

**Guide to the Oral History of  
MOHLER, MARY BURTON (1903-1986)**

**Biographical/Historical Notes**

Mary Burton Mohler was an educator and civic leader in Montgomery County. She was born in 1903 in Sullivan, Indiana. She received her Bachelor's degree in Education from the Indiana State Normal School (now Indiana State University) and later her Master's degree at George Washington University. Mohler began her teaching career in Indiana. In 1926 she came to Montgomery County, Maryland and began her long career as a teacher and supervisor in the Montgomery County Public School system, mostly teaching at schools in Bethesda and Chevy Chase. Her community and civic activities included serving as a delegate for the Montgomery County Civic Federation, helping to establish the Bethesda Public Library, and serving as a member of the Women's Auxiliary for Suburban Hospital.

**Interview** – Interviewed February 4, 1972 by Blossom Holland for MBL.

**Subject**

College bureau  
Montgomery County (Md.) – Public Libraries  
Montgomery County (Md.) – Schools  
Montgomery County Civic Federation  
Suburban Hospital

**Subject Names**

Broome, Edwin W.

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Feb. 4, 1972

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND, INC.  
MEMORIAL LIBRARY FUND

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
(in cooperation with Montgomery County Department of Libraries)

Interview with MARY B. MOHLER

INTRODUCTION: (please note that there is an unusually long leader and the record of footage starts with 000 when the actual interview starts.)  
Interviewer - Blossom Holland

018 PART I - Professional Career - Teaching

Came to county because wanted to be here to take D.C. teacher exams and because most of her family was in this area.

028 Principalship at Woodside Elementary School: 1926-28  
037 Described Woodside

065 1928 - Mr. Broome asked her to take charge of 12 to 15 "underprivileged" boys at recently opened Bethesda-Chevy Chase Junior-Senior High School. Taught junior high level until 1931-32; then started teaching some senior high English.

098 Junior High idea went into effect in 1925 at Wilson Lane School (Bethesda Elementary)-grades 7 to 10. Bethesda-Chevy Chase Jr. High opened in 1926.

138 Mr. Pyle took her as one of his teachers to B-CC High School. Only one wing was then open. New construction started in 1929.

150 At first, only one senior high--in Rockville. Students from this area could take street car to Rockville.

175 In 1928 some students graduated from the 11th grade at B-CC. Some stayed on for another year and graduated from the 12th grade the next year. Even then she was aware of the pressure of the community for the schools to prepare for college.

189 She started filling a college advisor role (1936 or 37) in addition to full schedule of English. Started the first college bureau in the county. Had a file of college catalogs from all over the country.

233 B-CC was the first school in U.S. to have college night.

244 B-CC started a career night program.

262 B-CC had 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. 110 graduates in 1939.

275 Mrs. Mohler had somewhat lighter English class load; half day for college advisory.

295 B-CC students made good at college-sometimes had advanced standing. Was one of top ten schools of U.S.

306 Other county high schools besides Rockville and B-CC were Blair, Poolesville, Gaithersburg, Damascus, Sherwood.

322 Mrs. Mohler took advanced classes in remedial reading. Got her M.A.

- 352 Dr. Broome asked Mr. Betts, expert in field of reading, to give training sessions. Mrs. Mohler attended. She taught class of reading damaged 11th graders for one year.
- 392 Elementary level remedial reading
- 416 Dr. Forbes Norris, new superintendent, 1953.  
In 1951, Mr. Broome assigned her to work with secondary school supervisors to find course content material written at elementary school level. Had to do some re-writing.  
Dr. Norris asked her to plan remedial reading program for elementary school level. No money in budget for that year.
- 475 The following year he told her she would have \$200 plus her salary to work at Bethesda, Chevy Chase, and Somerset Elementary Schools with Mr. Burdette as supervisor to prove what could be done. She describes her problems and victories. Average gain of each child was two years.
- 547 1955-56 - Ten positions assigned to remedial reading. Children with range of 2 years below to 2 years above grade level kept in classroom.
- 624 Clinic for interdisciplinary evaluation located at Junior College.
- 672 By 1963 had 30 or 31 elementary reading specialists and 12 to 15 secondary ones.
- 682 Clinic moved to Takoma-Silver Spring School; one-way window installed. "Prescription" library.
- 735 Dr. Whittier, new superintendent (1957 or 58). His coming was tragic for school system. He quickly brought in many outsiders who had no notion of this system's growing pains. System was faced with too many innovations to assimilate all of them. Some of our failures today may be based on letdown then. A woman was brought in who had been a special education teacher in Virginia. She took Mr. Burdette's place. The Dept. of Psychology "went;" then Special Ed. and Remedial Reading were affected adversely.
- 980 Mrs. Mohler said she had come to the county while waiting to take the teacher's exam in D.C. After comparing D.C. schools and those in the county, she decided to stay in the county.
- 007 THE END OF PART I
- 011 PART II - The Junior College
- 042 It was not necessary to push high school graduates into college. Colleges would take top half or 3/5ths of graduates of B-CC.
- 083 After World War II local colleges were filled with veterans. Many high school graduates not accepted.
- 124 Mrs. Mohler suggested to Mr. Pyle to start an extension of University of Md. at B-CC to be held after high school hours.
- 149 Meeting with Mr. Pyle and others--maybe including Mr. Broome.
- 170 Second meeting included the State High School Supervisor; Dr. Broome; Dr. Pullen, State Superintendent; and Hugh Price, a B-CC chemistry teacher.
- 252 Started the next fall with High Price as dean.
- 315 Financed with local funds.

- 340 The Bliss Electric School was to close; county took it over for the Junior College.
- 30 Mrs. Mohler is not able to evaluate the college since she left the college building where the clinic was located
- 471 Is disturbed by the failure of administration to follow through with her on setting up a scholarship grant. Is unhappy about taking homes of elderly people to expand campus in Takoma Park.
- 516 In early years, many finished the two-year course successfully and went on to further education.
- 533 THE END OF PART II
- 534 PART III - Civic Federation  
Federation started in 1925. Brought about many improvements in the lower part of the county. From 1935 to early 1960's, Mrs. Mohler was a delegate from Chevy Chase Terrace.
- 688 1956 or 57 - Mrs. Mohler was the recipient of the Evening Star Cup. Cup was presented for outstanding civic service during the year. She believes she has been the only woman and the only educator to receive the cup. Citation credited her with leadership for Junior College founding, for education in general, and for her work in public library system.
- 830 35th anniversary banquet of the Federation.
- 870 During the later years of her membership there was not the zeal, the attendance or the caliber of reports as in earlier years. The communities had the improvements they needed, except for the Metro. The Federation worked on the Metro 10 or 12 years ago.
- 929 PART IV - Bethesda Public Library
- 958 When she first came to county school she couldn't believe there was no library. School system bought a few books for children to use. A women's club provided some books for a library at Woodside.
- 006 Became aware of Newcomb Club's lending library. Had quarters in or near Bank of Bethesda. Mary Foster was a guiding light of Club.
- 038 Clubwomen tried to get tax support but would have had to relinquish all claim to the library.
- 063 They disposed of their books - 1933 or 34.
- 091 An influx of people into Bethesda rea. Many wanted library. A movement to get tax-supported library. Mrs. Walter Perry, II, a driving force. An advisory council was set up.
- 135 High school youngsters circulated questionnaire to determine interest in the library. Results of the questionnaire showed strange pattern of geographical location of those interested. District set up according to interest shown.
- Tape II 006
- 037 Advisory Council--each community group was invited to send a representative. A publicity group.
- 047 Legislature had to pass a bill to allow district to be taxed. District collected 2¢ tax for the library.
- 062 Librarian hired. Worked first in store building on Hampden Lane and then in basement in B-CC High School.
- .20 Were able to lay aside some money toward buying or building a library. Other libraries were being organized in the county; one in Silver Spring.

- 180 Mr. Moorland met with the Board to urge that they join the county system. At this time Mrs. Mohler was president of the Board. The Board refused to enter the county system but bought a piece of property on Moorland Lane.
- 224 The Silver Spring Library went into the county system and got a new building.
- 231 John Reed became president of the Board. He made a deal with the county. Turned over \$64,000, which had been saved, to the county. The county built the building for the library.
- 275 Library to serve all the people. People outside of library district could use the library by paying \$1.00. Had interchange of books with other library systems.
- 291 Disapproves of arrangement with the Virginia libraries--that we're being taxed to help support Virginia libraries.
- 306 END OF PART IV
- PART V - Suburban Hospital
- 307 Suburban Hospital auxiliary; furnishings of hospital rooms.
- 545 Free clinic
- 565 THE END.