

## Albion Fellows Bacon Retro Riley

Albion Fellows Bacon (April 8, 1865-December 10, 1933) was a social reformer best remembered today for her efforts to improve Indiana's housing standards and work on tenement reform. Her singular persistent efforts and ability to rally others like the Indiana Federation of Clubs, a statewide organization of women's clubs, to support her cause led to passage of Indiana housing legislation in 1909, 1913, and 1917.

Not to be forgotten is Bacon's leadership as a champion who worked to improve the lives of Indiana's children and youth through several leadership roles. In 1917 she became chair of the Child Welfare Committee, a part of the Women's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense. Bacon served as president of Indiana Conference of Charities and Corrections and the Juvenile Advisory Commission of Indiana's Probation Department, a group that oversaw efforts to assess physical and health of preschool children. She was also head of the executive committee of the Indiana Child Welfare Association, a statewide organization of representatives of public and private, state and national agencies doing child welfare work in Indiana, of individuals interested in child welfare, and of the chairmen of child welfare committees in the various counties of the state.

Bacon and her sister, Annie Fellows Johnston and James Whitcomb Riley were friends, no doubt brought together by their mutual love of writing poetry. While Bacon wrote books, articles, and pamphlets on tenement reform and other social reform issues, she also wrote published books of devotional materials, poetry, and children's stories. Through her leadership of the Indiana Child Welfare Association, Bacon became one of the early voices speaking out for the need for the James Whitcomb Riley Hospital for Children. Much in the same way as she had done with her zealous drive for housing reform legislation in Indiana, she turned to state networks of women's organizations and other groups to stir awareness and support for a children's hospital.

In her role as head of the Executive Committee of the Indiana Child Welfare Association, she joined forces with the Riley Memorial Association and Indiana University to introduce legislation in the 1922 Indiana General Assembly for passage of the bill supporting creation of the James Whitcomb Riley Hospital for Children and for allocating funding to support the hospital. In a 1921 presentation at the State Conference of Charities and Corrections where she spoke on behalf of Dr. Charles Emerson, then Dean of the Indiana University School of Medicine, Bacon recalled:

"Dr. Emerson came to me, as president of the Indiana Child Welfare Association, to get our help at a time when with so many pressing interests, it was felt they must have all help possible. . . Dr. Emerson asked me if I would go with him to our Governor and talk to him about the matter and I remember so well when we went in and spoke to him, how enthusiastic he was, how his face lighted, what intense interest he had and what good cheer he gave . . . and it will always be to the honor of our legislators that they passed so readily a bill for the appropriation of this money, not only because it was for the children but to honor our beloved poet."

Bacon rallied support for Riley Hospital for Children at state meetings of the Indiana General Federation of Women's Clubs to help encourage other women to spread the word about the need for the hospital statewide. The Federation resolved at their 1921 state conference that "hundreds of children in the State of Indiana need hospital aid not now available" and that the Federation "pledge assistance in the dissemination of information concerning hospital plans."

The Riley Hospital for Children bill was passed by the Indiana General Assembly in March 1921. As Chair of the Housing and Child Welfare Committee for the Indiana Federation of Clubs, Bacon reported at the Federation's October 1921 state conference that the state's appropriation of money to support the hospital was a "great victory."

Bacon later went to work on passage of Indiana child labor and school attendance laws and on establishing a juvenile probation system.

Photo of Albion Fellows Bacon

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