most likely, Ethel stayed in Bloomington caring for their two children while making time to campaign for him locally, and making preparations for the district meeting of the Parent-Teacher’s Association of District 6 (of which she was president), planned for November 5 in Pontiac, IL.

On Thursday, October 28, Ethel Hanson was suddenly stricken with double pneumonia. She had taken their children back to school after lunch around one o’clock in the afternoon when she

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<sup>98</sup> “To Abolish German at High School Now,” *The Pantagraph*, April 12, 1918, 3.

<sup>99</sup> “Council of Defense Hears Report Monday,” *The Pantagraph*, April 12, 1918, 7 ; “Complete Minutes of McLean County Committee of the State Council of Defense,” p.17

<sup>100</sup> “Public Schools to Drop German,” *The Pantagraph*, April 17, 1918, 11.

<sup>101</sup> Letter from Walter S. Brewster to J.J. Condon re: Resignation of Mrs. Frank O. Hanson, October 31, 1918, *McLean County Committee State Council of Defense II Vertical File*, McLean County Museum of History Library and Archives.

<sup>102</sup> “Frank Hanson for State Senator,” *The Pantagraph*, June 22, 1920, 7; “Frank O. Hanson, for State Senator,” *The Pantagraph*, September 11, 1920, 13.

<sup>103</sup> “Republicans to Tour the County,” *The Pantagraph*, October 18, 1920, 5.

became ill.<sup>104</sup> Her husband was out of town at the time, campaigning and touring various towns in Ford County.<sup>105</sup> When she took ill, Hanson and her family were living with her father at his home on East Walnut Street in Bloomington. Frank and Ethel had recently sold their home on South Main Street and were living with her father temporarily while their new home at the intersection of Walnut and Elder streets was being re-decorated. Sadly, Hanson did not recover from her illness, passing away on October 29, less than 24 hours after becoming ill.<sup>106</sup>

Many friends and family paid their final respects to Hanson at the wake held at her brother's home on Broadway Street in Normal. Her funeral was held at First Christian Church on November 1. Reverend E.E. Higdon, pastor at the church, conducted the services, with burial immediately following at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington. Her husband Frank was elected state senator for the 26<sup>th</sup> district just four days after her funeral.<sup>107</sup> And, at the District 6 conference of the P.T.A., (which Ethel had been planning at the time of her death) a resolution was passed in honor of her many years of devoted work to the organization. It stated that Hanson "was profoundly imbued with the importance of Parent-Teacher Association work; balanced and efficient in co-operation with others, instant in effort and generous in the giving of herself to the cause she loved. We feel that in 'carrying on' for the immediate present and for the future according to her plans we shall be paying the most appropriate tribute to her and doing the wisest thing for the promotion of the interests of this district whose chairmanship she was just assuming."<sup>108</sup>

By: Candace Summers, 2017

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<sup>104</sup> "Mrs. Frank O. Hanson Critically Ill with Attack of Pneumonia," *The Pantagraph*, October 29, 1920, 5.

<sup>105</sup> "All Are Busy on Eve of Election," *The Pantagraph*, October 28, 1920, 17.

<sup>106</sup> "Death Summons Mrs. F.O. Hanson."

<sup>107</sup> "Total Vote in McLean County," *The Pantagraph*, November 5, 1920, 3.

<sup>108</sup> "District Conference of P.T.A. Yesterday," *The Pantagraph*, November 6, 1920, 6.