

The Family Ties of Shaw

By Cara Jensen

Researching for this issue's article, I came across yet another noted name living in the Shaw neighborhood. In 1900, Rockwell Milligan lived with his parents and sister at 4003 Russell, then married and moved to 4162 Flora to raise his own family. Architect Rockwell Milligan and his colleague William Ittner were responsible for designing most of the St. Louis Public School buildings. There is a local website which gives a comprehensive virtual tour of all the buildings: www.builtstlouis.net/schools/ittner01.

While Rockwell Milligan certainly fits all the criteria for an acclaimed Shaw resident and merits extensive praise, my focus kept shifting to his younger sister, Cora Milligan. In the 1900 census, she was 24 years old and her occupation was listed as 'lawyer'. A young female lawyer in 1900 St. Louis – my curiosity got the best of me and I dug in!

It seems St. Louis was supporting women's rights and feminist ideals far before it was fashionable. In a historical decision, Washington University Law School admitted Phoebe Wilson Couzins and Lemma Barkeloo in 1869. They were the first American women to be offered an education in the law and the first women admitted to a Bar Association. Ms. Barkeloo was the first woman lawyer to try a case in federal court. Ms. Couzins went on to found the National Women's Suffrage Association with Susan B. Anthony.



Cora Milligan found inspiration and strength from these pioneering women. A pioneer herself, (SLU law school admitted 8 women in 1908), she began her St. Louis practice during the time in US history when the gendered concept of 'separate spheres' was accepted, divorce law favored the husband, contraception and abortion were made criminal, and women could not vote. Imagine the experience of a woman studying legal rules that explicitly subordinate all women!

Rockwell and Cora Milligan found the strength to fulfill their individual passions while living in the Shaw neighborhood. Their familial ties provided a network of support while facing challenges and overcoming obstacles. Shaw supports families and provides a physical and spiritual place to grow. My life is enriched by Shaw's past and I look to the ties of this community to inspire myself and future generations.

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