



Biography of Margaret Chapman Barnhart 1874-1913

Mrs. Margaret Chapman Barnhart, tirelessly devoted to the welfare of children, was a moving force behind curbing juvenile delinquency in Summit County. Born in Holmes County, Ohio, Barnhart began teaching at age 16 after completing her education at Millersburg High School. After his marriage to Board of Education Secretary John F. Barnhart on April 1, 1893, Barnhart became very interested in the welfare of children. After the Civil War, many children were left without a father. She became very active in raising funds for the first Children's Home in the county. She was so successful in her persuasion that she was appointed to the building committee and helped design the plans for the new home. Barnhart also lead efforts to provide public playgrounds in Akron. she believed that having a safe place to play would lessen crimes committed by young people. She served on the Akron Civil League's Playground Committee. As a result of her efforts, many playgrounds were built throughout the city. Barnhart was also appalled that young people who committed crimes were sent to the same facility as adults. She had worked as a juvenile probation officer and felt that a separate court system for juveniles was needed. She worked with the Akron Woman's Council to involve city leaders in establishing the Detention Home in Summit County. Assistant superintendent of the Sunday school at First Methodist Episcopal Church in Akron, Barnhart was also a charter member of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and once again used her ability to raise funds for the support of that organization. Not only was Barnhart concerned for the welfare of children, she wanted to provide educational opportunities for immigrants in Summit County. She opened her home and taught English classes to foreign girls who came to work in Akron. Over the years, Barnhart was involved in numerous community organizations. She was secretary of the Summit county Health Protective Association and was in charge of the first sale of Christmas seals for the Red Cross. She helped organized the Visiting Nurses Association, which provided health care services for children in schools. Upon her death on March 18, 1913, the Akron Beacon Journal quoted a lifelong friend of Barnhart's as saying, "she was a character seldom met...and never set out to do a thing that was not accomplished."

—Penny Fox

Submitted by Jack Chapman CFA #417

Margaret Chapman Barnhart is the Granddaughter of Roswell chapman, my great great grandfather.